



Powerful and Practical Tools for Optimising Sleep

Guest: Misty Williams

Alex Howard: Welcome everyone to this session and I'm super happy to be talking with Misty Williams. Hi Misty.

Misty Williams: Hello. Great to be here.

Alex Howard: So we're going to be talking about sleep and I think sleep is a really interesting topic, because when we have trauma and we have challenges in our life, often it affects our sleep. But when we don't sleep, often it's quite traumatic. So I thought it was a really interesting inter-connectedness here.

Before we come into Misty's story let me just get a little bit of background and bio. So Misty Williams spent years struggling to reclaim her health and vitality after surgery to remove ovarian cyst, life threatening complications and an endometriosis diagnosis sent her into a brain fog and fatigue tailspin.

The doctor told her that the only remedies for her issues were drugs and surgeries, that her lab tests were normal 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 45 pound weight gain, debilitating brain fog, fatigue, hypothyroidism and premature ovarian failure.

She founded [HealingRosie.com](https://www.healingrosie.com) 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.

And she recently hosted the very successful Your Best Sleep Ever online Summit.

So, Misty, we've given a bit of a tease there at some of your story. But I know that your interest in the area with sleep was not a chosen path in life, it was a path somewhat that chose you.

So let's back up a little bit and tell us a bit about how this all unfolded for you.

Misty Williams: Yeah, you're right. I actually get a chill whenever you say that, I think probably my entire path wasn't one that I chose and I know that there's many people that can relate to that. But my journey started pretty benignly.

Actually, I went in to ask my doctor to check my fertility because I was 35 years old and was contemplating motherhood. And I'm getting older and what's going on in my body and the story of the surgery and complications and everything is a pretty long story.

What ended up happening that really ties into this conversation is they found a cyst. I went in for surgery on the way out of the surgery, they stitched up part of my small intestine, which wasn't supposed to happen, and I spent six days not able to keep food or water down. Finally went into the emergency room. They did a follow up surgery, sent me home after and I didn't sleep for six days, 144 hours with not a wink of sleep. And as it turns out, that very traumatic beginning actually wasn't the most traumatic thing that happened to me, the most traumatic.

Alex Howard: Before we come to that. What is it like to not sleep for six days?

Misty Williams: It's terrible. You think you're losing your mind, it's not normal, it's not a normal thing to happen. So to lay in bed all night and the next day come and you haven't slept is, it's weird. If that's never happened to you, that in itself is very disconcerting. But then to go through the next day and then go to bed again and it happened again.

That starts messing with a sane mind. But over time, every single day, you're actually losing a little bit of your sanity because your brain isn't resetting, it's not organizing everything that happened from the day, your body isn't resting.

So this compounded for me. And by the end, I was weepy. I was a little delusional, I couldn't focus on anything, I wasn't doing any work for clients. I have had a marketing agency since I was 26 years old.

So it's very scary to be in that situation knowing that you're not functioning and you don't know why it's happening and no one told you this was a possibility.

So it was awful, it's a form of torture in wartime to sleep deprive people.

Alex Howard: And it works well.

Misty Williams: It was really scary. I actually connected the dots, I had six days of not being able to keep down food or water and six days of not sleeping.

I just connected the dots on that, this had happened 10 years ago. But I do think there's something that happens in the body where this just massive buildup of cortisol eventually just overthrows your entire system. And I wasn't making any sleep hormones at all.

My body couldn't, it's like, what we even do with all this cortisol? My liver's taxed and that wasn't the only thing, the build up of cortisol wasn't the only trauma I was dealing with, I also had all this stuff going on in my body. So that was a very scary time for sure.

What's been worse for me, though, is a couple years later, they improperly drilled mercury from my teeth and that crashed my hormones, methylation, which is how your body detoxifies and I've had so many health issues from that.

