



## Ep. 36 Decode Your Fatigue - Alex Howard

Evan H. Hirsch, MD 0:01

Hello and welcome to the Fix Your Fatigue Podcast. Whether you can't get out of bed in the morning, your energy crashes throughout the day, or you're a bio-hacker looking to optimize your energy, productivity and focus. This podcast is for you. I am Dr. Evan Hirsch. And I will be your host on your journey to resolving fatigue and optimizing your energy. And we'll be interviewing some of the top leaders in the world on the tee resolution. Welcome.

Evan H. Hirsch, MD 0:27

Hey everybody, welcome again to the Fix Your Fatigue podcast. I'm so glad that you're here with me today because today we're going to be talking about decoding your fatigue with my friend Alex Howard. So let's learn a little bit about Alex.

Evan H. Hirsch, MD 0:47

So Alex is the founder and chairman of The Optimum Health Clinic (OHC), one of the world's leading integrative medicine clinics specializing in fatigue, right up our alley, with a team of 20 full time practitioners supporting 1000s of patients in 50 plus countries. The OHC team has pioneered working with patients remotely since 2004. Along with founding and leading the OSC practitioner teams for the past 17 years.

Evan H. Hirsch, MD 1:15

Alex is an immensely experienced psychology practitioner, having delivered over 10,000 consultations. He has also led the therapeutic coaching practitioner program since 2005. training the next generation of psychology practitioners. Since March 2020. He has been documenting his therapeutic work with real life patients via his in therapy with Alex Howard YouTube series, which I highly recommend definitely check it out.

Evan H. Hirsch, MD 1:42

In 2015, Alex founded leading online video platform, Conscious Life, which has produced programs with over 150 teachers, including Byron Katie, Marianne Williamson, Dr. Joe Dispenza, and Ken Wilber. In the last few years, Alex has created some of the largest online conferences in the health and mind-body markets, including the Fatigue Super Conference, that I was on, and the Trauma and Mind Body Super Conference. Alex's online conferences have been attended by over a quarter of a million people.

Evan H. Hirsch, MD 2:17

He has published academic research and publications such as British Medical Journal Open, and Psychology and Health, and is also the author of Decode Your Fatigue, which I'm excited about talking about today.

Evan H. Hirsch, MD 2:30

Alex, thanks so much for joining me.

Alex Howard 2:32

Evan, thank you for having me. That's quite a long bio, I said.

Evan H. Hirsch, MD 2:37

I decided I was gonna read the whole thing, because it's it's so impressive. So let's start off talking about fatigue and how you became interested in it. Why fatigue?

Alex Howard 2:49

You know, when I was at a career selection course, and in my teenage years, I'd be like you probably didn't sit there and go, my life's work is going to be working with fatigue. But I think sometimes life life has its own plan, right. And we can, we can fight that and we can battle against that. But at some point, we have to surrender to that. And I, in my teenage years suffered from severe EMI chronic fatigue syndrome, and I spent a couple of years pretty much house bound at times pretty much bed bound.

Alex Howard 3:23

And I think like a lot of people that go on those journeys, initially, obviously, intense frustration, anxiety, overwhelm, but sort of just hoped somebody else was going to be able to find the answers to the kind of living how, I guess that I was living in and went and saw many different doctors and practitioners and initially would go in with a level of hope and a level of well, these are the experts, you know, they tell me, they can help me.

Alex Howard 3:54

And I think like a lot of people with what I call fatigue-related conditions. I didn't become negative or cynical, because that's necessarily my nature, I just got so used to the disappointments and the getting my hopes raised about something that didn't have the answers that after a couple of years of this and like a lot of people severe debilitating fatigue, headaches, muscle pains, being completely exhausted, but unable to sleep, which was always a sort of weird, weird thing.

Alex Howard 4:27

You know, I reached a point of pretty much desperation. I didn't, I didn't want to end my life, I just the thought of continuing to live in the living hell that I was in was was was overwhelming. And I had a conversation with my my uncle who was was was pretty amazing. I look back at that conversation. You know, sometimes in life, we have that moment and we go in a different direction suddenly, you know, years later life looks very, very different.

