



Conscious Life presents

# TRAUMA SUPER CONFERENCE

## The trauma of illness

**Guest: Dr Nafysa Parpia**

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### **[00:00:10] Meagen Gibson**

Hello, and welcome to this interview. I'm Meagen Gibson, co-host of the Trauma Super Conference.

Today, I'm delighted to be speaking with Dr Nafysa Parpia, a board certified naturopathic doctor who has spent the last decade treating patients with chronic complex illnesses.

She specializes in tick-borne illnesses, environmentally acquired illness, mold, mycotoxin illness, autoimmunity, fibromyalgia and ME/CFS. She uses cutting edge laboratory tests and deep intuition applied to the full range of scientific data to create comprehensive treatment plans that are highly personalized.

Dr Nafysa Parpia, thank you so much for being with us today.

### **Dr Nafysa Parpia**

Thank you so much for having me here, and thank you for doing this work. I think it's such an important summit. I'm just so pleased to be here.

### **Meagen Gibson**

Wonderful. So I want to talk to you about who your typical patients are. We talked a little bit about who you treat, but I want to talk about your patients a little bit.

### **Dr Nafysa Parpia**

Yes. So they have complex multi system illnesses. So typically they have tick-borne diseases, but along with that, they've got concurrent infections, parasites, viruses, mold, all with inflammation that's causing secondary illnesses like Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, Fibromyalgia, Mast Cell Activation Syndrome, Long Haul Syndrome, I'm seeing a lot of that.

And then they have these symptoms that are mysterious. They have a lot of brain fog, pain in their bodies. It could be in their joints and their muscles, nervous system dysregulation. They have a lot of headaches, GI issues, fatigue.

**[00:01:41]**

So then they've got these mystery symptoms, they've had them for at least six months, but usually many years and they've been undiagnosed. So then this itself can induce PTSD.

The symptoms alone, the lack of diagnoses, the lack of validation when they're told by their doctors there's nothing wrong with you. Your labs are normal, you're just depressed, and it's only because you have poor sleep.

Or they're told by family members, friends, pull it together, you're lazy or some of them are told they're crazy or they're isolated by family and friends, ignored by them.

Also, they don't have enough energy to socialize, so their symptoms are often not recognized or they're given the waste basket diagnosis and by that, I'm talking about when a doctor says, you have symptoms, but we don't know what that means.

And then they get a diagnosis like Chronic Fatigue Syndrome or Fibro, even autoimmune conditions. Here's a label to put on you, but we don't know why that is.

Here's some prednisone, or here's some antidepressant and then they're left feeling invalidated by family, friends, doctors.

Or if they're validated and supported by family, they've not been given the appropriate diagnoses and treatment.

So there's trauma in this that I want to acknowledge, the trauma of debilitating symptoms, the trauma of being ignored by the medical establishment, the trauma of not being believed.

I think this is the biggest one. And being shamed by family and friends for just not trying hard enough or not getting it together is trauma of isolation.

### **Meagen Gibson**

Absolutely. Well said. Gosh, I'm not even sure I have anything to add to that, just because it's such a comprehensive summary of how chronic illness and pain you spoke to pain.

I mean, pain meds get such a bad rap and people, pain relief seekers and things like that but that's one of the main methodologies of relief for people who can't get help and can't get a diagnosis.

That's the first line of defense in a lot of circles of medical care unfortunately, isn't it?

### **Dr Nafysa Parpia**

Right, they're given the antidepressant and they're told, this is it. You're just depressed. They take it but often those antidepressants don't work or they backfire because they're not getting at the root cause. Sometimes antidepressant is needed, I'm not going to invalidate that but often not.

**[00:04:12] Meagen Gibson**

And often won't cause more harm. We know, obviously, of some cases where they do, so they might not cause more harm but they won't actually help the root cause of what's going on with all of these symptoms. Right?

**Dr Nafysa Parpia**

Right, exactly.

**Meagen Gibson**

We can't cure Lyme disease with antidepressants, unfortunately.

**Dr Nafysa Parpia**

Right, but it's tried all the time.

**Meagen Gibson**

So how does stress exacerbate illness?

