



## Healing anxiety & depression with natural medicine

**Guest: Dr Ameet Aggarwal**

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**[00:00:10] Alex Howard**

Welcome everyone to this interview where I'm super happy to be talking with Dr Ameet Aggarwal. Firstly, Ameet welcome. It's always a pleasure to be talking with you.

**Dr Ameet Aggarwal**

Thank you. Likewise, Alex.

**Alex Howard**

We're going to be exploring, in this interview, the relationship between anxiety, depression, mood issues and trauma with particularly inflammation, how inflammation can trigger and cause these things, but also looking at an integrative natural medicine path to looking at addressing these issues.

And one of the things that I really appreciate about Ameet is his integrative framework and way of understanding these things from a broad perspective. I think sometimes people can get very reductionistic and look at things through just one lens. And I always enjoy it with Ameet when we have our conversations, that we get to come at things from these different places that I know we're both excited by.

Just to give people a bit of background, Dr Ameet Aggarwal was voted one of the top 43 naturopathic doctors worldwide and combines naturopathic and functional medicine, Gestalt Psychotherapy, family constellation therapy, EMDR and homeopathy to help people with trauma, anxiety, depression and chronic disease.

His best selling book, online sessions and online courses have helped thousands of people heal their mind and body together with emotional release techniques and holistic medicine. Dr Ameet also treats poor communities and children living with disabilities in Kenya through his charitable work and sales of his book and online course.

I think a good way of opening this up a little bit would be just to explore a bit around how mood, anxiety, depression, insomnia, this group of things that we're exploring, are connected to trauma. How trauma can lead to some of these different conditions that we can struggle with.

**[00:02:08] Dr Ameet Aggarwal**

Okay. Thanks, Alex. So trauma is what happens inside of us, not necessarily always to us. Inside of us we go through a stress response and that stress response triggers our adrenal glands and other cells in our body to release cortisol and adrenaline.

And the thing is, trauma usually stays unhealed in people. So we have these things stored in our nervous system, in our limbic system. And we are constantly stressed in modern day life. And we also have stress from unhealed trauma. So the present day stress and the stress from unhealed trauma, even though it's not in your conscious memory or in your conscious mind, is continuously triggering your adrenal glands either into the fight, flight or freeze response. Whatever it is, your adrenal glands are pushed to make more cortisol, more adrenaline over time. And over time, they eventually burn out.

And when they burn out your cortisol levels go out of balance. And when that happens all your brain chemicals, serotonin, dopamine, GABA, melatonin, all those start to go down, leading to anxiety and depression. That's one angle of how trauma affects anxiety, depression and other mood disorders.

**Alex Howard**

And I think part of what's important about that is that people can have the same initial impact in their body, but different people. Some people may primarily experience it as low moods, as depression, and others are seemingly the opposite. Which is this very heightened anxious, wired state.

**Dr Ameet Aggarwal**

Yes. And this is because of the conditioning we have during childhood, usually. And the state of your physiology of your body. How much inflammation you have, the health of your liver, the foods you eat, which we'll talk about later, on how to heal your gut, your liver, and your adrenal system to minimize these overreactions.

But the priming of your nervous system during childhood, did you see a lot of conflict? Was it unsafe so you were triggered into anxiety? So now, as an adult, when you experience trauma, that anxiety response is triggered because that's your conditioning to stress. Versus maybe you were abandoned and neglected by your mother and it wasn't so much anxiety, but depression, loneliness, sense of lack of support and a low mood. And so when you're faced with stress those resources get triggered.

In a way, the way we compensate as children almost becomes a resource when we're stressed out as adults so we go back to those places. So I might slip into more depression.

For example, I grew up in boarding school and I was bullied and terrified all the time. And my solace was literally sitting in the Church, in the Chapel and praying to God, but with tears in my eyes all the time. And only recently did I realize my association with God was with sadness and with tears all the time, like looking for pity or something. And other people have other relationships with God, rejoicing, strength, confidence. So in a way, my resource with God was almost created through depression and loneliness of being abandoned by my parents.

So depending on the priming we have different responses, one.