Alex Howard 4:54

And he really helped me realize that if I wanted the circumstances of my life to be different, then I could spend the rest of my life as I had been these last couple of years, waiting for the doctors and the kind of seeming medical experts to find the answers but I could be waiting the rest of my life and if I say if I wanted the circumstances, my life to change and I was going to have to change them.

Alex Howard 5:18

That set off five year healing journey. And along that journey, I saw dozens of different health practitioners some pretty traditional, some completely certifiably crazy, looking back, I probably enjoyed seeing those more than the traditional ones, but I just started a way always help. I, you know, at one point, I was taking 70 supplements a day, something that I wouldn't recommend anyone does. But this was in the kind of late 90s. And back then we knew so much less than we do now. And that was a sort of pre mass use of the Internet.

Alex Howard 5:54

So it wasn't like now you can go on Dr. Google or Dr. YouTube, and you can find lots of answers, it was, you know, I remember going to the local library and going to the local bookshop and, and asking for if they could order me in, but like self help books and psychology books, and it was probably more embarrassing than being in my early teens and being dad to go and buy pornography from the from the local user. Just I just remember, it was it was so I was so awkward about it. But I was also so desperate, that I just couldn't go on living my life the way that it was.

Alex Howard 6:29

And that five years was immensely difficult. And I wish I could sit here and think my publisher wishes I could sit here and say to you, and I found the one miracle answer for fatigue. And this is it. But the truth was for me that there were lots of different things along the way that helps. And what I realized in hindsight was it was a process of decoding. It was like having a puzzle or having, you know, having a kind of complex problem to figure out, and then having to figure it out piece by piece.

Alex Howard 7:02

And as I decoded my fatigue, more along the way, things that had been complete mysteries, like why I would crash after certain activities, or why I would eat certain foods and have certain reactions, it all started to make more sense. And I was able to eventually reach the point of making a full recovery. And on the other side of that, I think like a lot of people, as I say that have been through these kind of conditions, I really made a promise to myself along the way that if I found a way out, I wanted to use my life, I wanted to use the energy that I'd reclaimed to hopefully do something that was helpful to other people in the same situation. And that was 18 years ago now. And that was really the foundation of all the work I've been doing since then.

Evan H. Hirsch, MD 7:49

That's brilliant. Sometimes our mess becomes our message, right? Our pain becomes our purpose.

Alex Howard 7:54

That's good. I've never heard that before. I like that.

Evan H. Hirsch, MD 7:57

Yeah, no, I feel you. And so you mentioned the book, tell us a little bit about it.

Alex Howard 8:04

So I avoided writing this book, at least a decade, I you know, I wrote. So I wrote a book called, "Why Me? My Journey From ME to Health and Happiness" very soon after I'd recovered if I was I was working on it, the last year or two of my recovery journey. And I wrote that that book was really the story of my own healing journey. And I didn't, at that point, feel I was in a position to offer recommendations really, for other people around how they could get better.

Alex Howard 8:33

I was 22 when I finished writing that book. But it became really the foundation for the Optimum Health Clinic. And on the back of that book, a lot of people over the years, of course, came to the clinic, and then publishers, would I sometimes approach publishers, other books I wanted to write and they'd go, yeah, we think you should write a book about the Optimal Health Clinic approach to working with fatigue. And my resistance was that our approach is so nuanced. It's so patient-specific. It's not, "this is the protocol for this. and this is the protocol for that."

Alex Howard 9:05

I mean, it took us five years to get ethics approval for the feasibility study that we're just starting as part of a larger randomized control trial, because we didn't want to do a randomized control trial, saying everyone that has digestive issues, give them this up from everyone that's got immune issues, give them this, we wanted to do this patient specific approach. And the idea of breaking that down into into one book, and also wanting to write a book that people would finish write a book that people would enjoy reading that would take them on a well crafted journey, just kind of felt overwhelming.