I've learned, I feel, Humpty Dumpty got patched together again, but Humpty Dumpty has never been the same, that's how I feel from the mercury toxicity. Because even with doing deep work that is supposed to heal your hormones for me, my hormones are not coming back. And the professionals that I'm working with, some of the best experts in the world, I'm very fortunate to know, are all saying they may, they may not, so that's a very devastating thing. But it came up in my journey, this issue of trauma that you're doing this wonderful Summit on, because there's a lot of trauma that I endured as a kid that I didn't think of as trauma, it was just my life as a child, all the extra responsibility at 7 years old, I'm watching my siblings when my parents are out running their errands and I was always uber responsible at home. And there's just a lot of things that I didn't think of as trauma being an overly responsible person,

I'm an entrepreneur starting at 25. I thought this is just normal life and as we get older and our body is less resilient for a variety of reasons. We don't bounce back and spring back and we realize, oh, all these things that we've carried for so long and just dealt with as our body isn't 20 years old anymore it becomes a more obvious challenge that we have to confront. And so for me, my healing journey has had two paths.

It's had the path of functional medicine and I love lab work and tracking and measuring and what's happening, and that whole side. But it also had this very spiritual side where I learned that the way that I was living my life was actually not good for me. It wasn't good for me to constantly be in a space where I'm the giver of support to everyone else, but I don't have any inroads coming to me offering support. And that's not because people in my life were selfish and hateful.

That's because I was conditioned from a very young age to not have needs. Because when you're 7 years old and your family is counting on you to do really adult things, you can't have a 7 year olds needs.

If you're the person taking care of everybody else, who's going to take care of you at that age? So I just had this way of being in the world that was overly responsible, and I was invisible to myself.

I spent probably the last 5 or 6 years of that 10 year journey, the recent past, really confronting that dimension. What is it about my belief that I am not worthy of being seen and supported, I give to everyone else in my life. And I've been deeply impacted by the work of people like Brené Brown and Allison Armstrong. I mean, just revolutionary. I remember watching Brené's Ted talk for the first time, it was about 6 years ago on vulnerability.

Alex Howard: Yes.

Misty Williams: And feeling confronted because I saw myself in her story, everyone else could be vulnerable with me, but I had really no place that I could go and be vulnerable. And it's at my own creation and even then, logically think, why is it like this? And there can be this tendency to blame and put it out there like something out there, did it.

But as you peel back those layers, it's just a way of being in the world and we can shift and change. But all of this has come together in my own journey. And as you can imagine, I've

had many layers of confronting my own sleep, from having that experience where I wasn't sleeping at all.

To have the mercury fillings improperly drilled from my teeth which completely shut down hormone production across the board for me and for women, especially when we don't have our hormones, we don't sleep.

Alex Howard: Yes.

Misty Williams: And this is a very, very chronic thing for women as they enter midlife, enter into perimenopause. They have all these troubles sleeping and it's due to hormone depletion, but what's depleting our hormones? It's a variety of stressful situations, including trauma. And trauma is a big word. There's internal trauma and external trauma and body trauma.

Alex Howard: Yeah, I think often how trauma is created is a very similar path to how sleep issues are created because it's rarely one thing. People think about it as the final straw that breaks the camel's back.

Well, what are all those straws beforehand and what all those loads on a boat. And if we look at your story from some trauma as being younger and often also when we experienced trauma in childhood, we just know that as normal.

So we don't label it as trauma, we don't recognize that the way that we've learned to be in the world is problematic. That's just how we know ourselves, that's what we know. So for sleep to go out of balance, rarely is it one single thing, it's as you describe it, is a combination of factors and a trigger of the surgery was perhaps the final few straws, but it sounds like much of that burden had been created prior to that.

Misty Williams: Well, there were so many things that I didn't know where sleep issues to your point, that I was having in my life. I would say my sleep is fine, but I wasn't going to bed until 2:00 a.m. ever from 18 to 35, there probably wasn't a single time that I went to bed before that. I was just a chronic night out and that was just my routine. So there's that.

And I don't remember even in high school, ever waking up feeling refreshed in the morning, like never. I didn't know waking up feeling refreshed was a thing.

After my surgery, I worked with a chiropractor because all my doctors were, obviously telling me that my labs are normal, things are fine. And I'm not functioning brain fog, no energy, I've got to look at an alternative, somewhere else. And the first thing this chiropractor asked me was, how's your sleep?