What trauma also does, it throws off your vagus nerve. The vagus nerve is a beautiful nerve that goes right through your body. And research is showing that it actually releases chemicals, cytokines into

your gut, your liver, etc. And these chemicals, these cytokines, affect the health of your gut, and they affect the bacteria in your gut. And now we know that most of your serotonin and GABA and other neurotransmitters are actually produced in your gut.

**[00:06:03]**

So if you have a lot of trauma that affects your vagus nerve and suddenly you're not releasing the right kind of cytokines, your microbiome, your gut is going to become unhealthy. So you're not going to produce the right kind of brain chemicals or neurotransmitters all the time, which can also lead to anxiety and depression.

**Alex Howard**

I think one of the points that's really interesting that you're making here as well is that people can get very caught up in trying to explain their symptoms, anxiety, depression, insomnia whatever it may be, in the current circumstance of their life.

So they'll say, well, I'm anxious because I've got loads of pressure at work or I'm depressed because I've ended a relationship and I feel alone. And I think what's really important in what you're saying is that a lot of the foundations to this, a lot of the origins of this, are set up long before this current circumstance that someone's dealing with.

**Dr Ameet Aggarwal**

Absolutely. We're literally reliving our pain from the past, combined with, of course, our interpretation of what's happening based on society's view on what's happening to us.

So if my girlfriend cheats on me, for example, I might feel less of a man, but am I less of a man or is it because of conditioning of what it means to be cheated on in certain communities and societies? A combination of those will trigger a response and an outlook.

**Alex Howard**

Yes. And of course it's not, I think what's also really important to emphasize here, I think people are often aware of psychological patterning being set up in childhood. But I think people often don't realize as much the physiological patterning that gets us set up in childhood.

**Dr Ameet Aggarwal**

If you are very stressed as a child then your nervous system is very fragile, one. And when your nervous system is very fragile and you're releasing all this cortisol, they've shown that cortisol actually makes your gut more leaky, like the junctions, the cells stick less tightly together in your gut. And that means that toxins can easily go into your bloodstream and cause inflammation everywhere, leading cause for asthma, arthritis, a lot of chronic conditions, as well as brain chemical imbalances.

Physiologically, because of stress and trauma during childhood, you might be more vulnerable to leaky gut or liver toxicity, which we'll talk about soon. And that will create hormonal imbalances, inflammatory imbalances, skin issues and also brain chemical imbalances. So some people might find it harder to get out of depression and anxiety no matter how much therapy they go through because they haven't healed their physiology as well. Their physiology is suffering, one, from the trauma from childhood, but also because of the foods they're eating. If you're eating too many burgers and chips

and too much gluten and dairy, if you're sensitive to it, you're damaging your gut lining. And when you damage your gut lining, like I said, then you have holes in the gut and then toxins go everywhere, causing inflammation, causing mood disturbances as well.

**[00:09:10]**

So anxiety and depression and insomnia is a result of trauma as well as the foods you eat, as well as the toxins in your liver, and, of course, all the medications you might be taking that are damaging your gut and causing other imbalances in your body.

**Alex Howard**

In a sense, what you're describing is that each of these different variables is reducing one's capacity to meet the demands of their life. And then an event or a circumstance happens and that tips us over the edge, or it's like the final straw that breaks the camel's back. But actually it's all of these other ingredients that we need to work with to grow one's resilience and one's capacity to meet the challenges of that life.

**Dr Ameet Aggarwal**

Yes. Absolutely Alex. The more we heal childhood wounds, for example, and I'll talk about family constellations and healing ancestral wounds, but the more we heal childhood wounds, the more resilient we get to stress. Because when we're faced with stress now, that angry boss or that strange looking mail, our childhood memories and vulnerabilities are less triggered because we have healed those wounds. So we are able to walk in this world with more confidence, and we don't collapse as much when we get triggered. In fact, there's less triggering going on.

And when you're triggered less, one, that's called emotional resilience. Number two, your adrenal glands don't go into the fight or flight response as strongly as they were. So you don't burn out because of adrenal fatigue as often as you used to. And when you don't burn out with adrenal fatigue, then your cortisol levels are more into balance. Therefore, your brain chemicals are more in balance and therefore you have less anxiety, depression and insomnia.

**Alex Howard**

Yes. And you touched on it a little bit as you were talking about the liver and leaky gut and so on, but let's just open up a bit more the role of inflammation in trauma.