**Dr Nafysa Parpia**

So a lot of my patients have also had trauma previous to getting sick. They've had adverse childhood events.

And then in susceptible individuals, this can set the stage for being sensitive to further traumas. And then the inflammation from chronic illness, that gets their body to be more susceptible to stress.

Because inflammation just predisposes you to increased anxiety. So when the brain is inflamed, they get more anxious. Inflammation is another way of saying danger in your system. So the inflammation will change how your mitochondria work, they won't be producing as much energy.

So then when you're sick, the mitochondria produce less energy, and other parts of the cell produce energy by burning sugar instead.

Energy metabolism bypasses the mitochondria, and it's not efficient, and it produces more cellular stress.

So the idea is that being anxious, being in PTSD, is a metabolic problem, not just a psychological problem. You've got both happening at the same time, but the more low energy you have.

If those pathways to anxiety were laid down early in life, or if they were reinforced, often they are in my patients then you're going to have a tendency to get stuck in anxiety.

So, for example, the more the more times you do something, the easier it is to do, right? Like blowing up a balloon. The first time you blow up a balloon, it's hard to do. The 10th time you blow up that same balloon, it's easier and so those patterns in the immune system and those patterns in the mitochondria, those mental patterns, they're easy to access again.

**[00:06:19]**

So how your body reacts to stress, there's a large genetic component to that. It's modifiable, but not totally fixable.

So I think about a weightlifter, some people will lift weights, they'll build muscle, but they don't look big, they're strong, but they don't look big and someone else looks huge. That's the genetic component.

So then the tendency to anxiety, there's a genetic component similar to that. So then the more anxiety provoking moments in your life, if you put that on top of a genetic predisposition, you're going to build the molecular structure to have high anxiety.

So it makes people with a mild tendency to anxiety, they can tolerate it more, they have less to overcome. But it's like we can pull ourselves up by our bootstraps, but it depends on what the straps are made of, right?

So you could have handcrafted in leather bootstraps or canvas ones. So if you're somebody who's naturally wired that way, it's in the biochemistry itself and what's really important here is it's not the person's fault.

It's the genetic tendency you're born with that gets expressed through the inflammation from being sick and I think that that's what's so important.

It's not your fault if you're sick and you are depressed and you have anxiety. A lot of times it's the genes, it's the metabolism that's causing the genes to express, it's just amplifying it.

### **Meagen Gibson**

And I'm sure it's an incredibly overwhelming experience for patients right. Because there are so many factors involved and they have been so gaslit by so many people in their lives, that to begin to piece that apart or even remotely understand all the factors involved and where to start must be super overwhelming and where someone like you comes in.

### **Dr Nafysa Parpia**

It can be very overwhelming for people. We have to work with them on so many different layers. Very often I can't even begin to treat their chronic infections until we begin to work on the nervous system, calming it down or having them meditate, having them have healing work, trauma work, even before we can treat the infections. But it's done simultaneously, usually.

### **Meagen Gibson**

Yeah and I know that you mentioned, obviously you've mentioned inflammation several times but inflammation in relation specifically to mental illness and not necessarily like diagnosed conditions, but things like anxiety, depression, things that don't have to be chronic and how exacerbating inflammation can be.

**[00:08:55]**

And it's kind of like a feedback loop, right, where inflammation can cause an increase in mental health issues and then mental health issues can cause an increase in cortisol, which increases the stress and it's just a constant kind of feedback loop of dysfunction, if you will.

**Dr Nafysa Parpia**

Right, exactly that and I love how you worded that, because it is a feedback loop. It's the circle and where we cut that circle is different in each person.

And so we want to be able to point to one thing, like A cause B, B cause C. But it's not like that, it's more an ecological model where it's different for each person.

**Meagen Gibson**

Yeah, I'm so glad you said that, because I can imagine if you're a single parent with a child with cancer and you've got a full time job asking you to manage stress in order to stop this feedback loop is unattainable at this moment in these conditions. Right.

And so we've got to look for somewhere else to cut that loop and get some support so that they can be on their healing journey.