Alex Howard 9:45

And I felt also overwhelmed about writing a book that would do justice to the 25 full time practitioners that we have have doing the work. And then a few years ago, I started to get some clarity that if I was to write this book, how would I do it? And it was just after the first fatigues for conference we did a couple of years ago and I think I interviewed you that's where we first met, Evan and I really enjoyed the process of taking other people's work and trying to help find an entry point and make it accessible. And on the back of that I thought if I can help others do that, surely I can do that for for the work that we've been doing.

Alex Howard 10:26

So this book was a lot of care a lot of thoughts. No book has all of the answers. But I think it has a lot of really helpful answers. And it really, it hangs off this idea of, we need maps, you know, if I'm going to get from where I am in London to where you are in the States, if I just walk out my front door and start walking, I have a very, very low probability of finding my way to where you are.

Alex Howard 10:55

But if I have a map, and I can hear from other people that have walked that journey, and I can hear, "Oh, don't fly with this airline, because they always crash and don't do this and don't do that," then I've got a much better chance of of ending up, you know, you and I having a cup of tea together. So this idea is to take all the different approaches and protocols and methodologies, and simplify them to the point that they still maintain enough of the integrity and the essence of the work, but also making it accessible in a way that people can really decode their fatigue, but also map their own path to recovery.

Evan H. Hirsch, MD 11:32

Wow, that's so interesting. And I don't know what all that means.

Alex Howard 11:37

As I said to you, before we started, I'm not sure if I do, but I think the book sorta helps.

Evan H. Hirsch, MD 11:44

That's great. Yeah. So I want to I want to learn a little bit more about that. So maybe one of the ways that we can do that is talking about these five personality patterns that you talk about in the book.

Alex Howard 11:56

Yeah, so even take a little step back. Before we come to that, in the book, I talk about two different maps a map to decode one's fatigue, and have the map of how we can start to put together the ingredients of one's recovery path. And in that map to decode fatigue I talked about there's a genetic element. And I think, you know, the research is that there is a modest genetic element in me chronic fatigue, but there's certainly not a direct causative genetic element, which explains the picture, we've then got different personality patterns, different ways of relating to ourselves relating to the world around us. And I'll come back to that, that in a minute.

Alex Howard 12:36

We then have the different loads that we have on our body. This could be environmental loads, like environmental toxins, like mold, or whatever. We can have loads in terms of pathogens in our system, things like Lyme co infections, you know, Epstein Barr, those sorts of things. We can have loads in terms of psychological loads or traumas that we've experienced in the past, but all the different impacts that happen to our system. And all of that together results in an impact on our on our body. And for different people, that impact is going to be different for one person, that impact might be that they have chronic pain.

Alex Howard 13:18

For somebody else, it might be that the primary thing is they get migraines. with someone else, it might be that fatigue is their primary thing, somebody might have all of those things. But by decoding by figuring out the different ingredients that may cause these different parts of the map, we can then start to look at intervention that addresses those different pieces. So to get to give an example, you mentioned about different personality patterns that I'm very aware of just to to qualify this for a minute, I'm very aware that people with fatigue, have had people say to them, oh, well, you know, maybe it's in the mind, maybe you're making it up.

Alex Howard 13:53

And I want to be very clear that in no way am I inferring that fatigue is not a very real physical condition. It absolutely is. And I will fight to death to defend that point. But we also can't get away from the fact that the state of our nervous system, how we approach and treat our body has an impact on our body. So if I break down these personality patterns a little bit, I think it will explain it more. I talk about a helper, an achiever, an anxiety, a controller, and a perfectionist pattern.

Alex Howard 14:28

If we take a helper pattern, we're defining our self worth by what we do for other people. So let's say for example, you come home from a long day at work, your body feels tired, and what it needs is to you know, lie on the sofa and watch a movie on Netflix and just relax and not have have more demand. You then get a text message from a friend say, "Hey, I'm having a really bad time and my girlfriend, boyfriend, husband, wife, whatever, can you come around and keep me company?" And rather than going, "Actually no, I need to take care of myself." It just becomes a routine thing that everyone else's needs are always more important.