**Dr Ameet Aggarwal**

So inflammation is a two sided coin. They're showing that trauma actually creates inflammation. Bizarrely. Trauma, one, it shuts down your mitochondria and ATP and energy production cells. But trauma actually causes your body to release certain inflammatory cytokines. And then that triggers a whole cascade of cortisol overproduction as well as neurodegeneration. Because if you have too much inflammation in your brain, for example, you cannot make new brain connections. Your ability of neuroplasticity goes down, so your memory starts fading or you get foggy thinking that's, one, because of the rewiring, but two, because of the inflammatory response created by trauma.

The other thing is that if you are inflamed already from a poor diet and a toxic liver, then you have all these brain chemicals going out of balance. And you also have hormonal imbalances. And

inflammation also causes a cortisol imbalance which affects your thyroid levels. So you've got low brain chemicals, low thyroid levels. So your mood is already going to be low.

**[00:12:14]**

When your mood is low you're going to have negative thinking, self criticism, inability to be resilient or to get over your mood or anxiety and depression. And then suddenly you're faced with a trauma. Either your dad hits your mom or you break up with a partner or financial stress, whatever may happen. The inflammation has left you vulnerable to a mood disorder. Now you add trauma on top of that, you slip deep down into depression, anxiety even worse.

And then because inflammation reduces your brain's ability to rewire itself, you'll go for therapy, all these different wonderful therapies out there, but if you're over inflamed it's very hard for your brain to rewire itself and get the best out of therapy. So in my opinion, it's harder to heal trauma if you're over inflamed. So healing your gut and your liver and eating the right foods, which we'll talk about, I think is primary in your journey of healing trauma as well.

**Alex Howard**

And there's also, I think, a vicious circle that people get into. the lower one's mood or the higher one's anxiety or the less one sleeps, the more likely they are to choose unhealthy and unhelpful eating habits and exercise habits. So what can happen is one becomes their own worst enemy in the choices they make.

**Dr Ameet Aggarwal**

Yeah, because depression and low serotonin makes us crave carbohydrates and alcohol and smoking. And so most carbohydrates are unhealthy, the ones that we snack on, like the crisps and the bread and the pastries and all those comfort foods.

**Alex Howard**

All the good stuff.

**Dr Ameet Aggarwal**

All the good stuff. I know, I was thinking the other day that I live in a very strange world because I treat with homeopathy, which are these little pills which have almost nothing in them, and they have an amazing effect. And all the most delicious foods are terrible for me. So I woke up on the wrong side of the bed one day. But all these foods, they trigger more and more inflammation which ruins our mood. So yes, you're right. It is a vicious cycle.

**Alex Howard**

Shall we start to open up a little bit some of the pieces that we can then start to do to address this? I think the best starting point is when you're working with someone one on one, someone comes in and there's inflammation, there's some trauma, where do you start in that? We'll come into some of the specific pieces, but how does your thinking as a practitioner work in terms of organizing that information?

**[00:14:47] Dr Ameet Aggarwal**

So I look at priorities first, the client is coming in with acute anxiety, is there a recent trauma that they really need therapy and to get over with and calm the nervous system down? Immediately I'll do some EMDR or gestalt or maybe family constellations, some form of psychotherapy. And at the same time I find that they have chronic depression, they're burnt out. I look at the history. Is there a lot of trauma history? Are they working in Somalia, for example, or some high stress, high conflict area? Then I know they're completely burnt out.

And what's their diet like? Are they showing signs of constipation? So I've covered this all on my website in a free online course. People can watch how to heal the liver, the gut, everything, but I'm going to explain as best as I can here.

If they have constipation, for example, I know their liver is not working because there's not enough bile flowing. Then, are their joints aching? Do they have skin rashes? All these signs of inflammation, dark circles, etc.

So I know, okay, their diet is horrible and they have signs of poor digestion, etc, they likely have leaky gut. Let's also heal the gut and detoxify the liver. Most people make a mistake of ignoring their liver. So whenever you're healing the gut with probiotics, cleaning up your diet, you have to heal your liver, Alex, because your liver is the master organ. It controls your hormones, bile production and the bile actually affects your microbiome, the good bacteria. And so people are stuffing themselves with probiotics all the time and change their diet, but they don't do anything about the liver, they still get the gas, bloating, constipation and their symptoms don't improve.

