



Conscious Life presents

Stick Up For Your Gut

Guest: Shivan Sarna

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[00:00:09] - Meagen Gibson

Hello and welcome to this interview. I'm Meagen Gibson, your conference co-host. Today I'm speaking with Shivan Sarna, the author of the Amazon bestseller *Healing SIBO*. She's a TV host and the creator of the *SIBO SOS* summits and community.

After a lifetime of struggling with health issues, Shivan made it her mission to demystify her own health struggles and to share that information with others who are struggling. Her personal mantra is SOS, Save Ourselves, and that's what she's helped thousands of people do. Shivan Sarna, thank you so much for being with us today.

Shivan Sarna

Oh, my pleasure. Some of my favorite topics, thanks for talking to me about it.

Meagen Gibson

Let's start by helping people understand your personal journey and how you arrived at your area of expertise.

Shivan Sarna

Well, I am the author of *Healing SIBO*, and I have had 11-12 summits and a docuseries called *Digestion SOS: Rescue & Relief for IBS, SIBO, & Leaky Gut*. I've done summits on fascia, and lymph, and liver, and the microbiome, and biological dentistry. All of those things were wrong with me at one point or another. Partially from food poisoning as a child, but also from working in a moldy building for 20 years, unbeknownst to me. I had mold denial when I finally found out that the building was moldy.

I was very passionate about SIBO because I'd had IBS since I was five. Typical, I went to the doctor, then went to an acupuncturist, then went to an ayurvedic doctor, then went to foot reflexology, then went to a different doctor. Everyone was super great, and yet they could not crack the code for me.

[00:01:56]

I was very famous for lifting my shirt up, not boobs, but just the belly, and showing these practitioners and being like, "Dude (or dudette), what is this? Boinga. Boinga." I was so bloated, and I had a girlfriend at work who said... We were the weirdos because we were the only gluten free people at this TV station.

Meagen Gibson

Those early days, when it was really super weird.

Shivan Sarna

Yeah, super weird. She's like, "Oh, my gosh, I'm on this really intense antibiotic. I had to do this weird test. Yeah, okay, I'll talk to you later, bye." I was like, "What?" I was haunted by her story of this passing comment. So she told me it was a SIBO breath test, and I went into that rabbit hole. I was like, "Okay, I need to get this test." And it came back false negative. I lost 18 months on, and on, and on as the whole journey.

But I was, from the optimistic perspective, is that there were people who knew what was wrong with me. I just didn't know them. So I went on a quest to find them. Once I found them, and while I was in this process, I swore to myself and the universe and the higher powers that I would share my information with anyone who was also struggling, because I had privilege, I had money, I had a computer. My husband was studying for CPA, so I had a little time on my hand while he was busy. I went and found a cache of SIBO specialists, that's Small Intestine Bacterial Overgrowth.

I then started with the book and the summit, and one thing led to another. That's a little bit about how I got here.

Meagen Gibson

Absolutely, and definitely came to self-advocacy the hard way, as many of us experts do, or people with areas of interest, we come to them through our own hard-fought journeys to knowledge.

Shivan Sarna

Exactly, and it used to be that Dr Google was like... Whatever you do, don't do Dr Google. But because technology has moved forward and because... Use your discernment, right? Yeah, Dr Google is a great place to start and then find your people, find the research, PubMed. My platform, *SIBO SOS*, was originally, literally, "Someone come save me", but it became save ourselves, very organically.

I am pro-practitioner because those people got into the marketplace of healing and health for a reason. I'm very happy to support practitioners. What I particularly advocate for is for the patient to help educate the practitioner. When I found the gastroenterologist who finally could really help me, I walked in with studies.

[00:04:48] Meagen Gibson

You're ready for battle.