**Dr Nafysa Parpia**

Right. It's different for each person, absolutely. That single mom with a child who has cancer, there's no way we can ask her to meditate. She doesn't have the time. We have to come in and help her in other ways.

**Meagen Gibson**

Absolutely. So you talked a little bit about this kind of mix of symptoms and how we stop this loop. I know that you've shared about how illnesses can cross boundaries which a lot of people might not know and I know is relatively recent in the science and research.

So gut and brain and things like microglia and all of that, which I find absolutely fascinating.

And so often your patients have had traumas where their boundaries are also crossed. So can you share more about this?

**Dr Nafysa Parpia**

Yes. So my patients have multisystemic illnesses. So they have illnesses, they have infections or inflammation from infections that have now been treated but the inflammation is still there or the immune dysregulation is still there.

It affects the nervous system, it affects the gut, it affects the brain, it affects the musculoskeletal system. What I've noticed about my patients, I've been working with patients like this for the past eleven years.

**[00:11:24]**

I've noticed some similarities here, they're highly sensitive beings. So this is both their superpower, but can also be their Achilles heel.

So for example, they know how to read the hearts or the minds of people. They understand the mysteries of human nature or some of them even understand the divine mysteries.

Now with that sensitivity as their superpower. It's not everybody, but many, many of my patients, say 80% of my patients, it's a lot. So they're more sensitive also to the tragedies of the world, the oppression of the world, the political state and the world at large.

They can feel this more than the person next to them, even personally then so they sense the world at large that way.

But then personally, if somebody slights them or insults them they're going to feel that more, they take that in more than the next person. So now a lot of them, their boundaries have been violated in their life.

I see this over and over again. I see a lot of my patients have had abuse or neglect by their parents when they've been growing up. A lot of alcoholism in the family. It's very, very common in my patients and they're highly sensitive to that so their personal boundaries have been crossed very, very often in their lives.

Then what happens? We talked about before on a biochemical level that stress amps up their immune dysregulation and their nervous system dysregulation.

They're sensitive and they're defended at the same time. So they have their superpower of feeling the things that most people don't. Then simultaneously their bodies are responding to it.

So interestingly, a reflection happens. This is what I've observed. There's no proof of this, no one's written about it but it's just what I've seen, right?

So they know how to cross the boundaries, feeling other people, feeling what is magical in the world. They have a clairvoyance if you will, most of them know it.

Their family members know it. Then they've had their boundaries violated in abusive situations in childhood or adulthood. And now they have infections or toxins that have crossed their boundaries, the gut, the nervous system, the musculoskeletal system.

So their boundaries are crossed and that's their Achilles heel. Yet there are superpowers to know, the hearts and minds of other people and their clairvoyance.

So how do they access their superpower? By going easily into that place that we're all connected. Some people call it the Great Spirit, some people call it collective consciousness, some call it God.

Some people who don't believe in that, they might call it the open, empty meditative space, whatever you call it, that place that's greater than ourselves.

**[00:14:13]**

They know how to access that place easiest the most and that's where the boundaries and their superpower and their Achilles heels, it's all melded, it's like one vibration that's being burned at and that's where we have to work with them.

**Meagen Gibson**

That's beautiful and something I hadn't put together before quite that beautifully of just boundaries and sensitivity and the ability to perceive others and how that can be unperceptively happening, imperceptibly.

I just made up a word, in your actual body as well, affecting you in deep ways that you can't perceive but end up feeling.

And you said something about sensitive and defended and I was thinking about how much energy it takes to be both sensitive and defended and I know so many people with chronic illnesses that you treat have such an energy depletion and struggle with energy as kind of one of their primary things.

They want to get back to living but they just don't have the energy to do so because of whatever illness they're dealing with and inflammation that they're dealing with. So that sensitive and defended perspective must take up an enormous amount of energy.

**Dr Nafysa Parpia**

It's true, because when they're defended it's taking up more energy, it closes their system and so they have to know when to put the sword down. But if you put it down at the wrong time, then you're in trouble and that struggle.