So I'll give them that to take during the week and then they'll do the therapy. When I know their body is less inflamed and less toxic I'll introduce adrenal supplements. Because we've got to nurse those adrenal glands back into balance. Most people are walking around with burnout nowadays. A combination of childhood trauma, modern day stress, lights on in the middle of the night, cell phone use all the time, all these demands. Your adrenal glands are working over time. So most people have adrenal fatigue.

And so what happens is when you rebuild the adrenal glands with either Rhodiola or Ashwagandha, I test it energetically, then that emotional resilience comes back. But some people rely on adrenal supplements without healing their gut and their liver, big mistake. Because you create too much heat in the system. So then you break out into skin rashes or you don't feel so good, your digestion is off. So always make sure your gut and your liver are healed appropriately before slamming in the adrenal support.

And as I'm doing that I have in mind what has traumatized the person. To help them on their journey while they're not in the session with me doing psychotherapy, I'll often give them a homeopathic remedy as well to heal that stress and trauma. Because homeopathy can actually heal trauma from the past. I've used it multiple times and the results are phenomenal.

Ignatia amara, for example, is a great remedy for a recent breakup where there's a lot of tearing, crying, a sense of a lump in the throat, etc. Natrum muriaticum, for example, another homeopathic remedy, is when there's withdrawal, resentment, you've lost a loved one and you lose trust. There's so many. Aurum has all that guilt and suicidal thoughts, for example, that's homeopathic gold.

And so by understanding the picture of the person and their response in the session, I can give them remedies, low dose remedies to use at home so that they're almost getting psychotherapy in a pill.

The beauty of homeopathy is it doesn't suppress symptoms, never. It releases the energetic confusion and entanglements a person has post trauma. That's why homeopathy works so well.

**[00:18:32] Alex Howard**

In a sense, what you're doing is you're working on multiple levels at once. You're working on a nutritional therapy level, on an energetic level and on a psychotherapeutic level.

To break each of those down a little bit more. If we look on the psychology side, you're making decisions between whether you're doing a more family constellations approach or using EMDR or using gestalt, how are you deciding which pathway to go with people?

**Dr Ameet Aggarwal**

It comes at the moment to be honest. Gestalt is infused in everything I do. You're trained that way, so the way you look at a client and the language you use is automatically therapeutic. If there's an immediate trauma, sometimes gestalt is too intense for people, they just need simple tapping or EMDR. I'll just get them to do EMDR, I will get them to think about the sensations.

I'm also studying somatic experiencing, so I'm combining the two. So I'll get them to think of a positive, safe place first. Tap it or get them to move their eyes left and right so that they ground that safe feeling, that resource in their body. Then I'll say, okay, let's look at that painful time. What are the negative thoughts you have with that? What is the physical sensation during that stressful time? Then I'll do the eye movement or the tapping to let the nervous system discharge that.

And at the same time, if I know that their symptoms are unexplained, like they have a strange anxiety from a long time ago, their life is not going well, I smell a family entanglement right away. It's either, okay, what happened to your mother? Was she abandoned by her father? Yes. You seem to be carrying an unexplained grief all the time.

And in family constellations we see that people carry the grief and the traumas of their ancestors. So I'll ask the right questions, and they'll be like, yeah, my mom was chronically sad and she shared her feelings with me. I'll be like, great. Now talk to your mom and say, mom, with all due respect, I leave this with you. And I know you're the big one, and you can carry this. If you can let me be the child to you so that I can feel what life has in store for me. And I really am still your daughter or your son, knowing that you are capable of handling your grief with your own father, I will feel a better connection with you, mom.

**Alex Howard**

One of the things you're speaking to here that I think is very important and I think one of the great offerings of family constellations is this recognition that we each have our place within a system and that place that we have has different needs and different responsibilities that come with it.

And so often, what can happen, as you're speaking to, is children can become the parents and they can take on more impacts and more trauma as a result of that.

### **[00:21:18] Dr Ameet Aggarwal**

Yeah, a lot of people confuse that. They take on the parenting role if one of the parents is being neglected. We often have children side with the victim's parents. And then we also neglect the other source of our life, which is maybe the father or the mother.