Shivan Sarna

Oh, I was ready for battle! And he was amazing, I had never met him before. He was divine. He was like the prime candidate for being flexible and open and honest. He's like, "Oh, my gosh, thank you so much. This is new. Oh, I know some of these researchers. Oh, that's great. Oh, yeah. They just didn't teach us that in medical school." That is like the classic mantra of what I want to say to everybody when they're P.O'd at their doctors, or, "I've had it with this medical community."

Well, there are good people and there are bad people in every walk of life, and there are good doctors and bad doctors. There are practitioners who absolutely are drowning in information, and they can't keep up. Help them out, for goodness sakes.

By the way, if you are with a practitioner that is not meeting you where you are, not making you feel safe and sound and heard, then you will have to do the legwork, unfortunately, of finding another practitioner. That's a little bit of tough love, but you are not a victim per se. Of course, we can all be victims because terrible things happen.

If you're in that position of where, "If I stay here, I'm not going to get the care I need", then you need to move on if that doctor is not going to be open, or if you're being disrespected or if you're saying it's all in your head, or they're saying it's all in your head. "Sayonara, see you later. Bye bye." You have the right to fire your practitioner, for goodness sake. Definitely.

And then there's so many wonderful practitioners who do telemedicine or educational consults, even if they're not licensed to practice in your state. You can get a whole to-do list. Sorry, I'm very passionate about this. And then go find practitioners to help fulfill the plan. Be a diplomat, be kind and respectful and patient to the point of where you're also insistent and keep moving. Inch by inch, it's a cinch.

You may not find everything out today, but as you move forward, I call it GTE, Generate the Energy. There's a velocity that comes as you move forward on this journey of putting the dots together, Hansel and Gretel, following the breadcrumbs. Mainly I'm talking about people with medical mysteries. But it is hopeful, there is so much hope. So please do not give up. A lot of these conditions, I'm thinking of SIBO, Small Intestine Bacterial Overgrowth, IBS in particular, they have brain fog, they have anxiety associated with them.

I remember one day I had so much brain fog that I literally couldn't speak. I could not form words. My husband looked at me and turned white, whiter than he already is, white man. He was really freaked out, I was freaked out. He thought I was having a stroke. I literally couldn't form words. Gives me the chills just thinking about it. I was really quite ill. I also want to say... I know I'm not letting you say a darn thing, is it okay?

[00:08:09] Meagen Gibson

Keep going, yeah.

Shivan Sarna

Okay. I also just want to say that when you manage a chronic condition, for example, you can feel 100% better than a non-managed chronic condition. The extreme would be like diabetes. But IBS, lots of things. If you can manage them and get your life back, maybe you don't have this clean, perfect bill of health like you did when you were 12, or 19, or 20, but you're doing good. You're doing well. You feel good, you have your energy back, you get your sense of humor back. "Oh, my gosh. Yeah, my liver is really struggling, but I'm on my glutathione. I'm on my coffee enema every once in a while".

Whatever it is, you have a protocol, you have a plan, you're working it. All the tools, the red light, the sauna, all that jazz, you can feel great. Not everybody can, I get that. But you could feel better. Your attitude can be healed as well. Those are some of my thoughts for you today about patient advocacy.

Meagen Gibson

I love it because we were talking, before we started recording, about the frustrations of finding doctors that will take you seriously, and you mentioned three qualities in the doctor that finally, that you matched with, and they were optimistic, flexible, open, honest.

Just keeping those characteristics in mind when you're finding your healthcare practitioners, also keeping in mind, which was news to me until literally yesterday, I was yesterday-years-old when I found out that a lot of doctors, their scope of care does not allow them to treat whatever it is that you're coming in with documentation, and studies, and journals, and you have all the evidence, and they're like, "That's great, but that's not my scope of care that I can treat you for."

Shivan Sarna

Speaking of hormones, I went to the gynecologist with the idea about replacement hormones, and they were like, "Great, good. Talk to my nurse practitioner". Okay, well, she'd had some additional training. Not functional, but she'd had some additional training. No test, no blood test, no spit test, no DUTCH test, pee test, whatever. It was just like, well, here's some estrogen and here's some progesterone...

