



## **How To Heal From Toxic Mold Exposure**

**Guest: Dr. Margaret Christensen**

**Alex Howard:** Welcome everyone to this session where I'm really happy to be talking with Dr. Margaret Christensen. Well firstly, Dr. Christensen, welcome. Thank you for joining me.

**Dr. Margaret Christensen:** Thank you so much for having me. I'm so excited to be part of a Summit that is really looking at the importance of trauma because it's so relevant right at this moment, and it has been for hundreds of years. But, wow. Right now it's so important to understand this in the big picture.

**Alex Howard:** Yeah, and thank you for joining us. And I think this is a really important piece of the jigsaw as well, because there will be people that are watching this Summit that have got all of the symptoms of trauma and they're experiencing trauma. It's quite possible that the actual trigger or the way into that is actually toxic mold and we're going to come into this in a minute.

But just to give people that aren't aware of you, just your professional background, Dr. Margaret Christensen is an Institute for Functional Medicine Faculty member for the last 13 years. And she first became interested in function medicine 18 years ago when trying to solve the riddle of her and her family's complex health challenges. We will touch into that a little bit today.

Her initial boutique functional medicine practice has grown into the Carpathia. Is that the right pronunciation?

**Dr. Margaret Christensen:** Carpathia.

**Alex Howard:** A large multi-disciplinary, functional medicine practice based in Dallas and covering the full spectrum of complex chronic disease.

Dr. Christensen is passionate about educating her clients and colleagues about root cause, whole systems medicine and is also the host of the toxic mold Summit. I think that's the right name, which is a powerhouse of information where people can go much deeper into this whole subject.

I think probably Margaret, the best starting point is just for people that aren't familiar with the concept of toxic mold. Can you just explain what it is and just initially, briefly how it can impact the system. We'll then come into this all in a much more detail?

**Dr. Margaret Christensen:** Sure. Well, unfortunately, toxic mold exposure is incredibly common. And I'm not talking about outdoor molds in the springtime when we have a lot of wet. I'm talking about the molds and also other bacteria and biofilms that grow in water damaged buildings.

Whether it's your home or your workspace or even your car, that can be another exposure. And unfortunately, what happens is these molds make mycotoxins, these very toxic substances that have even been used in chemical warfare. That can have multiple different effects on the body from psychiatric, to autoimmune, to hormonal, to again gut issues.

Pretty much the whole spectrum of what we see in chronic complex illness. I'm always looking for toxic mold and fungal issues as underlying causes.

**Alex Howard:** And your interest in this, as we just touched on very briefly in the introduction, was triggered by yours on your own family's experience. Maybe just say a little bit about that, because I think there'll be others that are watching this that might just trigger a few alarm bells for their own experience.

**Dr. Margaret Christensen:** Sure. Well, first of all, you have to know that I'm a super type A, always kind of the top of my class, did the best in medical school, and also an undergraduate and was a leader when I was in the hospital where I was. But I became more and more and more fatigued and my brain just wasn't working. I couldn't find words. I would come home, I would be crashing and naps. And then also everybody in my family was sick in a different way.

I have four kids, so we had everything from learning disorders, A.D.D. to migraines going on, to actually some severe psychiatric illnesses, including bipolar and then subsequently schizophrenia, and as well as thyroid hormone disruptions, hormonal disruption. So kind of the whole gamut and I became so ill that I had to close my practice. I had a very successful OB-GYN practice, that's my original background. So for me to say I can't keep going, I have to stop, was unheard of. Because I felt so bad, I had chronic fatigue, fibromyalgia, and my whole body hurt.

I went to see all my wonderful colleagues to try and figure out, well, what's wrong, what's going on here? And it turned out, again, they were saying, oh, honey, you're just depressed. Here's your antidepressants. Go see the physical therapist, take some pain medications. And I wasn't sleeping, I had terrible insomnia, a racing brain. So I actually closed my practice, two years later I'm still, can't sleep, still feel like crap, my whole body hurts and that's how I fell into functional medicine. And I just started with changing my diet and getting some nutrients and I got a whole lot better, but it actually took 8 years to figure out what was wrong. Because the first time around I got better just by doing those things. But after the second major exposure, I crashed and burned again.