So two things are happening, Alex, one is we are parenting a parent, which we're coming out of role, like you're saying, and that will create confusion in our life, in our nervous system. The other thing we're doing is we're rejecting one of our sources of life, the other parent. That creates weakness in your nervous system, that creates self doubt, anger. And you don't know why. But it's really because you've been rejecting the father for abusing your mother. And so you're angry at him, but then you block off your own breathing.

Family consolation is wonderful in that way. The other thing we do in family constellations is acknowledge unborn or miscarried or aborted children that never get acknowledged. Or people who were murdered in the war or the black sheep of the family who left or who was excluded from the family. In family constellations, we see when these people are ignored, somehow symptoms show up in the family, in me, and you, my brother, my sister, that represents the trauma of this person who is neglected.

### **Alex Howard**

One of my discoveries when I first did family constellations is that the biggest impact in my life, at least psychologically in terms of psychological damage, had been my father who'd been absent. And the belief was because he wasn't there, there wasn't any impact. And the realization was the opposite. Because he wasn't there, there was an enormous impact.

And I think sometimes it's hard for us to recognize how these different dynamics, these different ingredients of our family system have actually had an enormous impact on shaping us psychologically. But also, as you're speaking to, shaping us physiologically.

### **Dr Ameet Aggarwal**

You hit the nail on the head, Alex. I see a lot of people not realizing they have an issue because, like you said, you didn't realize it had an impact on you until you're faced with the therapy, and you're like, oh, my gosh, wow. This is how it feels to feel my father's presence or to know that I have another source of life. This is what it feels like to be including someone. So you get a paradigm shift and you realize this is what energy feels like, this is what health feels like.

So a lot of people think they've never had trauma in their life or they're living a normal life, but yet they're disappointed. Nothing is going right for them. And when they're faced with a really good therapy session and they disentangle or embrace their missing parent, or acknowledge that aborted child, or find their place as second born in the system instead of the first because they recognize the aborted child before them, suddenly they find the right place. It's like, wow, I really get my path in life. I really see where I'm coming from.

And that is so refreshing for a client. And suddenly everything starts working better in their life. One, their health improves. I've seen, not thousands, but a lot of people with physiological issues, stomach ulcers, skin issues, etc, when we heal the family entanglement or the trauma from the past, the physical symptoms go away. In fact, I'm tending towards healing most chronic diseases now using family constellations and trauma therapy.



**[00:24:43] Alex Howard**

I think what's important to highlight here as well is we were talking a bit earlier around addressing physiological pieces to impact how we feel psycho-emotionally. What we're saying here is also working on things psycho-emotionally is also then impacting what's happening physiologically.

**Dr Ameet Aggarwal**

Yeah. A lot of the root causes are sometimes psycho-emotional. How many times have we had a client come in to the visit with a skin issue or an ulcer or some other pain, and then you're asking them, okay, what happened the year before or a few months before? Mom left us, or sister died, or something happened. Great. And so the root cause is the emotional event.

So if you just focus on supplements and physical therapies they'll be on supplements all their life. When you heal the root cause, the emotional event, get them to really feel the sadness, the grief, the crying out, the longing for connection. And really acknowledge that in the nervous system and feel safe about that acknowledgement. Then their defenses are less in the nervous system. We let go of something called armor, body armoring.

And when we relax that way in our nervous system, our electricity in our nervous system starts to flow better. Our electricity in our cells starts to flow better. So we detoxify better. We release the right kind of chemicals between the cells. They communicate better. And my belief is that it reduces the risk of cancers and other chronic diseases.

**Alex Howard**

Do you find that sometimes when people come in with clear physical complaints, someone's coming in because they have anxiety, for example, or depression or insomnia. And they're coming to you because you're a naturopathic doctor and they don't want to do a mainstream, take beta blockers or benzodiazepines, whatever it may be that they would get in a more traditional pathway. But they want the natural equivalent. They want you to give them a supplement or a medicine that's going to fix it. And then suddenly you start talking about their ancestors and their family of origin. And how do you navigate that with people?

**Dr Ameet Aggarwal**

Well, if I see resistance to that I'll always start with the biological explanation. You have a gut, it's a nice lining kept healthy by good bacteria, good food. It gets damaged, you get inflammation, it causes the brain chemical imbalance, and the inflammation also stresses your liver, and you get this indigestion. And usually when I'm describing it I'm touching upon all the symptoms that they're coming in with.