Alex Howard 15:07

If someone lives their life in that way, that is what I call an energy depleting psychology. It's a way of approaching oneself one's body on one's life, which is inherently draining, it's depleting one's resources to take the achiever pattern, we define our self worth by what we do and what we achieve in the world and our sense of safety, our sense of feeling lovable is defined by by achievement.

Alex Howard 15:35

So again, similar example, end of the day, feeling drained, feeling tired, body needs to rest body is clearly communicating, what I need is rest. The way we respond to that is, but I need to hit that target at work, I need to achieve this thing. We're ignoring our body's messages. And we're pushing through. And just to quickly, I won't go into all these in detail, but just quickly, to speak to them, the anxiety pattern is where we tend to try and think our way to a feeling of safety.

Alex Howard 16:03

So we feel unsafe in our body, we may have anxiety, we may have maybe some history of trauma perhaps. And the way we deal with that is our nervous system speeds up, our mind speeds up, we often disconnect from our body and go more into our mind, it takes a lot of energy, a lot of resource to feel that speeding up in our system, controller pattern.

Alex Howard 16:26

Again, we can, you can, you can probably see, to control ourself in our environment, to feel safe, takes a lot of energy, to be a perfectionist always have to get things right. Getting things right is more important than what our body may be telling us. These are ways of living that don't. There's not necessarily some magical mechanisms, I run these patterns, and it causes fatigue. But it's like having a car that's not looked after that we're always driving it too hard. We don't service that we know cars a bit different to a biological organism that needs rest.

Alex Howard 16:58

But in a sense, we live our life in a way that is inherently draining and depleting. And we particularly this is very brief backstory and I'm I realized something that thing that people is really annoying when you're an interviewer, I'm getting very long answers to questions, and I get excited about this stuff. But the part of the origin of this is that in the early days of the optimum health clinic, when we hadn't identified these personality patterns, we were doing things like giving mitochondrial support supplements to people, they were getting more energy, we were working with hormones adrenal function, and we had ways where most people, you could give an uplift in their energy.

Alex Howard 17:40

And what we noticed was people would feel a bit better, they would then go and crash. And they would go and do all the things in their life that had been a factor in burning out in the first place, not necessarily the cause, but a part of the jigsaw. And until we addressed those, we would find this constant booming and busting pattern that was happening. So that was just I think it's important point that we weren't looking at it from what's the cause necessarily even of fatigue, we were what's blocking people from recovering, people are starting to get better. And these are the patterns that are almost might have been hidden away, because there wasn't enough energy to run them in the first place for a while. Soon as the energy comes back, those underlying patterns often start coming in again.

Evan H. Hirsch, MD 18:23

That's brilliant. So helper, achiever, anxiety, controller, and then what I miss?

Alex Howard 18:29

And perfectionist.

Evan H. Hirsch, MD 18:30



And perfectionist. Yeah, yeah, that's brilliant. You know, I see that time and time again. And I haven't had the words to put them, you know, oftentimes, they'll say, a lot of us have perfectionistic tendencies. I know, for me, that's been a big thing, pushing myself, you know, obviously going through undergrad, pre med, medical school, you know, and all that, and, and wanting to be the best person that I can be. And consequently, that definitely played a significant role. So I'm excited to read the book, and learn more about those different personality types. So then let's talk about the the maladaptive stress response and why it's so important to calm that down.

Alex Howard 19:08

Yeah, so that this was another really, I guess, important insight and realization early in the clinical work that we were doing. But we noticed that a lot of the patients we were working with, their nervous system was just really jacked up. And initially it was, well, maybe there's just it's a, it's a predisposing factor that people that have really kind of anxiety or wired nervous systems are more likely to get fatigued.