That was the first big thing that I had to work on in my own healing, because when I told him that I didn't go to sleep until 2:00 a.m. and that I slept typically until 9 or 10, but then I woke up feeling like I'd been hit by a Mack truck.

He started chastising me immediately, like, this is not, if you want your body to heal, you are going to have to change this pattern. And I was desperate at this point, if he would have

come to me at a time in my life and I hadn't just recently experienced all this trauma and said, "Misty, you really should do this for your health." That probably would have just rolled right off me. But in this situation I was very desperate and realized that I had a lot of challenges with my sleep that I did know were there, that certainly what I was experiencing at that point in my life and what was to come are only going to exacerbate my sleep challenges.

So I took it on early, this whole thing with sleep and have been through many layers of resolving my sleep issues. And we can talk about some of that if you'd like, but this is there's not a path, there's so many, that's why I did an entire summit on this. And after the summit was over, I just got emails from several men who were like, what's affecting my sleep is enlarged prostate. The enlarged prostate keeps me from being able to sleep through the night. And this is why I think we're called grumpy old men as we get older. I'm just thinking there's as big of a topic, I did over 40 interviews and there is still more to talk about. So, yeah, it's very, very big, very big.

Alex Howard: Yeah, And I think it's also one of those ones that there can sometimes be quite a lot of secrecy around it. I think a lot of people struggle with sleep and either feel ashamed about it or they just think that's how they are. I think there's something about conversations like this that people go, wow, that's me as well, I don't go to bed till 2:00 am or it's the opposite.

So I was like, well, I'm always up at 4:00 or 5:00 in the morning and they look at it and go, I'm just actually, I'm not getting enough sleep. And the impact of not having enough sleep on everything in the body, from energy, to brain function, to ability to heal and recover from anything. It's like sleep is critical.

Misty Williams: It's so critical.

Alex Howard: And as I introduced at the top as well, I think this relationship between sleep and trauma is a really interesting one. Because the more we don't sleep, that's traumatic, but also trauma has a big impact on our ability to sleep.

Misty Williams: There is a little model I just want to throw in here that can kind of help people wrap their head around this because there are a lot of layers to this conversation.

But there is a way to simplify it just for the purpose of understanding. And that is there is one reason that we get sick and there's one reason we don't sleep, and that reason is stress.

And the cortisol response. Now, how that plays out is very, very multi-faceted. But that's the reason. So we could talk about all the inner stress and obviously I had all these things happen with my body, that's stress. Trauma is clearly stress.

Whatever is going on in your life and your relationships is stress. Even external things happening, mercury fillings being improperly removed is stress, everything is stress and it creates a cortisol response, and that cortisol response creates a cascade of effects in the body. And so when you're thinking about, why is sleep impacted?

It's really because of that cortisol response that your sleep is impacted. When your body makes sleep hormones, there is a way that your hormones naturally convert into your sleep hormone, starting with pregnenolone, our mother hormone. But if your hormones are all converting over into cortisol instead and your body doesn't have the building blocks of what it needs to make your sleep hormones.

You can see how everything starts to unravel and fall apart. And based on your sex, male or female and based on your genetics, that will kind of impact how this cascade unfolds for you, and what your particular sleep issues look like.

So if we can back our thinking up a little bit and think, all right, so this is a cortisol response ultimately, if we're being overly simplistic in how we're thinking about this conversation so we can understand it. We're dealing with this cortisol response then what do we need to bake into our life and our lifestyle to support our body in being able to properly manage this load? And that makes it so that we can kind of wrap our heads around this conversation a little bit, because there are so many things that create this cortisol response. And some of it is just a really bad lifestyle, we are not aligned with Mother Nature and it's creating a lot of stress in and of itself.

Some of it's the relationships, our job choices, this trauma that's happened to us in our past that still haunts us to this day. I mean, we can all look at it, but you could probably just jot some notes to yourself of, where do I think my stress is coming from? And that can really give you some insight into where you need to do your deeper work.

Alex Howard: What would you say, just to take that a little bit further, what would you say is some of the really big factors that you see being stressed in people's lives?