And then I'll talk about the mood disturbances. And I'll say, also trauma and stress affect the mood. I'll talk about the adrenal glands and how trauma wipes out the adrenal glands leading to anxiety and depression. So they're getting a taste of how trauma is affecting them, as well as the importance of supplements.

So in a way, when they hear one truth and they can resonate with that truth, introducing something in the sandwich in that truth is digestible to them. No pun intended.

**[00:27:48]**

And then I will feel it. So we become very sensitive as therapists. So I'll ask them to say a sentence like, you know what? I want you to try this sentence. Don't think much about it. Don't swallow it. Just say, dear Mom, I was really disappointed and sad, and I've missed you a lot, and I didn't know what to do. I'll get them to say a sentence that really connects to their vulnerability. And then they'll be like, wow, what's happening? The tears will come up or it'll touch a nerve. And I'll say, great, now breathe. Just stay with that feeling. Don't judge it. Stay with it and just ride with it and notice how you feel being seen.

Because being knowledgeable is half the therapy. When we're seen in our vulnerable place, huge relief happens for everybody, if it's done in a safe way, of course. And when they get that emotional support of feeling seen in their vulnerability, they're willing to go further.

### **Alex Howard**

There's something about what I'm hearing you say which is partly the educational piece of really helping them become active in their understanding of what's happening. And then I really like what you're saying around, I think it's very true, people will drop their defensiveness and their resistance when they feel you see them. And there's something that I think is very powerful about that. That somehow it becomes almost impossible to defend because it's just so true.

### **Dr Ameet Aggarwal**

Yeah. Our power lies in truth. When we're seen, we drop the armor. And then, I believe that there's an automatic love or trust. And once you have trust with someone, it's hard to lie again. And that's where the real deep work happens then. Because, automatically, when the guarding stops, the heart opens and all those wounds are willing to be seen again to go deeper and deeper.

### **Alex Howard**

And you were saying around using homeopathy as one of the tools between sessions, I'm also wondering about practical homework. Obviously, there's the work that you're doing with people within the sessions but how important do you see what they do between sessions as a way of integrating and deepening that?

### **Dr Ameet Aggarwal**

So in my online course I have exercises they can do. And that comes with a session they book. Those exercises are their journal exercises, tapping exercises or even positive affirmations, like grounding in a positive memory. Because if somebody doesn't have any resources they're always stressed and traumatized and they're so focused on what's wrong in their life.

In the session I might have them revisit safe places in their memory, in their childhood. And we'll do some tapping. So the nervous system really gets used to it. So that when you go back in your own life back home and I'll say, okay, for 5 minutes or 3 minutes just go to that place and tap again. Tapping reconnects our nervous system to what our mind is doing. So focus on that safe place you had during childhood and just tap.

Over time what happens is the brain becomes familiar with safety. And the more often you go back to safety, the less indulgent our mind gets in analyzing or ruminating on the trauma. Sometimes

rumination is because there's no resource available to make us feel comfortable, so we're always busy trying to solve the issue. So if you give a person a chance, a visceral, a somatic experience of feeling safe and grounded in a safe memory, the nervous system will be less prone to rumination and trying to problem solve.

### **[00:31:39] Alex Howard**

That's powerful. And there's something about that as well when thinking about it, often when people have anxiety or insomnia that there's an absence of that grounding, an absence of that safe place to land back into. And I think that I'm sure they are very powerful in terms of, not just the deeper healing, but also the day-to-day managing of symptoms.

### **Dr Ameet Aggarwal**

And that's why I love somatic experiencing. It really focuses on grounding in those safe places, as well as dealing with trauma.

### **Alex Howard**

Someone that's watching this and listening to this that's really resonating with, how I think about it, different jigsaw pieces, but is perhaps feeling a little overwhelmed of, well, where do I start? All I know is that I feel anxious, I feel depressed and I can't sleep. Like all the pieces that we're talking to. Where are some of the really practical, simple pieces that people can start doing with themselves?