And that's how I got to the Environmental Health Center in Dallas, learned from Dr. Bill Ray, who is an icon in environmental medicine. Then began a very long journey to explore why am I seeing so many sick people and why aren't they getting better?

**Alex Howard:** It's not always as simple as this, but one of the things that I've observed a few times in the more obvious mold cases is. You can have a family move into a new house, for example, and within 6 to 12 months, everyone starts to have health issues. And then you see improvements when people go on holiday, for example, or they come back or they leave the house.

There can sometimes be some very obvious signs if you know what you're looking for. And other times it can be much more subtle and much more complex. You can have families of 4 or 5 and only 1 or 2 people start to show symptoms. It can be quite tricky can't it to really see what's going on.

**Dr. Margaret Christensen:** Absolutely and part of that is there's a lot of different pieces here. And I know you've had a lot of people talking about functional medicine. So, I mean, in my case, for example, we have to look at predisposing factors and the fact that I probably had multiple exposures over time from the time I was a kid.

Living in houses on the East Coast that had basements and a little bit of mold, lots of stressors, many years of antibiotics that I took for acne when I was in my teens. And lots of sleep deprivation, having 4 babies, taking care of my own, having a high stress practice. So it wasn't just one thing and also being exposed to lots of chemicals in the hospital. So it was like many different things and that's what people have to look at when they are trying, to kind of look at their history. And then oftentimes it's the women and children that are more likely to show to have symptoms, but they can be very different.

Many times the dads aren't sick and part of the reason is they're not at home as much if the home is the problem. Now, if the office is the problem, that's a whole nother story. But if they're gone a lot, they're not home as much. Children are also much smaller so the amount of exposure necessary in order to show up as A.D.D, chronic ear infections, upper respiratory infections, strep throat, getting ear tubes, being on lots of antibiotics because of that, suppressing your immune system. That can be very different than women who are ending up with super heavy periods, a lot of immune system dysfunction, infertility, endometriosis, bad P.M.S, and again psychiatric symptoms.

Men are much more likely to present more with things like irritability and maybe some fatigue, but not the same. You tend not to see the same profound fatigue as you see in women unless they've had some of these other predisposing factors. Head trauma is another one as well as ACE's, I'm sure you've had plenty of people talking about adverse childhood events. So it's never one thing and it's always building up and that's what makes it a little bit difficult.

Men also have testosterone, which to some extent helps protect the immune system from some of the devastating effects in the beginning, then it can make it worse. So that's why you can see a very different spectrum.

When everybody in the house is having something, also look at your pets, because pets can be a sentinel species. If they're sick, have thyroid issues, are getting cancer or whatever or have seizures, whatever. That can also be a clue that there's an environmental issue and it

may not just be toxic mold, it can be, like you said, brand new house, VoC's lot of other things. But it's the buildup of those things that can create a problem.

Then I can, if you'd like me to, go into the different types of toxicity we can see with mold exposure.

**Alex Howard:** Yeah, I think that would be helpful because I was thinking as well, it's understanding a bit about the actual mechanisms of what's happening physiologically when someone has mold exposure.

**Dr. Margaret Christensen:** Well, there's a couple of things that are going on. So number one, just the exposure to the actual mold itself, the organism, the bacterium itself. That can trigger and elicit a lot of allergic response so the common things that you think about are sinus allergies, puffy eyes, runny nose all the time, post nasal drip and maybe some sinus infections.

But the molds that make toxins called mycotoxins, those are incredibly damaging depending on what kind of mycotoxins it is. So you can have neural inflammation, you can have autoimmune disruption, you can have gut issues, a lot of SIBO, SIFO.

I'm sure you had maybe somebody talking about those things. So you can see a whole broad range of spectrum from the toxicity standpoint. And then it also can be a very potent immune system trigger, so it can create a lot of imbalances in the immune system and insensitivity. So it suppresses the part of the immune system that's called the innate immune system. That's what's kind of surveilling for bacteria, viruses, cancer cells. That part gets suppressed. Mycotoxins are amazing immunosuppressants of the innate immune system and then it over-activates the adaptive immune system. That's the part that makes all the cytokines everybody's very familiar now with cytokines, they've heard that term because the whole Covid.