If someone's trying to go well, what are those factors? That you mentioned, for example, childhood trauma so that there for example, having surgery can be another example. What are some of the other things that people might want to look for?

Misty Williams: Challenging relationships, being in relationships and partnerships that ultimately aren't supporting you for whatever reason, without placing any blame in that statement?

I had created a life where I wasn't supported. There is no one to blame for that. I had good people in my life, but I was choosing to interact with them in a certain way. So there's a lot of ways that can play out, it can be in a really close intimate relationship if we have partners, could be the kind of relationships we've created with our children. It can be our professional relationships, it could be relationships with our parents and extended family and all the dynamics that are at play there, all of those things can cause stress.

I mean, we're going through it just around the world right now, an unbelievably uncertain time. Uncertainty itself creates a lot of stress for us when we feel out of control of what's happening in our environment, that's very, very stressful.

As we're getting older, our bodies change and the way that our bodies respond to our environments change and that can bring up a whole another layer of stress. And then we

can just have traumatic life events, we lose a job, we lose a child, we lose a pregnancy, various ways that loss comes to us creates stress for us.

So stress has lots of layers, too. I mean, even the good things, people are actually negatively impacting their sleep because they're working out too much.

Working out is also stressful. So a little bit of stress is good for the body, but too much stress is actually very detrimental. Part of the challenge that I had created for myself right before my surgery as I was running half marathons and had been for years, on top of everything else. And you think that's something good, I certainly thought I was doing something good for my body.

What I didn't realize is how much stress I was adding on top of all the other stress that existed, plus all the historical stress. So there's this stress thing, none of us are gonna get out of here alive without experiencing stress. I think the challenge is how do we manage our lives and how do we start making choices differently so that our body isn't overwhelmed by all this stress?

Alex Howard: Yeah. So let's change direction a little bit towards some of the things people can start to do to shift what's happening around sleep. And I know one of the things that you talk a bit about is how one can optimize their bedroom for sleep, just the practical things in their environment they can do.

Misty Williams: Yeah. Well let's back up one step before the bedroom and let's just talk about. So we're talking about cortisol and stress, if the body is producing cortisol properly and you have what they call a healthy cortisol response, and you did a saliva test to show what that response looked like throughout the day.

What you would see is in the morning, cortisol would be at its peak at its highest level, that's actually what wakes you up refreshed, ideally. And then over time it would go down. And by the end of the day, that cortisol is pretty low and that's actually what supports your body making all the sleep hormones and going to sleep.

So that's how that curve is supposed to look and one of the things that helps to shape that curve is built into our biology, it's baked into our biology and if you've been around this space a lot, the functional medicine space or the biohacking space, you hear a lot about circadian biology. So at a cellular level, our cells respond to light, to light cycles. And part of what helps to wake us up in the morning is the light starts to come in, hit our cells, our skin, whatever, and our bodies entrain to that. And it's like okay, this is when our cortisol should be at its peak and then there's a timed response.

The body knows about how long day time is moving into nighttime. So that really helps to shape that curve. So when we have a lifestyle where we're never in the dark, or we're rarely in the dark, or we're not sleeping in dark rooms, or in the morning, we're staying in a fairly dark space, we're not getting out letting the sunlight hit our eyes to really help set that proper, healthy cortisol response. What happens is we have cortisol spiking at all different times of the day and trying to re-regulate that without using light is pretty much impossible. And this is why a lot of people will say things like, and my experience was, I would get a

second wind at 9:00 p.m. Because my cortisol response was so screwed up and I could have, back then gotten rid of all the stress and whatever, but I have to reset this healthy response. So we can reset our sleep response first thing in the morning. And that's a really important thing for us to know and it's actually something that I did when I had to reset my 2:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. sleep cycle back to about 9:30 p.m. to 6:30 a.m.

So that's a biggie and along that train of thought, we've got to start being disciplined about dusk and dark. When it goes dark outside we need to be mindful of how our body responds to light and dark. There are sensors in our eyes right through our retina that hits our SDM, which is the body's master clock to control timing everywhere, blue light, there are blue light sensors. Same with our blood cells that are running through our skin. So we've got in our blood, there's little sensors that control melatonin. And that's really what this blue light thing is all about, it controls the production of melatonin in the body.