**Meagen Gibson**

Yeah, absolutely and I'm reminded of what so many people that I've interviewed have said when talking about kind of like self compassion in regard to this type of thing, which is kind of the set and step of like, it makes sense. It makes sense that I want to defend myself and also that I'm very sensitive and can be hurt easily, it makes sense.

All of these things that we develop over time because of genetics, because of temperament, because of experiences.

It makes sense and then it's our job once we become self aware to then get the support from someone like you to try to build better structures of support around us so that we can be less, maybe more, what's the word?

It's like more savvily, sensitive and less stringently defended, if you will.

**Dr Nafysa Parpia**

Exactly that, that's what we have to work on while I'm working on their biochemistry, while I'm working on the inflammation, on treating infections.

**[00:16:58]**

Their environmental toxicity, a lot of them have high environmental toxic loads that causes immune dysregulation. So as we're working on the physical pieces, it's also bringing in the emotional pieces and finding a safe place for them.

So actually it goes right into how do we work to work on the healing aspect? And it's really about finding a safe place where they can access their superpower.

It's easier for them to go into those deep meditative spaces. Sometimes they don't even know it until they go into it but having a safe space for that is having a healer with them so we make sure that happens.

Or even a frequency specific microcurrent. We can program different currents to different systems of the body and put the healer's hands on them and a lot shifts. Acupuncture, grounding, being with the earth, singing, prayer, all of that.

### **Meagen Gibson**

That must be wonderful. People find that kind of support and can get access to that thing that they've always known was just out of reach for them.

### **Dr Nafyssa Parpia**

Right? A lot of the times they say to me, you know what, when I ask them are you wired this way? Are you typically an anxious person? Are you typically an angry person?

And they say, yeah I actually am, I've had a tendency to anxiety or anger or whatever, even a little bit of OCD in my life but never like this.

This is just way amplified so I think it's important to bring all those pieces in together at the same time. How am I going to take away the inflammation as much as possible and work on healing you energetically and emotionally simultaneously?

That's, I think, often overlooked. People might think it's just one or the other that has to be done, but not when someone's been sick for so long.

### **Meagen Gibson**

It's really important that you acknowledge that because often people think a healing path or like a healthy path is going to change them into an entirely different person and you're like, but what level of anger and irritation is normal and typical for you.

You're not going to be a different person but that amplification factor is so important and I'm so glad that you named it. It's like, is this an extraordinary level of whatever expression for you?



**[00:19:36] Dr Nafysa Parpia**

Right? I tell them, we're not here trying to change your personality or change who you are. Who you are is the way you came in, we're all perfectly imperfect.

But I'm trying to help you not suffer with the amplification of what is unnecessary. They often say, this isn't me. I know this isn't me. I feel like there's something from outside of me that's now inside me, but it's not mine.

So we work on that piece. What isn't yours? A lot of times they'll talk about that, oh, right this is ancestral trauma. This comes from my parents, this came from my neighbor, whoever. It's not mine.

And when they realize that it's a big moment for them, they can work on putting that down, returning back to sender.

**Meagen Gibson**

Yeah, absolutely.

Well, Dr Nafysa Parpia, how can people find out more about you and start working with you?

**Dr Nafysa Parpia**

So I'm at Gordon Medical. I'm in the San Francisco Bay area, and our website is [gordonmedical.com](http://gordonmedical.com). So we work with people who have complex chronic illnesses, including Long Haul Syndrome. A lot of that. Yes.

**Meagen Gibson**

Wonderful. Yeah. It's one of the things to, the only good thing to come out of COVID is so much more acceptance and normalization and legitimization. Not that anyone who suffers from a chronic illness needs that, but in the community and in the medical world at large, it's real now for everyone. Yeah.

**Dr Nafysa Parpia**

Because so many people have these symptoms all of a sudden. I'll call it a second pandemic, even Long Haul Syndrome and now people who've been treating for decades with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, Fibromyalgia, suddenly they're showing up.

It happened so quickly and finally got the attention of the medical establishment so there's been a big silver lining.

**Meagen Gibson**

Exactly. Glad that was the one but I wish we could have avoided the whole thing.

Thank you so much for being with us today.

**Dr Nafysa Parpia**

Thank you so much for having me.