So these are the cells that start producing a lot of inflammatory chemicals that create a lot of the disturbances and a lot of the inflammation in the body. And it's actually what gives you the flu like symptoms or gives you the respiratory, upper respiratory infections. And I'd be happy to touch on the connection to Covid and why we're seeing Covid where we're seeing it.

**Alex Howard:** Well I think let's, rather than parking that for later, I think that's probably relevant now. So just a little bit about, you were saying before we started recording, that there seems to be some correlation between areas where there's more likelihood of toxic mold with some of the more severe cases.

**Dr. Margaret Christensen:** Well, so, yes, one of the important things to understand is that if you are living in a moldy environment or working in one and you're breathing it in all the time. Number one, your sinuses can become inflamed and infected.

That's part of what causes the brain fog and also inflammation directly going back into your limbic system, we'll come back to the limbic system. But the other thing that's happening is you're actually breathing in those mycotoxins are incredibly teeny tiny. So our normal sinus

mechanisms, which are supposed to be filters, don't filter those out and they can go in and directly infect the lungs and inflamed them. Particularly if you also live in a city that has high levels of pollution, high levels of smog, if you're a smoker, your lungs have already been sensitized and then you throw mycotoxins in there.

Again, which is evading the innate immune system that's supposed to be surveilling for that and then triggering the cytokines. That's exactly what's happening with the Covid, it's invading the innate immune system and triggering the cytokines. So if you are in a situation where you're already susceptible, you live in a very humid city, you live in a city that's had a lot of damage because of all the current hurricanes, certainly that we've seen in cities both along the East Coast like New Orleans, and then the other pieces, electrosmog. And that's a whole nother conversation, but EMFs themselves can impact how cells work. And so if you are living in a place that has high density of cell towers of different frequencies, in particular the new frequency that's being rolled out.

All of those things together create that cytokine inflammatory innate system over reactivity and suppressing the immune system and with mold, that's already what's going on. So you get a Covid virus that comes along and you are susceptible and boom, that's why you're getting sick, that's why you're seeing all this respiratory stuff. And when you have those mycotoxins breathing in, they actually get into the systemic circulation.

So, again, they can pass directly into the bloodstream, both through the lungs and then end up dumping into the liver, and then dumps into the intestines. So all of that ends up impacting your immune system at many different levels. And depending on the mycotoxins, depending on your previous total toxic load and burden and other things that are going on, including stress. That's why we're seeing some of the very severe illnesses that we're seeing and it's not being talked about.

**Alex Howard:** One of the things that people often forget here is that, there is a load issue as well as the individual factors, right?

**Dr. Margaret Christensen:** Yes.

**Alex Howard:** I think people can think, oh, well, why is it other people have been exposed and I haven't? You were saying about predisposing factors earlier, that it may just be there's too many loads on the immune system.

That was one of the things that Dr. Neil Nathan was saying in his interview, that sometimes people could have been managing mold for many years. It's then when they get bitten by a tick or vice versa. And that combined load is then when people then start to get symptoms they can't ignore?

**Dr. Margaret Christensen:** Absolutely. And I use the metaphor of a toxic bucket and perhaps some others who have talked about that, looking at the total body burden or the total toxic load. So the genetics kind of determines the size of your bucket and whether or not your spigot is working well. That's all the things that help to drain the toxins, your kidneys, your liver, your skin, your gastrointestinal tract. So genetically if you have a smaller bucket or if you need a whole lot more nutrients.

You've got Kara Fitzgerald and Ben Lynch talking about genetics and methylation pathways. So if you're not able to excrete toxins very well, then again that builds up. And then the standard American diet, all the genetically modified foods, all the toxins that are environment, the pesticides, the water problems, the air. That kind of builds up, your toxic bucket is full and then you have hormonal disturbances. Maybe you're under super high stress for whatever reason or you have ACE's or trauma's, you're not sleeping well, you've had babies and you've been sleep deprived, you've had really high levels of cortisol, or you burned out your adrenals. Those all are building up and then you get these environmental exposures and boom!

That spills over the bucket, your spigot can't keep up, all those normal mechanisms. Our bodies are powerful, so amazingly able to detoxify themselves. However, we need all the right ingredients and we need to take out the toxins. So that total toxic load is an incredibly important way that we approach recovering from toxic mold illness.