So when it goes dark, put those amber glasses on. In my home, we don't do any overhead lighting, we have amber bulbs and many of the lamps in the house. And we just do our best to keep the lighting low, use the amber lights, wear the glasses. And then when it's time to go to sleep, now we're moving into the bedroom.

Sleep in a very dark room, so we have room darkening curtains and I remember when I first heard Dr. Ann Shippy talk about the fact that our skin has sensors, because I've been doing the amber glasses since 2012. I had no idea that our skin was sensitive in that way, I remember hearing something about it, but not understanding the mechanism. So I immediately was like, oh, crap. We're doing all those other things.

Alex Howard: Come on I've been wearing the glasses, is that not enough.

Misty Williams: I need amber glasses for my skin. So we put the room darkening curtains up and then it's amazing how much light you have in your room, we had the smoke detector light.

There was something plugged into the desk across the way that even though it's off, has a light on it. My curling irons in the bathroom are off, but there's still lights on it. So you have to do this exercise of making everything dark, getting out the black tape if you need it to tape over lights. So making your room dark is really, really huge.

Being disciplined about screen time, no screen time three hours before bed is a really great rule of thumb for a few reasons. Number one, of course, we know that just biologically it's important. But beyond just the biology of it, we want to be after, say, 6:00 or 7:00 p.m. moving into a time of no stress. We don't want to be doing things that amp up our cortisol stress response.

So getting into a fight with your partner, working late at night, watching the news, which can be a lot of doom and gloom and you've got anchors who are trying to get everybody revved up because they're wanting those eyeballs. All of that stuff is contrary to your outcome of creating good sleep.

So we need to start developing these routines at night. And how do we ease yourself into being able to go to bed? It's amazing what the amber glasses alone will do. I actually have a friend who just moved here from California. She's staying in my guest room for a few months while she gets her feet under her.

Now she has a pair of amber glasses and she said just last night we were playing cards, it was about 8:30 p.m. and she was "like, oh my gosh, I can't believe how these things just make you tired." It was her third night and it really does have that significant and profound of an effect on your body. It really helps you start moving into what you should be moving into whenever it's nighttime, so that's a big one.

Another one that can be really helpful is making sure that you are cooling your room at night. They say the best temperature for us to sleep at is probably 65 degrees and for a lot of us, that's gonna be really challenging. How do you actually get your house, your entire house would have to be that cold. I mean, most of us don't have thermostats only for our bedroom.

Alex Howard: I mean, it's not challenging in the UK in winter, just to be clear.

Misty Williams Right. And that is true, it depends on the time of year, for sure. But for me, I have the thermostat down probably around 70 degrees. I wish I could do the translation for you and do what it is across the metric system, too, but Celsius. But for us, it's 70 degrees and then I also have a Chilly Pad on my bed, which throughout the night cools my body even more. And why that's important is because the cooler your body is, the more melatonin you produce, the better your deep sleep. So a lot of these bio hacks that really work for sleep, it's really all about melatonin and how much melatonin you have in your body. Some people do have genetic snps to produce less melatonin and that's why taking melatonin can be really important for some people when these basic lifestyle hacks are not enough.

Alex Howard: It's also really, what you're doing is your re-creating the environment that our ancestors slept in for millennia, which was dark and it was cold. When it got dark and cold, it was less safe to go out foraging and to go out hunting, so people would sleep and they would be out in the world when there was daylight. So you're really trying to recreate that in a modern world.

Misty Williams: Yeah. There's people, I've gotten a gazillion emails by now about this whole sleep topic. And there's women in the Healing Rosie community who've offered a lot of feedback, too.

You can get portable air conditioners that you can put just in your room so that you're not cooling your entire house. So people find all sorts of creative ways to make this happen.

The great thing about a Chilly Pad is if you and your partner don't like it to be the same temperature necessarily at night, then you can regulate that the way that the Chilly Pad is setup, allows you to regulate each side of the bed.

Alex Howard: My wife and I have to have different duvets in the winter because she gets really cold and needs a warm duvet, whereas I have a much thinner duvet. We share a bed, but we don't share a duvet.