### **Dr Ameet Aggarwal**

One is looking at your diet. Are you anxious or fatigued after eating certain foods? Become aware of the effects of gluten or dairy. Does that change your mood? Then be really honest with yourself. How many traumas have you had in your life? What are you going through right now? And rather than saying, gosh, I should be able to deal with this. I'm a grown up. I'm a man. I'm a woman. I'm a successful person. Just know that you were a child at one point, and your nervous system might not have got the right resources growing up.

So really be compassionate, forgiving yourself. In fact, get curious about your symptoms that you're going through rather than blocking them. Because curiosity in your symptoms actually leads you to that memory that created the pain in the first place.

I see it all the time. Whenever I'm going through a crisis, I'll sit within and I'll exaggerate the anxiety or exaggerate the depression. And suddenly it's like, gosh, I'm still missing my mom when I was in boarding school. I'm looking for her food or something. And then I'll allow that memory to take place and allow my adult self to also meet that memory. And I'll never try to correct it. I'll just stay with the feeling and let it go through me. And suddenly my intelligence, my nervous system, my frontal cortex in my brain will assimilate the two parts, and I'll be less reactive to that emotion.

So getting curious about your symptoms as well. Looking at your diet, of course, understanding what burnout is.

**[00:34:15] Alex Howard**

Sorry to interrupt you, but also just wanting to respond to what you're saying about getting curious. I really like the emphasis you're placing on the wisdom of one's symptoms and the wisdom of one's body that actually it's not just something that's broken, but there's information there.

**Dr Ameet Aggarwal**

We are biologically purposeful. And even somatically or psychologically purposeful. Our anxiety is trying to get us out of danger. Our depression is a sign that, gosh, I'm not feeling supported enough or there's inflammation going on in my brain.

So it doesn't mean that there's something broken in you. It's like you're on a journey to find out what needs to be healed. But if you live in a world of duality, what needs to be healed means something is broken. No. Try not to think in opposites. Just think, I'm on a journey and I need support, the right kind of support. And really be forgiving with yourself and patient with yourself.

Because in a way symptoms are better than not knowing what's going on. And suddenly, 10 years down the road you wake up with a cyst or with cancer or something like that. But the more you feel symptoms and you address them, the faster you heal in the future.

**Alex Howard**

It's almost like placing value on the system being sensitive. I know sometimes people that have very sensitive systems feel frustrated by that. And it's like, I just wish I wasn't so sensitive. But the difference is that they're actually getting that information moment to moment, day to day, as opposed to someone that's just, either they're just shut down or their system isn't very highly tuned and sensitive. Which, as you say, then at the point they actually get the message, it's already far too late to do something corrective about it.

**Dr Ameet Aggarwal**

Yeah. I used to get suicidal thoughts all the time, and it was my way of exiting because the pain of living was too much. And many people get this. I still get it sometimes. And what happens is now I actually sit with that thought and say, gosh, what am I responding to? Is it an absence of mom or dad, or is it an absence of support and feeling isolated from the community? For example, going back to my example of boarding school, I felt like I didn't belong with the rest of the boys, for example. And not belonging is one of the biggest traumas somebody can experience.

**Alex Howard**

It's incredibly painful. Yeah.

**Dr Ameet Aggarwal**

Incredibly. In fact, in family constellations most of our compensations are a desire to belong. We want to belong to the system where father is abusive to mom so we make sure that we're not happy and we get an abusive partner in order to remain belonging. It's bizarre, but we always want to belong. So the feeling of not belonging or being excluded can bring up a strong desire of death and depression. So realizing that some of your symptoms might be because you're not feeling connected and you're needing to belong, address the desire to belong.

**[00:37:30] Alex Howard**

That's powerful.

I'm mindful of time. There's always so many different places we could go at this point, but I think that's actually quite a sweet place to wrap up.

For people who want to find out more about you and your work, what's the best way for them to do that?

**Dr Ameet Aggarwal**

Well, there's free videos explaining how to heal your gut, liver, and there's a beautiful emotional healing exercise on [drameet.com](http://drameet.com)

There's an online course and my book is there as well. That helps me do my community work. So feel free to purchase that and support my work. Shoot me an email if you have any questions as well. Everything's on the website.

**Alex Howard**

Thank you, Ameet. It's always a pleasure. Thank you so much for your time today. I really appreciate it.

**Dr Ameet Aggarwal**

Thank you.