**Alex Howard:** One of the things that people can find is that their nervous system or emotionally they're super sensitive to the world around them. And therefore, the spotlight tends to go on working on those reactions, which may well be part of the jigsaw. But it may be that exposure to toxic mold and other pieces that we're talking about here is actually such a load on the system that that's what's driving that sensitivity.

**Dr. Margaret Christensen:** Absolutely. And really, there's sort of three major components that we think about and perhaps Dr. Nathan had mentioned these things. But we have the limbic system that's involved, that's part of the brain and I'll come back to that. I know you've had a lot of people talking about the limbic system, retraining and trauma.

We also have the vagus nerve which connects the head, the heart and the gut or the brain, the heart and the gut. Also, by the way, the lungs and also the hormonal system. So the vagus nerve is incredibly important and this also comes back to Polyvagal Theory and trauma and you have a lot of wonderful people speaking to that.

So we have the limbic system, the vagus system and the third thing is mast cell reaction or histamine or what's called mast cell activation syndrome. And the release of a lot of histamine can actually create lots and lots of sensitivities. Whether it's to smells, to chemicals and psychiatric symptoms are often very histamine related. So I can go through each one of those and speak to them.

**Alex Howard:** So at this point I also wanted to touch on. People may be listening to this or watching this and going, I think I might have had some mold exposure, some of these symptoms make sense and what do I do with that? How do you get information? How does someone, I guess really the question is how do you diagnose that someone has exposure to toxic mold that's impacting them?

**Dr. Margaret Christensen:** Well, that's a big ball of wax. I have 40 different interviews on the [ToxicMoldProject.com](http://ToxicMoldProject.com), which is the mold Summit that I do looking at those various areas. But there's some simple things that we can do.

Number one, you can start by going online to [SurvivingMold.com](http://SurvivingMold.com) and doing an online VCS test or there's [VCSTest.com](http://VCSTest.com). That's a little screening test that looks at how well your eyes would be able to discriminate against very fine gray lines.

Dr. Nathan and I and many folks are also going to plug the International Society for Environmentally Acquired Illness, [iseai.org](http://iseai.org). That is an organization of both clinicians as well as indoor environmental air quality people as well as lay people. So we many, many, many of us are using urine mycotoxins testing, actually picking up these mycotoxins tests.

Dr. Schoemaker, who was sort of one the pioneers in this area. He started out with using a lot of these cytokine markers, these inflammation markers such as TGF beta, MMP9, MSAH, ADH. There's a lot of those. I use a combination of those things along with a really good history, along with the history of how many antibiotics you've been on your life, how many steroids if you take in your life, do you have head injuries?

That's another very important predisposing factor. So those are some of the ways that we can start beginning to look at whether or not this is an issue for you. And you have to remember here that there's actually two patients. There is the person in the body, and then there's also the building of the home, and if I can touch on that, too.

**Alex Howard:** Yeah.

**Dr. Margaret Christensen:** That mycotoxins are fat soluble toxins. So they can be in your system for many, many years. You may have had an exposure many, many years ago or multiple small exposures over time that have built up along with all the other factors in your toxic bucket. And then when you just reach that straw that broke the camel's back, that's when it spills over.

So that's why it's important to take a very good history of where you've been living, where you've been working, which cars you were driving when you were experiencing all of these symptoms. So it's both a diagnosis by getting a really good clinical history along with doing some of the testing.

What I can tell you about using urine mycotoxins testing is sometimes our very sickest patients. Those tests will come up negative when you first test them. The reason being their body is so shut down and their detoxification mechanisms, that it's not able to show up. Once you start treating them, you've got a good history.

Then all of a sudden you repeat their mycotoxins testing three months later. So that's another way, there's other ways of testing. We can look at antibodies in the blood, which can be useful, but they're not a hundred percent and there's some stool testing mechanisms. So there's several different ways and ideally, you want somebody who's had some experience in doing this.

**Alex Howard:** Yeah. And I think it's one of those ones where sometimes a little bit of knowledge can almost be dangerous. That people think, well, I've tested for mold because I checked that or did that. And actually it can be much, much, much more complicated.

You mentioned, I want to track back because I took you off track there, but I just wanted to land that piece. That you can look at it from a limbic point of view, you can look at it from a vagus point of view and from a mast cell point of view. And speaking to those different pieces in terms of how they present. Maybe just continue on that piece.