Alex Howard 19:35

And there's a subgroup that's true for but it isn't necessarily true of the majority, I would say that for the population. What became clear is the experience of suffering from a what will be classified as a medically unexplained illness, although you and I would strongly argue it's not a medically unexplained illness. But certainly, when you're going to mainstream medical professionals, and you're often getting told, two completely contradictory things, the first of which is there's nothing wrong with you. I can't find anything wrong with you, therefore, there's nothing wrong with you, or there's something clearly wrong with you.

Alex Howard 20:08

But I don't know the answer. Therefore, there's no answer. Which if you if you'll forgive me for a moment, both of which are the highest level of arrogance, because the assumption in both of those statements is, I as a medical professional, know everything that's ever been known about medicine, so if I can't find anything wrong with you, there's nothing wrong with you. Or if I don't know the answer, no one knows the answer. But when you interact with medical professionals that really what you what you mean.

Alex Howard 20:33

It's not a sign of craziness, it's a sign of actually a probably a healthy nervous system to start to panic a little bit like your system starts to start to speed up to go? Or what's wrong with me? Why is it wrong with me? What should I do about it? Should I rest? Should I push through? Am I ever going to get better? If I take this supplement? Is it gonna make me feel better? Or am I going to have a terrible reaction to it like, the very experience of living with a medically unexplained illness results in this increasingly wired and jacked up nervous system.

Alex Howard 21:09

And I call it a maladaptive stress response. Because it's a stress response, which is a healthy response in an acute situation, like we're, you know, walking down the road, you're not looking and suddenly, there's a bus goes flying past. And you've got to get out the way really quickly. And in that moment, a stress response is, is a healthy thing to survive. It becomes a maladaptive stress response, when the stress response is now actually not keeping us safe, it's doing the opposite because for the body to heal, it has to be in a healing state.

Alex Howard 21:45

And when we're in this increasingly wide state, like there's interesting, I don't know if this is true or not interesting anecdotal. Research where you take a frog, you put it in a glass of boiling water, and it jumps out, you put it in a glass of cold water, and you gradually heat it up, and it stays in there and gets fried. I obviously haven't done this research. I'm not recommend anyone does this research. But the point is, the frog doesn't notice the gradual increase in temperature. I've worked with patients, and I'm sure you have, Evan as well, where someone is so wired in their system, that it's actually takes quite a lot of work for me just to keep my own system calm and grounded, because it's almost infectious.

Alex Howard 22:25

How, why have that person and often there's a million questions coming in a million miles an hour, and they're sort of can't say still in the chair. And I might start speaking about a maladaptive stress response. And I'll say, "That's absolutely not me, I'm completely convinced," but not, they're completely disconnected from the experience. Because like the frog, they've just gradually normalized, they've got more and more wired into this state. But as I say, for the body to heal, it has to be in a healing state at this body's in this maladaptive stress response. It has an enormous impact on a whole load of bodily processes.

Alex Howard 23:00

And you know, everything from the research that's been done around a lot of it done on students that exam time because a lot of research is done by by out undergrads. And it's easy to find an undergraduate researcher. But we have lots of research that shows the impact of the stress of exams on things like natural killer cell activity, different elements of the immune system. There's a ton of research that shows the impact of stress on things like digestive function hormones.

Alex Howard 23:25

But, I find a particularly helpful way of thinking about this. And I'm sure everyone you'll be familiar with it. Maybe you talked about already on the podcast of Dr. Robert Naviaux work on cell danger response. But just I think it's a really helpful frame for this. And just if I can just briefly speak to this that the mitochondria which are light, in a sense, they are the power stations in our sales, making our energy, like our body's kind of cellular energy mechanism.

Alex Howard 23:55

In fact, in the book I dedicate one of the early chapters to talking about mitochondria is the key mechanism that explains the symptom of fatigue. It's often very unexplained for people. But what people often don't realize is that the mitochondria actually have two functions. They have the function of energy production, which is what people are often familiar with. So another way of putting it people might remember from biology classes, it's called the Krebs cycle, that's an another way people talk about it.