Misty Williams: That's right, and for a lot of women what ends up happening and this was happening for me, I actually just did a hormone adjustment myself because I'm dealing with just sleeping hot. And if I weren't on bioidentical hormone therapy, this is me personally, which my hormones crashed because of the mercury toxicity.

If I weren't on that therapy, I would be in full blown menopause at the time of this recording I am 44 years old. I was showing premature ovarian failure at 38 because of what happened to me. So I would be in full blown menopause instead, now I have to figure out how to regulate my hormones. So I'm figuring out over a very, very long period of time I experience what women experience typically in a much shorter period of time because they just move on through it.

I've experienced sleeping hot, the night sweats. I mean, it's miserable, it's absolutely miserable for women as you're going through these changes. So besides advocating hormone therapy, I think all women should be on top of their hormones and optimizing their hormones, because it dramatically impacts your quality of life and your longevity.

I mean, we deal with things like osteoporosis and losing bone mass and there's just terrible things that happen to us. But women really, really need their hormones to sleep well. So your wife is cold now, there might be a time that she's the one sleeping hot. But it's good that we're having these conversations because no matter where you're falling on that spectrum, there's things that you can do really to help regulate this so that you're getting great sleep. For me, I started sleeping hot again and I just actually went in and changed the form of estrogen I'm taking, and it made a massive difference in how I sleep at night. So the cold can be a big help.

Another thing that can actually help, taking warm baths actually cools your body temperature, you're warm in the bath, but when you get out, your body temperature tends to dip. That can be really helpful if you need a system to move you into sleeping, taking baths can be helpful. The thing that I did when I was resetting my clock, which was very hard, it took six months to reset my sleep clock.

I started taking cold baths, 65 degree water at night in the evening. I didn't do it for sleep benefits, I was doing it just for the mitochondrial benefits overall that I'd heard that you get from doing cold baths, and I was really trying to support my body and healing at this time.

Two weeks in, suddenly I started waking up not feeling like I'd been hit by a Mack truck and exhausted, so that was a surprise for me but I was not alone in my experience. Many people that I was in the community with at the time were noticing similar positive effects to their sleep as well. So that can be another thing that if you're really committed to supporting your body and dialing this, then you could do the cold baths.

Alex Howard: And sometimes transitioning between hot and cold or cold and hot can also be a good thing.

Misty Williams That's right. Any of those actually are really good for the body. So anyway, cold can be great in the room and dark is great in the room. Some people swear by it being completely dead silent and some people can't sleep. I think you have to kind of find what's

going to work for you. But it certainly makes a big difference how your room is set up. In my house, the most important thing for us to spend money on is improving our sleep.

I just won't spare any expense because I've tried so long for my body to heal, trying different protocols and struggling, spinning my wheels. And I learned with a lot of wasted time and money, that if I'm not sleeping, I'm not healing. It doesn't matter how much I'm spending on these protocols and working with the very best doctors, doesn't matter, if your body is not sleeping. Nothing else will work. So I just feel like it's the most important thing for all of us to invest in.

Alex Howard: So I think that's some really helpful practical advice around some of the circadian rhythm pieces and how to manage the sleep environment. We touched on, and just maybe explored a little bit more, you mentioned the hormones, you've mentioned briefly heavy metals.

Maybe just say a bit about the functional medicine piece and even just some of the basics, like balancing blood sugar and just making sure that people are supporting their body in that way.

Misty Williams: Yeah. The blood sugar one is an interesting one. For so long that hasn't been my personal issue because I've really adopted a kind of a paleo lifestyle. Certainly there's a lot of ways to go about being healthy. Some people find a more Mediterranean template works for them.

The universal truths are though, regardless of where you fall ultimately on the diet spectrum, getting rid of processed food, getting rid of sugar is really crucial for good health as we get older. Not only for our sleep but for diabetes and all of the other chronic diseases of aging that we're getting, fatty liver disease. And I mean, there's just so much that crops up when we don't have healthy lifestyles when it comes to our food.