**Dr. Margaret Christensen:** Sure. And I think this is so important and this is how I work with many of my clients. And since this whole thing is about trauma, so many of the clients that end up coming to me, they've already seen 10, 15, 20 doctors. They've been to all the very big name places because they have all these unusual symptoms, pods, multiple chemical sensitivity, they're having unusual atypical Parkinson's, A.L.S., a lot of neurological symptoms, M.S or chronic fatigue.

And so what we have to understand is that the limbic system, which is the part of the brain, the very primitive part of the brain and you have a lot of people talking about this. Becomes involved when you've been chronically ill and nobody can figure out what is going on with you, and you're being told it's all in your head, you may be crazy, and to some extent it is in your head.

Because again, you're breathing in through your nose and some of those mycotoxins are directly inflaming the olfactory nerves, the smelling nerve that goes directly back into the limbic system. Which is controlling emotions, memory, your fight or flight response and hormones. So when you inflame the limbic system and you get it stuck in the on position, you're in fight or flight all the time.

So this is where we can see the psychiatric symptoms from anxiety, depression, insomnia, get hallucinations, severe bipolar, schizophrenia. That can be part of that as well.

**Alex Howard:** And part of the challenge. Sorry to interrupt. Part of the challenge can be that you go and see a medical expert. Expert, in inverted commas and they see that, and they assume that's the cause of everything else as opposed to being a symptom of what's going on.

**Dr. Margaret Christensen:** Right. And again, from a functional standpoint, when we're looking at anxiety, depression, again psychiatric illnesses, hormonal disturbances. That's not a diagnosis, it's a symptom that there is diffuse imbalance going on. So one of the things that we see, too, is people who've had chronic sinus infections and chronic upper respiratory infections, and their whole sinus cavities are inflamed, their olfactory nerve is inflamed. And so working on treating those, treating any fungi or molds that are growing in there. And it's just so important to recognize recurrent sinus infections are fungal.

They're fungal with bacterial overgrowth. Then people get put on antibiotics and what do antibiotics do? They kill off all your good gut flora and they suppress your immune system, and they have more yeast that grows, and yeast itself produces mycotoxins. And so it's important to treat chronic recurrent sinus issues for the limbic system with the antifungals, and then you have the whole issue with the vagus nerve.

So, again, the vagus nerve is actually the longest word nerve in the body. And it's sending signals from the gastrointestinal tract and the heart, and the brain, and the lungs, and some



of the hormonal systems up to the hypothalamus and the limbic system. And there's actually more information that's going from your body up than coming down. But the vagus nerve also controls things like heart rate, breathing and your gastric motility.

So when it becomes inflamed and damaged because you are on the standard American diet, you've had a lot of antibiotics, you've got a leaky gut, you're having mold mycotoxins that are being dumped from your liver into your intestines. You're also eating a lot of moldy foods or you're eating foods that are very high and simple carbohydrates etc. And or you've had severe stressors that also impact the vagus nerve.

Then you get a lot of dysfunction that's going on in all those areas in the gut. And you can have heart palpitations and you can have SIBO, SIFO symptoms or IBS symptoms, nausea and then impacting the hormones. So activating the vagus nerve and Dr. Nathan spoke to those issues, but that's another important component.

There's all kinds of exercises that we can use that are fun and simple that you can do at home, gargle, gag, hum, sing, thump, a little tapping. Those are all things that can act, laughing, smiling, singing. All can activate the vagus nerve and help to start calming down and put you into what Stephen Porges would say would be the parasympathetic.

**Alex Howard:** Safe and social state.

**Dr. Margaret Christensen:** The safe and social state, however you want to call it, ventral vagal, and get you out of fight or flight, dorsal vagal which is the freeze response, which is a lot of with fibromyalgia and depression is about as being in that freeze response.

So if we activate the vagus nerve from a physiological standpoint, that can be super helpful. And then the third thing that we have to look at, and particularly when we see this with a lot of super sensitive patients. Who, they're allergic to water, they can't take supplements, they have a 100 zillion food allergies, they smell something and they want to pass out. That is their mast cells being triggered because of limbic system dysfunction and vagus nerve dysfunction to release histamine. And so what are called mast cells are a link between the nervous system and the immune system and they're sending signals to both. And when they release that histamine, you can get everything from skin issues, to hives, to again food sensitivities, to migraines, to psychosis and severe psychiatric symptoms are histamine related.