Alex Howard 24:22

The mitochondria have a second function, though, which is danger signaling, when the body is under threat, because of how efficient they are in producing energy. Our mitochondria are incredibly, incredibly efficient at passing messages through the system. So when our system is under threat, when our system is in danger, our mitochondria will be prioritized energy production, to focus on danger signaling. So beyond the fact that being in a maladaptive stress response has an impact on digestive function and on hormones and on sleep and all of the other things that I think there's there's a plethora of research that can speak to, there is a direct impact also on our cellular energy production, because our system is d prioritizing, making energy so it can prioritize the spreading of danger through our system.

Alex Howard 25:17

And I it was one of those pieces of research when I came across this a few years ago, that there were things that we knew to be true, but we didn't have the evidence that explained why they were true. I don't know if that makes sense. But it was like suddenly now we can Explain this mechanism that we've seen that sometimes patients, some people you call a maladaptive stress response. And it's a piece of a jigsaw.

Alex Howard 25:39

And gradually over time that helps them get into healing state, and the body starts to move forward. But there are these examples where you switch off a maladaptive stress response. And almost instantly, energy goes up dramatically. And I think this is why you are switching the function of the mitochondria, which then allows energy production to be prioritized.

Evan H. Hirsch, MD 26:01

Yeah, that absolutely makes sense. And so then, what do you do to to fix that maladaptive stress response?

Alex Howard 26:10

So sometimes it's really simple. At times, it's really complicated. So sometimes it can be as simple as there are techniques from we have something called the stop process. There are different methodologies and ways of working with this often based in things like neuro linguistic programming, mindfulness, some of these approaches where you learn to recognize a pattern, and you learn to stop that pattern and reset and calm your system. And I have a 12-week online coaching program called the reset program where we go deep into this for other people, though, as they start to calm their system.

Alex Howard 26:46

So the first piece may be relatively simple for them. But they start to calm their system. And then and then it's almost that triggers a bigger stress response. Because for some of us, what's happened is the reason why our nervous system sped up is there's all these feelings, emotions, we might use, the word trauma is often a word that's more recently used, that are held in the body. So when we go into the mind when we go into an anxiety response, where partly escaping all of these underlying emotions that are happening, so sometimes we'll also need to happen.

Alex Howard 27:18

As much as we need to learn to calm the system, we also have to work on some of these deeper underlying emotions, learning to feel them, learning to process them. And in a sense, it's a journey from being so much in our mind and in our anxiety patterns and reactive reactivity, to be much more embodied, and much more grounded. And in a sense, when we do that work with people, which is that the second half of the focus, for example, in the reset program, I also speak to this quite a lot in the book that we get this much more lasting change in the nervous system.

Alex Howard 27:55

As opposed to this constant. It's almost like we've got, we've just got a four month old cockapoo dog who's like, just like this bundle of energy, and it's like you take take, take her for a walk. And it's like, you felt like she's on the lead around London before you get to the part. It's like, you feel like you're trying to slow this dog down, just like dragging you along. And that's what I think sometimes an overactive nervous systems light.

Alex Howard 28:18

And it's like, the metaphor that I could use is, it's like swapping Nala who's the cockapoo for sizzle or sausage dog who it's sort of the opposite, she just sort of drops along at a very slow pace and has a long sniff at something and then drops along. So it's like it's learning to have a lasting retraining of the system, which is not just working on the mental patterns, but it's also working on the underlying feelings and emotions that we're almost escaping from, which is in a sense, fueling those, that those those mental anxiety patterns.

Evan H. Hirsch, MD 28:52

Mm hmm. Yeah, that's such an important part of this, this whole process. So then, in terms of how you incorporate this, with functional medicine, you know, functional medicine is largely, I mean, there's definitely people talking about emotions and trauma and you know, a lot of these things that you and I incorporate into our programs, but a lot of is based on deficiencies and toxicities. How do you incorporate the mind body approaches with functional medicine?