So that's a really important one, if someone hasn't dialed in their diet and they haven't really given that part of their life the attention it needs, it's going to have a detrimental effect on their sleep. And what ends up happening with blood sugar in particular is that when your blood sugar is swinging wildly, when it's going way up, it's also going to go way down. And that often happens for people in the middle of the night.

So they eat a big meal at dinner time and their blood sugar goes way up.

It's like your body loses its ability to properly regulate.

Too much sugar just floods the system, you're not as insulin sensitive anymore.

These controls that the body has of keeping all of this in check, it's like the circuits are blown. So blood sugar is a big one, and if your blood sugar is dipping at night, it's going to wake you up. And for some people, that's just a wake up and go back to bed and it's not a big deal for them but for other people, the wake up, your body's actually kicking, what's waking up is cortisol. The cortisol response is kicking in and for some people, their bodies, because they're not regulating these responses well, that cortisol response is a surge. And then once you have that surge and that cortisol is in your system, it overtakes the body just like what happened to me after my surgery with all that cortisol and you're not able to go back to sleep again. So blood sugar is a big one for sleep, for women the hormones are really

significant. If we don't have enough progesterone, it affects our sleep. If we're not getting enough estrogen, it affects our sleep.

A woman's biology is way more sensitive hormonally than a man's because we're the perpetrators to the species. So our biology is more sensitive to the environment, it's more sensitive to the light stuff, it's more sensitive to darkness, everything for women is more. So if we don't have enough hormones in our body, it deeply affects us.

Whereas for men in the research that I've done and these experts I've talked to, it's not very often that with a man the remedy is going to be, you need a little more progesterone to be able to sleep. That does not come up from men, but it absolutely does a lot for women. So there's ways that you can support your hormones, just reducing stress supports your hormones, just like we were talking about earlier. And so for some women, they just have really stressful lives that are impacting their hormone production and therefore impacting their ability to sleep at night. So you've got to go after it from that perspective, but you could be someone like me, you just have chronically low hormones and your body needs hormonal support.

And in that case, bio-identical hormone replacement therapy is wonderful and certainly there's some supplement that you can do that really helps with hormones, evening primrose oil is great, chasteberry. There's all these different supplements that can help your body if you're subclinical, meaning just slightly low. But with what I'm seeing in the Healing Rosie community, especially thousands and thousands of women, we have these conversations all the time. If you have a significant dip in your hormone levels, you really need to consider supplementing because, not supplementing bio-identical hormone replacement, because supplements alone typically won't get you where you need to be. And then what does that mean? That means you're not sleeping and then if you're not sleeping, it means you're not healing, it just becomes...

Alex Howard: It becomes a vicious circle.

Misty Williams: That's right. And there's some really interesting things too. One of the things that was fascinating to me is talking to different experts in our space about how to get to sleep. And I want to mention a few of these people and I'll tell you a little bit about them. And so if you're listening and this sounds like you, I want you to feel like you have someone you can go to. Trudy Scott is excellent, I believe she's going to be on this summit.

Alex Howard: Yep.

Misty Williams: But she did an excellent presentation on anxiety, how anxiety keeps you from sleeping and how you can use amino acids like 5-HTP, she talks a little bit about melatonin in our interview, too. But these different amino acids support your body and sleeping. And I have heard directly from people who are applying what she is teaching and their testimonials are like, "this is changing my life." So she's amazing and there's so many great things you can do with amino acids alongside melatonin.

But people's bodies are different and that's where we just have to keep our mind open. Some people can just take melatonin and it works, but other people, the melatonin doesn't

work so much for them, but the precursors to melatonin really seem to work better. And you just have to be open minded about trying different things to find what works for you.

I did an excellent interview with Dr. Roger Murphy who, his patient group is autoimmunity and fibromyalgia patients. And he has an entire protocol that he uses with his fibro patients and his perspective is, it doesn't matter what else we do to try to help you with your fibro symptoms. If I can't get you sleeping, nothing else is going to work. So it's his very first protocol that he puts every single one of his patients on.

He basically has a requirement to go deeper, we have to get you sleeping. So he has an excellent protocol, both of these guys have great books of their work. And they have excellent websites where you can find lots of this information. But he's got a really great protocol.