Dr. Gail Clayton and I have a whole program that we've put together really for practitioners of advanced, looking at the immune response of what does toxic mold do to all the different branches of the immune system and response, and that's part of [www.molddetoxdiet](http://www.molddetoxdiet) coming up.

**Alex Howard:** That sounds fascinating. That's really fascinating. So I like that way, actually breaking it down to those three pieces because although they're all interconnected, there's also the individual reality of what's happening with those. So dealing with those pieces is obviously super important, getting clarity in terms of what's happening is super important. When it comes to actually dealing directly with the mold piece. Part of this is are the preparation and the things that are impacted by it. Where does someone start?

**Dr. Margaret Christensen:** That's a really good question. And part of it, again, depends on how severely sick you are and where you are presenting. With [iseai.org](http://iseai.org) we've come up with three different categories. And I'll just put it sort of mild, moderate and severe and severe is broken down into two categories. And the worst category includes the neurological and psychiatric symptoms.

If you are in the mild to moderate category, then we just start you with helping to clean up your diet. I use an autoimmune paleo diet that [molddetoxdiet.com](http://molddetoxdiet.com) is about, teaching people how to do that. And then starting using some binder's and there's lots of different kinds of binder's we can use to help to pull out the toxins.

**Alex Howard:** Sorry just to interrupt you, just to explain that piece a little bit more because binder's are obviously a key piece of this. Someone that doesn't know what a binder is. You sort of said it.

**Dr. Margaret Christensen:** So binders would be things that kind of sop up and soak up the toxins, and common binders that are used are things like activated charcoal, clay, chlorella.

We'll see things even like pectins that come from fruits, there's some fruit pectins or food pectins that we can use. There's things like Zeolite, which comes from volcanic ash, even *Saccharomyces boulardii*, which is a type of probiotic. Those are all things that can be utilized.

Now, again, usually that's where we would start. We start working with somebody's diet and then and starting to get some binder's going. Unfortunately, a lot of people have a lot of gut issues and constipation so we've got to work on that piece and get that moving. But we try to start with healing a little bit of a leaky gut and then getting some binder's in there about the same time.

If you are a little bit more severe than we may need to kind of squelch some of the histamine responses, and use some botanical things like quercetin, that helps to lower the histamine. And then if you were on the really severe categories, then the number one thing you have to do, if you have severe brain symptoms, if you have anything like Parkinson's or M.S. or you're having severe psychiatric issues, all kinds of wonky physiologic things going on, severe pots, you actually have to get out of your situation.

The things that I just spoke of was what we do in the body. But if we identify that it's in your environment, if you're super sick, you need to get out and leave everything behind. And that's a whole nother, talk about trauma, that's a whole nother traumatic piece. And that's a separate piece which is evaluating your home or workspace and deciding what you're going to do. But the things to do in your body, basically, are work on healing the gut, using binder's, up regulating your detoxing mechanisms. And you just kind of keep doing that over and over again, and then we get into repair. And we can use very advanced therapies and then we have to look for, do you also have any chronic infections? Whether they be viral or tick borne infections like Dr. Nathan spoke about Bartonella, Babesia, all of those, and then there are other toxic factors.

So decreasing body burden toxins, starting with diet number one, binders. Those are two things that you can start with at least getting some kind of high quality air filtration system for your house or for your bedroom in particular, where you're sleeping and turn off your damn Wi-Fi at night.

**Alex Howard:** Well, you're not the first person to say that in the Summit. One of the challenges, I just want to go back to the environmental piece, one of the challenges I think there can be just changing the environment can be its own.

Because in a sense, if someone is in an environment that has toxic mold and they're sensitive to that, they're rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic, until they actually deal with getting out of that environment. But that in itself can be quite challenging sometimes.

I mean, I've known patients, whether it's the family home of many years and everyone else seemingly is okay, and the whole family's got to uproot a move. That can be quite challenging to negotiate.

**Dr. Margaret Christensen:** And again, speaking of trauma, that's another huge piece that can be added to it. So I even tell people, depending on where they're living, you just park yourself out in a tent in the backyard, set up a tent or get a RV. I think that you call them caravans in the UK.