Meagen Gibson

Good luck!

Shivan Sarna

Yeah, something about this seems a little bit wrong, I'd like some accuracy here. This particular office was really trying, they were modern to be doing this. Some practices are really into it, the doctor's gone to the trainings, but you are asking for a big needle move to go from your traditional

GP, gynecologist, obstetrician to, "Hi, I want functional medicine and I want hormone replacement therapy". Remember, they were dealing with a lot of horse urine not so long ago, for hormones.

[00:11:19] Meagen Gibson

Yeah.

Shivan Sarna

Some of you are not aware of that, and that's fine. But believe me, it's been primitive. Very primitive. Being an advocate for yourself, finding the right people, like Michelle Sands, online she has a whole program for hormones and she manufactures the creams herself.

Meagen Gibson

That was who I talked to yesterday, actually. That's who I was referencing.

Shivan Sarna

Go team. Go find her on YouTube, she's a genius and really helps a lot of people, very affordably. So there are other options for... Because the topic is hormones for women, and men, that's also expanding big time. Big time.

There's a lot of, I would say, performance type practitioners out there that can help you with testosterone, help you with functional testing. You can get functional testing at Rupa Health. You can practically order it yourself or very easily find someone who has... I'm making it sound like it's oranges on trees and it's not that easy, but it's also not nearly as gatekept as it was before. A lot of chiropractors have options for functional testing that they didn't five years ago. It's not as tight of a lock and key keeping you out as it was before, so I'm really hopeful about all that.

Meagen Gibson

One of the things that I also want to bring up that I learned through our Hormone Super Conference is the... I bring this up because of your history with IBS and your frustration with gut health and things, how vital estrogen is in gut motility. Literally, moving food through your system is a hormonal issue sometimes that is hugely contributive.

Shivan Sarna

It absolutely is. Also thyroid. If you have thyroid issues, it's a big contributing factor to slow motility and that can lead to all kinds of things. So SIBO is the overgrowth of bacteria, or microbes, or archaea that are actually already in the body, in the colon. They overgrow, not like an infection, but they overgrow in the small intestine and can lead to bloating, constipation, diarrhea, alternating constipation and diarrhea, rosacea, restless leg syndrome, brain fog, anxiety, on and on, and on. Also malnutrition and metabolic issues.

So you really want to address it, and there are three treatments. I'll quickly whip through them, which is herbal antibiotic or the elemental diet, which is a liquid diet made up of the elements, amino acids used to taste terrible. Now there are brands that taste much, much better.

[00:14:06]

And then you get on a prokinetic, after treatment, you may have to retest. This is a breath test that you do to find out if you have hydrogen producers, methane producers or hydrogen sulfide producers, and the treatments are determined by the cause. So which type of gas generator you have. Often, once you resolve it and get that to a normal level, your microbiome comes back into balance and your food sensitivities and intolerances go away.

It's very exciting when that happens, and it is doable. There is a lot of myth around SIBO in terms of, "Oh, it's the new candida", or "No one ever gets better from it". That's simply not true. You may have an underlying cause that is not resolvable, like scleroderma, endometriosis, adhesions. Although things can be done for adhesions, and if you have the endometriosis surgery, you have to be careful because you might get adhesions. Those are internal scars that can pull the body into different directions and actually inhibit the migrating motor complex, which is that sweeping motion in the small intestine that is the key to resolving SIBO.

So you do the breath test. You have to retest. There's a whole nine-step protocol and algorithm that has successfully treated thousands and thousands of patients. You can also manage it if you have an underlying cause that will make it recurrent. But more often than not, you are suffering from post-infectious IBS. The post infection was previously a food poisoning episode.