I had a wonderful conversation with Dr. Christine Schaffner and she talked a lot about the glymphatic system, which I think we should mention here as we're wrapping up. Because the glymphatic system is actually a new system of the body that has emerged since 2015, that is the brain's system for detoxifying. So our body has the lymphatic system and we all, probably have heard of lymph and our lymphatic system. Well, the brain has a system called the glymphatic system that supports the brain in draining all the toxins that are produced by the brain. And that gets drained right into our lymphatic system and then out the body. If people are experiencing chronic brain fog where they've got this brain fog, they just can't shake and you've looked at the obvious things like thyroid and hormones, different things like that and you're just not getting any relief. It's likely related to your glymphatic system and when people aren't sleeping, when their body is designed to get deep sleep, which is the first half of your sleep.

When you're not sleeping in your genetic window, then your brain doesn't drain because the brain drains during sleep. And over time, this creates this chronic brain fog that people are feeling, so the glymphatic system is obviously very significant.

So in Christine's work, she really pushes melatonin and melatonin can be kind of a controversial thing. Like we don't know if you take melatonin, are you suppressing your body's ability to produce its own melatonin in the future? And where she comes, which really resonates for me, too, as a specialist is, it doesn't matter about the future if in this moment you don't have enough, you are compromising and this is jeopardizing your future.

Whatever it looks like there's nothing more important than making sure that you're getting good sleep now to heal and reclaim your body.

So she's a huge proponent of melatonin and she uses this as therapy a lot in her work with patients because so many of them have the brain fog issues with the glymphatic system. Melatonin can be just a total game changer.

I did touch a little bit on genetics, I learned some really interesting stuff from Dr. Michelle Sands that there are actually four different chronotypes for sleep. And we are actually genetically wired, some people are wired where they need to go to sleep at 8:00 p.m, which to me would be like, oh my gosh. They're wired to be up at 4:00, 8:00 to 4:00 is their body's

optimal window, it's how they are wired. If they will align with that, they will have the healthiest body, most productive life.

I have a friend who is this type, since 2016 he has had brain fog that hasn't let up. He did not go to bed until midnight, but he is designed to go to bed at 8:00. So he's getting his deep sleep way after his body, from the circadian stuff is designed to benefit from that deep sleep and align with it to do all the hormonal stuff, and the brain draining and all the things that need to happen. So knowing your chrono type is very significant.

The next type, there's a couple of them, but it's the typical 10:00 to 6:00 but then you also have delayed onset and that type is a 1:00 a.m. chrono type of which I wish was me because.

Alex Howard: That suits your lifestyle.

Misty Williams: Yes, but for that person they sleep until 9:00, 10:00 but they're designed to go to bed later. So knowing your own chrono type through your genetics.

Dr. Michelle Sands is the one that introduced me to this, she talks about this a lot and so does Dr. Michael Breus. Knowing what you're chrono type is can really help you dial this piece in. 80 percent of us are gonna be in that mid-range.

But you're going to have your outlier on either side that is wired a little differently, but that's hugely significant if sleep is a challenge for you or healing is a challenge, if you're just, why am I not healing like I should be?

This healing protocol was supposed to take me 10 miles down the road, I've gone the eight weeks and I'm like half a mile from where I started, hardly any noticeable improvements. Well, then you start to ask why, why isn't the body able to capitalize on what you're doing? And for the majority of us, it's an energy issue and it always ties back in some way to our sleep.

Alex Howard: Misty, there's so much. I mean, you've just done an amazing Summit and there's much more we could go into here.

Misty Williams: I know.

Alex Howard: I'm mindful of time. I love how you've given a summary, that's a really helpful piece for people. People that want to find out more about you and your work. What's the best way to do that?

Misty Williams: Just go to the website healingrosie.com and that'll connect you to social media profiles and you've got a thriving Facebook group for women called Healing Rosie, and lots of free downloads, and tools and resources to help you advocate for yourself, and really take on this health journey and move the needle. So healingrosie.com

Alex Howard: That's awesome. Misty thank you so much.

Misty Williams: Thank you Alex for having me. It's been a pleasure.