**Alex Howard:** That's a less glamorous term. Yeah.

**Dr. Margaret Christensen:** Yeah. And I kind of like that, it's very gypsy. And put it in the backyard and live out there and you have to make sure that that one's OK, too.

Sometimes people will need to go to an apartment that perhaps has concrete floors and just don't bring anything with you. You just kind of get an air mattress and you have to let it off gas for a little while. Don't bring any of your clothes out of your closet and then all of your possessions are put in plastic buckets.

Now, remediation and trying to deal with your home, that's a whole nother ball of wax. Some people aren't sick enough that they have to leave and hopefully that they can stay, but you want to get rid of things like carpet.

Carpet is terrible because it holds all that and a lot of drapes and a lot of the soft things, couches, mattresses, those can be problematic. There are ways to salvage some of those things, but not for all. Again, it depends on where you are on that spectrum of how sick I am. If you have a house that was damaged in a flood or damaged in one of these hurricanes, something like that. And you're sick and you've been sick for a long time, you may not be able to stay there.

So we helped people to discern what's going on. But let me just tell you that doing the limbic system retraining and doing some vagus nerve exercises, can make a huge difference in your tolerability of dealing with stuff. And then if you put some high quality air filtration in. And on the [toxismoldproject.com](http://toxismoldproject.com). I go into great detail about all these different areas and we in fact have Neil Nathan speaking to some of these issues himself. So it's a big ball of wax.

**Alex Howard:** Yeah, I get that. I think one of the things that you just comment on I think is really important here is that. What can happen is after a while, because the trigger to one's symptoms is toxic mold in the environment, that one could almost become phobic of going anywhere near an environment that might have that. And I think what you're speaking to is the importance of, it's not just addressing the environment, although in some cases that is necessary.

**Dr. Margaret Christensen:** Right.

**Alex Howard:** It really is dealing with one's own ability to process and deal with that toxicity. So there's actually something in that which is quite empowering. Because otherwise I think people can get in a mindset where it's almost, and I'm just tracking across a little bit, you touched on Covid-19 earlier that.

One of the things that's almost happening now at the time of recording this in early May, we're just sort of starting to open up to the idea in the UK of coming out of the initial shutdown. And so people are just like, oh, my God, let me out of my house and go and live my life. And others, there's like this new anxiety about social contacts and about the world, which is in some ways almost more dangerous than the virus. And it strikes me here that, there could be at the extreme here almost a fear of going into any new location or place, for the fear of having an exposure.

So how do you help people manage this in a way which is rational and practical, as opposed to an ever spiraling fear, which is often triggered by feeling like no one understands, so one has to ramp up their own hyper arousal around it?

**Dr. Margaret Christensen:** Well, again, fear is extremely contagious and that's part of what we're seeing here. And when you are in a state of huge fear, that in itself suppresses your immune system. So this is where I come back and just over and over and over, and tell people your body has an amazing capacity to heal itself. And again, community and connecting with others and socializing are very, very important pieces of keeping your immune system boosted and shut off the damn news. Quit watching it, quit.

We're being brainwashed with a lot of stuff. I have to tell you, it helps support a lot of certain companies for us to be in fear all of the time. So I want you to question what you're hearing, question what you're thinking, and know that your body, you have sovereignty, your body has the ability to heal itself and your mind has the ability to heal itself.

You're talking to Dr. Joe Dispenza. Oh, my God. I mean, he's like the top of that, Carolyn Myss I mean, I want people to think of this as an incredible opportunity. It's interesting that the Chinese ideogram for crisis combines two symbols. One is of danger and the other is of opportunity.

So we have a massive opportunity here to look at what are all the benefits that have happened because of this. How are people waking up? How are we understanding that our environment is completely impacting our immune system? And if you can take care of your immune system with good food, with good company, with positive thoughts, with laughter, with joy, with doing all the things that you're asking people to do on this Summit.

We can create an entirely new world and instead of focusing on the danger, danger, danger, danger, which keeps us in our limbic system, keeps us in our fight or flight, keeps our vagus nerve, in dorsal ventral and shut down or again, I can't remember all Porges categories, but in that state of fear and it's a choice. It's a choice. So listen to positive, uplifting music. Listen to positive, uplifting podcasts. Watch everything that you can, all the YouTube on flash mobs. Anything that makes you laugh, laughing kitties, all that, do tapping.