Alex Howard 29:22

Yeah, it's a great question. And I'm glad you asked it, because I'm mindful that I've been quite psychology specific in my answers. I thank you for bringing that in. So at the Optimum Health Clinic, we have a team of 25 full-time practitioners of which over half the team, our functional medicine, trained nutritional therapists, and the interface of the psychology work and the nutritional work, I think, is a never ending path of discovery and fascination. And it's certainly not a perfect science.

Alex Howard 29:50

But I think the thing that I increasingly have become interested by and the piece that I think is so important here is the sequencing. It's like, what piece do you do in what order to have the maximum result there are people that have for example, that say someone has CBD or someone has a kind of digestive issue that that's going on. And clearly they're going to do work around that they're going to do work in terms of diet, they're going to do work perhaps in terms of anti microbials or Rifaximin, on here, Mason, you're gonna have some sort of protocol targeted at the CBOE or you might have someone with Lyme or co infections and you're going to have a specific protocol around that.

Alex Howard 30:30

For some people, just working directly from a function medicine point of view is enough and they respond well to those protocols and other protocols take quite a bit of time to work through the stage of the protocol. But what we've observed is if you work on the on the what we classify as the more physical side, without also working on the psycho emotional side, often you get stuck in these roadblocks.

Alex Howard 30:54

Roadblocks, such as people react to everything you do to them, because maladaptive stress response ramped up nervous system, not only are people reacting to things in their emotions or people around them, they're reacting to supplements, they're reacting to foods, sometimes, the very interventions that are necessary to help someone can't be tolerated because the the nervous system is seeing those things like a threat or a danger.

Alex Howard 31:22

Calming down, the maladaptive stress response means that people have a much better probability of them being able to engage with those protocols. If we then take back what we were saying earlier about the different personality patterns, I was mentioning that we used to do, for example, work and we still do, but we might have sequenced it differently in the past that we would do work to give raw ingredients towards mitochondria. So we might give things like Magnesium D-Ribose, Coenzyme AQ or Coenzyme Q10.

Alex Howard 31:52

Some of those things that will fuel the mitochondria. But if we don't deal with the underlying personality patterns, you've just got someone get what you've basically done is given someone more energy to have a worse crash. So we have to then work with, is there an underlying achiever pattern? Or is there a helper pattern around? So I become an again, I mentioned earlier, when the kind of overwhelmed that I had before writing the book was, this is such a patient specific thing about how you sequence things.

Alex Howard 32:22

Do you start with psychology first, on nutrition first, or both together? Which pieces of those protocols do you start with? And I think that's where these maps and you know, one, being able to really listen to the laboratory of their own body and their own experience becomes so important, and I'm sure evidence, it's very much your experience as a practitioner, it's certainly been my experience that protocols are helpful test results that you know, lab lab results are helpful.

Alex Howard 32:55

But there is no information that's more important than how someone responds when they do something. And, and, you know, I've had people over the years, and I said was true for me a certain points in over the years have been completely atypical In response, like, you give X thing, and they're supposed to have y result, and they have the opposite result. And they get told that they're crazy, or they're making it up. But, more and more over the years, we still do a lot of work with with lab tests with a lot of work with knowing which protocols are effective, but really learning to listen to the individual and really training the individual to learn to not just decode, I used the idea of decoding once fatigue in more than one way.

Alex Howard 33:39

Like there's decoding in terms of the map like where are you on the map, which are the pieces that you need to work with. But also in this moment that someone is feeling fatigued? Why, like I talked about in the book, four different types of tightness, there's different, there's physical tiredness, there's mental tiredness, as emotional tightness as environmental tightness, talk about three different stages of the recovery process, different interventions, certain stages.