So quickly, if you have ever had a meal where you got sick and no one else at the table got sick, but you guys ate the same thing, so everyone ruled out food poisoning because, "Well, I ate the pasta, too. I didn't get sick". Once you've had food poisoning, it is more likely that you'll get it, so keep that in mind, and always make sure your food is properly heated or properly cooled, and that you're washing those fruits and veggies properly, and that you are paying attention to your food sources because you don't have to be in a third world country with an umbrella in your drink to get food poisoning. It happens every day.

Meagen Gibson

Absolutely. It's my turn to get the shivers. No fun with the food poisoning. So, as I'm listening to you and we're talking about gut issues and hormone issues, obviously, they're intertwined, they are a tag team. When you're at the very, very beginning of this journey and you're not a patient advocate yet of yourself, you don't have that agency, you're still in the mindset of, "I go to the doctor and they fix me", which we all start at. If we get the service that we need and we get relief, then we stay in that zone until we run into an immovable condition, and then we have to get more investigative and more advocate on our own.

If you're at the very, very beginning of that journey and you're super overwhelmed, how do you recommend that people start? What's the mentality? Where would you send someone first, if they're at this juncture of complication that they can't get any relief from?

Shivan Sarna

Are you talking about for gut health or hormonal health?

[00:17:39] Meagen Gibson

Either, any of them, because they're so intertwined.

Shivan Sarna

I would definitely, first of all, have beginner's mind. The doctor that you have been working with, maybe the family physician for ages, that may not be in your life forever, or maybe they'll be a great partner with you if you do need scripts and that kind of thing. Also insurance, there's some tests that functional medical practitioners use all the time that are traditional, that your insurance will pay for if you have the proper paperwork, script, et cetera for it.

So yay, get a practitioner on board within that traditional sense. If you ever have something where you need to have an antibiotic because you have this or that, then all for it. But I would definitely start asking around for who's a good practitioner in your area? If you don't have this laundry list of things, but let's say you're fatigued, let's say you do have hormone issues, you have gut issues, start googling 'Naturopathic physician in my area', 'Functional health practitioner in my area'. There are a lot of different web databases for IFN, Reed Davis's functional... I can't remember the name of it, Reed, I'm sorry! FDN.

There's all kinds of practitioners with great licenses, is what I'm trying to say. Start with that first Google search, ask your hairdresser, ask your nail tech, ask the PTA mom, the one who's into fitness, ask the yoga teacher in the area. There's a lot of places that will have a naturopath, a nurse practitioner, IV drips, maybe they have a hyperbaric oxygen chamber. These are all good signs to go in and check in with them. Doesn't mean that they're all perfect, but it's a place to start, "Hey, I just want to come in and get my blood work looked at from a functional perspective and just establish myself as a patient" and see what unfurls and what goes from there.

Meagen Gibson

Absolutely. Great. How can people, if they're on this journey and they want some support, some patient advocacy support, they need a cheerleader in their corner, how can they find out more about you and what you do?

Shivan Sarna

They can come to www.SIBOSOS.com. I'm also at www.ShivanSarna.com, where I have the list of the eleven summits that I've done on all those topics. You can get my book, *Healing SIBO*, that is a bit of my story, and absolutely a step-by-step of what you can do to help with your SIBO, and also recipes in the back.

There's some great Facebook groups. We have a Facebook group of [SIBO SOS](#) community with like 30,000 people in there talking SIBO 24/7, from all over the world. There are some great Facebook communities. You don't have to be on Facebook, that's fine. [Wellness Mama](#) has a great one. Let's say you find out you have Lyme, there are great ones for Lyme, candida, holistic health, Wellness Mama for the kids. You name it, there is a Facebook group for it. So pop in, you can lurk, you can just audit. You don't have to have a conversation. You can just see what community could be like for you and take it from there. Those are some good places to start.

[00:21:17] Meagen Gibson

Fantastic. Sivan Sarna, thank you so much for being with us today.

Shivan Sarna

Thank you so much for having me, it's an honor.