Whatever your program is, understand that you have a limbic system retraining program too. Those are empowering things that we can do, it's not this nebulous virus, oh my God it's out there attacking us. And that's a whole nother thing that needs to be debunked and understood, it's not out there getting you. The people who are susceptible or those who have suppressed immune systems and poor quality diet, and in loneliness and isolation.

So connect and learn how to boost your immune system. We can do it.

**Alex Howard:** I love what you're saying, that you really have to approach this from the many, many different facets. It isn't as simple as, I have toxic mold exposure, I have to nuke that in my body, bind, get it out, job done. It's so much more complex than that. I think it's also perhaps worth saying for people that are watching this, I think particularly those that have been affected by mold or Lyme or those kinds of loads. They can feel like they've tried a lot of things that haven't worked. They can feel that it's been a very long and difficult journey to healing.

What's the hope, you've worked with a lot of people, you've seen a lot of people, you've had your own experience, you've been saying a bit about positivity. Just give a little bit of hope to people that it is possible to heal the body.

**Dr. Margaret Christensen:** Well, I tell you what, I was influenced by the work of Victor Frankl many, many, many, many years ago. My father was actually, he was a Catholic who was working for the Polish underground resistance movements when the Nazis invaded Poland.

**Alex Howard:** Wow.

**Dr. Margaret Christensen:** And he was arrested by the Gestapo, went to Auschwitz and so from age 17 to 19, it was an incredibly traumatic situation. And again, what kept people alive and what Victor Frankl writes about is, can you create meaning and purpose out of the suffering that you were going through? And again, when you're in the middle of it, it's very difficult, it's very hard.

But I look at the incredible suffering that I went through that my family's gone through, that's still going through. And I know that the meaning and purpose that I've gotten out is that I completely changed my career. I completely changed what I'm doing. I left the conventional model of thinking. I went into whole systems medicine and I'm able to reach a lot of people to help change. So what is it that you can do? What are you passionate about? If you were feeling at your very best, can you hold a vision of yourself in that light? And this is Joe Dispenza's work this Carolyn Myss's work. What is your body trying to teach you? What is this about? What is this about at a planetary level?

All the suffering that we're going through all together collectively, and having had to have quiet time. So when you're in the midst of the toxic mold experience and you're trying, you feel like crap, and you can't think, and you've got to figure out what am I going to do with all my stuff? And do I got to move in? Oh, my God, I have no money left and all that. And this is where we have to go inside and we have to draw on our inner strengths and we have to connect to something that's bigger than ourselves, and we have to connect to others who've gone through the experience, and that's what's happening now at a global level.

So if we can believe and know inside of us that there is something bigger out there, and that there is meaning and purpose going through this. Then therein lies the hope and remember, on the other side of deep suffering is also immense joy. And sometimes just the simple things in life can bring you the greatest joy, and paying attention to that and getting quiet and looking for the positive.

Be the change you wish to see.

**Alex Howard:** That's beautiful, that's beautiful. I'm mindful of time, but I want to ask, for people that want to find out more about you and your work. What's the best way to do that?

**Dr. Margaret Christensen:** Well, probably the best way to learn about this whole, the whole ball of wax. All the different things we talked about, from psychiatric, to autoimmune, to gut to brain, to hormonal dysfunction and how it might be impacting you is to go to the [toxicmoldproject.com](http://toxicmoldproject.com) that will be running free online in August of 2020.

I'm also at [carpathiacollaborative.com](http://carpathiacollaborative.com) in Dallas, Texas. The Carpathia was the ship that picked up the survivors of the Titanic. So we have the Titanic of Western medicine that's just treating the tip of the iceberg. We're really super good at emergencies, but we're not good at looking at the underlying root causes of what destroyed the Titanic. Again, we have this massive technology now in our medical systems, but it's treating the tip of the iceberg and it's foundering because of that. And so the Carpathia came in and picked up the survivors and said, hey, maybe there's a different way here.

**Alex Howard:** That's great. I love that. That's great. Dr. Margaret Christensen, thank you so much for your time today. I really, really appreciate it.

**Dr. Margaret Christensen:** You're so welcome.