Alex Howard 34:06

So to give an example, so I'm not being too cryptic about it to give an example of you can use pacing, for example, like graded exercise, which is a massive controversy for all, you know, for understandable controversy and the chronic fatigue Well, that's stage one, where someone's in what we call the crash stage or the rest age. graded exercise is the worst possible thing that you could do. Someone that's in the later part of stage three, the reintegration stage graded exercise actually can be helpful sometimes, because there's enough physical recovery that actually we need to recondition the system, same intervention, different stage, at one stage, it can literally ruin someone's life and take years to recover from deeper and deeper crashes.

Alex Howard 34:52

At another stage, it can be the most helpful thing and so the in answer to your question of the kind of working with the functional medicine side with the psychology side, it's, it's really, it's not just jumping in and going, right, I've got this approach I'm getting on this diet, I'm going to do it everyone or this supplement, I'm going to give it to everyone. It's really figuring out what stage what type of tightness, what what personality patterns, what loads on the system, what status, the nervous system and, and all of these pieces together, then help us have the clarity of how to sequence the interventions that we're working with.

Evan H. Hirsch, MD 35:30

Brilliant I'm excited to read the book. So when does the book come out?

Alex Howard 35:34

So the book comes out, I'm going to hold it up, I'm really happy with the cover, by the way, this is the whole thing. But I'm a bit of a book addict. So I was I was excited to get happy with. And so the book comes out on the 12th of October. And we're doing if you don't mind me mentioning, we're doing a 21 day, Decode Your Fatigue Challenge in the 21 days leading up to the book coming out. So that starts on the 22nd of September, people can join at any point, if they join after I'm sure they'll still be able to access the videos.

Alex Howard 36:06

So each day for 21 days, I'm taking a chapter of the book, and I'm doing a live video in a private Facebook group, talking about some of the key ideas and key principles within the book. And as I say, no book has all the answers. And I'm always probably a bit like highly suspicious people go, this is the only book you need to read. It has all the answers on that subject. But a great deal of care and thought has gone into how to make it as accessible as possible. There's lots of great case studies in there of people I've worked with over the years. And I always like reading about case studies, and I wanted to just to share those. And I really hope it will help people.

Evan H. Hirsch, MD 36:48

I'm sure it will. Yeah, it sounds really amazing. And so where can people go to learn more about you?

Alex Howard 36:55

So probably the simplest place is my website, alexhoward.com. And on there, people will find links to the book, links to the Optimum Health Clinic to our therapeutic coaching practitioner training. Also, I mentioned the reset program, you can get a bit of a taste of some of the ideas in that. So alexhoward.com is the simplest place.

Evan H. Hirsch, MD 37:14

Excellent. And we'll also drop all the links below including the link to the challenge, which sounds like it's going to be an amazing event.

Alex Howard 37:21

It's gonna be fun. Yeah. Thank you.

Evan H. Hirsch, MD 37:22

So Alex, thank you so much for everything that you're doing for those with MECFS and everybody on the fatigue spectrum. Really appreciate all that wonderful work. And thanks so much for joining me today.

Evan H. Hirsch, MD 37:35

Thanks, Evan. It's been great talking to you. I really appreciate the opportunity. Thank you.

Evan H. Hirsch, MD 37:41

I hope you learned something on today's podcast. If you did, please share it with your friends and family and leave us a five star review on iTunes. It's really helpful for getting this information out to more fatigue people who desperately need it. Sharing all the experts I know in love, and the powerful tips I have on fatigue is one of my absolute favorite things to do. If you'd like more information, please sign up for my newsletter, where I share all important facts and information about the team from the foods and supplements to the programs and products that I use personally and recommend to others so that they can live their best lives. Just go to [fixyourfatigue.com/newsletter](http://fixyourfatigue.com/newsletter) to sign up and I will send you this great information.

Evan H. Hirsch, MD 38:29



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Evan H. Hirsch, MD 38:48

If you're looking for help with your fatigue, you can visit my website and work with us at [fixyourfatigue.com](https://fixyourfatigue.com) and remember, it's important that you have someone in your corner who is a credentialed health care professional to help you make changes. This is very important especially when it comes to your health. Thanks for listening and have an amazing day.