



## **Episode 17: How an Unhealed Betrayal Impacts Your Energy**

**Evan H. Hirsch, MD:** 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 biohacker 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 fatigue resolution. Welcome.

**Evan H. Hirsch, MD:** Hey everybody, Dr. Evan here. Welcome to another amazing episode of the Fix Your Fatigue Podcast. I say that we don't know if it's going to be amazing yet, but I know it's going to be so. We'll see how it goes. So I've got Dr. Debi Silber here with me today. I'm really excited about that. She is the founder of The Post Betrayal Transformation Institute, and as a holistic psychologist, a health mindset and personal development expert, the author of the number one bestselling book, *Unshakable Woman: 4 Steps to Rebuilding Your Body, Mind, and Life After a Life Crisis* and her newest book, which I'm really excited about is *Trust Again*.

Her recent PhD study on how we experienced betrayal made three groundbreaking discoveries that changes how long it takes to heal. I'm excited to get into that as well, in addition to being on Fox, CBS, The Dr. Oz Show, TEDx (twice), and more. She's an award-winning speaker, coach, and author dedicated to helping people move past their betrayals, as well as any other blocks preventing them from the health, work, finances, relationships, confidence, and happiness they want most. Dr. Debi, thank you so much for being here today.

**Dr. Debi Silber:** Thank you so much. I'm really looking forward to our conversation.

**Evan H. Hirsch, MD:** So first question for you is really about your path and your journey. So why betrayal? What got you interested in this?

**Dr. Debi Silber:** Yes, I don't think anybody says, "Oh, you know, I think I just want to study betrayal." It just doesn't work like that. So I've been in health mindset, personal development since 1991. And as things would happen, my business would Morphine change. And then I had a horrible family betrayal, and I thought I healed and did

everything I could do, but I guess how the universe works, there are more lessons to learn, so you get more opportunities. And this time it was my husband, and I was shocked, devastated, blindsided. I mean just what anybody would go through. So at that amount of the house, and, and I was really desperate to understand how the mind works and why people do these things and how I could heal.

So I, maybe not what everybody would do, but I enrolled in a PhD program to study it at that level. And it was in Transpersonal Psychology, the psychology of transformation and human potential because I was obsessed with that. That's what was happening. And I didn't quite understand it. He was on his own too, but I wasn't ready to look at that. So then it was time to do a study. Her study and I studied betrayal. What holds us back, what helps us heal, and what happens to us physically, mentally, and emotionally when the people closest to us lie, cheat, and deceive. And that study led to three discoveries, which changed my business, my life, everything.

**Evan H. Hirsch, MD:** Wow. Thank you so much for sharing that with us. So let's talk, let's go into betrayal and energy. You said that you, I'm really curious about what that link is, what you see with people who have betrayal. How often do they have energy issues and fatigue?

**Dr. Debi Silber:** Yes, so, like I said, there were three discoveries. One of them was that there's this collection of physical, mental, and emotional symptoms. So common to betrayal. It's now known as post betrayal syndrome. And we have a quiz on our site to see to what extent someone's struggling. We've had about 10,000 over 10,000 people take the quiz in the last year and a half. And well, first of all, we've all heard time heals all wounds. When it comes to betrayal, I have the proof that's not true because there's a question that reads, is there anything else you'd like to share? And people write things like my betrayal happened four years ago.

I could feel the hate. My betrayal happened three years ago. I can't trust. My betrayal happened 10 years ago. It feels like it happened yesterday. So we know when it comes to betrayal, it stays with us unless and until we face it, feel it, heal it, but what I did was I pulled some steps because every so often, we just want to see where things show up. So now imagine this is every age group is represented just about every country. And I'm thinking of the ones that would really resonate with you. So physical. So here just the physical, some of the most common physical symptoms. 71% have low energy. 68% have sleep issues. 63% extreme fatigue, 47% have weight changes, and 45% have digestive issues. That could be anything from diarrhea, constipation, IBS, Crohn's. You name it. And then also think about it, 80% of your immune system is in your gut. So then your immune system tanks.

That's just the physical. Here's some mental ones. 79% are overwhelmed. I mean, we're overwhelmed on a good day, right? Could you imagine coming off of a drug, 70% have disbelief, 68% unable to focus, 64% are in shock, 62% are unable to concentrate. So mix the mental and the physical, and you could see how uncomfortable that may be. Now here's some of the most common, emotional ones. 88% experienced deep sadness. 83% anger. You just mixed sadness and anger. That could be a lethal and existing

combination. 82% feel hurt, 80% are anxious, 79% are stressed. Here's why I wrote the book trust again. 84% have an inability to trust. 67% prevent themselves from forming deep relationships because they're afraid of being hurt again. 82% find it hard to move forward, 90% want to move forward, but they don't know how.

**Evan H. Hirsch, MD:** Well. And that's out of the list of 10,000. Is that what you said?

**Dr. Debi Silber:** Yep. Yes.

**Evan H. Hirsch, MD:** Wow.

**Dr. Debi Silber:** Well, and betrayal affects everything. That's why it affects us physically, mentally, and emotionally. It's very different than other experiences.

**Evan H. Hirsch, MD:** So in terms of the pathophysiology and like what's happening on the physical side of things, are people stuck in fight or flight from the moment of their betrayal? Is that kind of what's happening? There's increased stress on the system?

**Dr. Debi Silber:** They can be very much so. And actually, one of the other discoveries was that while we can stay stuck for years, decades, a lifetime. And so many of us do, if we will, if we are to fully heal, we're actually going to move through five now proven predictable stages. And we even know what happens physically, mentally, and emotionally at every stage and what we need to do to move from one stage to the next. What you just refer to is what we see in a classic stage three. And it's the most common place to get stuck. I'm happy to go through the stages if you if that would help.

**Evan H. Hirsch, MD:** Yes. Let's do it. Let's dive into those.

**Dr. Debi Silber:** Sure. So the first, when this, first of all, when this happened, I'll never forget handing my research over to my study chair who said, "Debbie, I believe you've discovered a process here." and in like the geekiest way. It was just so mind-blowingly exciting because what that meant was now, if someone is just willing to do the predictable proven stages, they will predictably heal. So that just, at that moment, I knew there would be a tremendous amount of comfort in knowing, "Oh, this is where I am. This is what I have to do to yet." So, okay. So the first stage was like a set up stage. And I saw this with every study participant, me too. And if you imagine four legs of a table, the four legs being physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual.

And what I saw with everybody was this real heavy lean on the physical and the mental and kind of neglecting the emotional and the spiritual. So what does that look like? Looks like we're really good at thinking and doing, and we're not really paying much attention to feeling and being, but that's where intuition lies. And we turned that down. That's not to say, if we're busy, it's a set up for betrayal. It's just what I typically saw.

Stage two shock. We're blindsided. This is D-Day, discovery day. And this is the breakdown of the body, the mind, the worldview. This is the day like that person takes a

mask off saying, "Oh no, no, no, this is who I've been." And so what happens is your, now you've ignited the stress response because of the shock. You're headed for, you name it, just about every stress-related symptom, illness, condition, disease. Your mind is in a complete state of chaos and overwhelm. You cannot wrap your mind around what you just learned. This makes no sense. And your worldview is shattered. Your worldview is your mental model. These are the rules.

This is how it works. Don't go there. These people are safe, like all the rules that allow you to navigate through life. And in this one life-altering moment, it's all shattered, and a new worldview hasn't been constructed yet. So this is by far the scariest stage. I remember one of my study participants said, "You know what it feels like? It feels like every negative emotion you can imagine being punched in the gut and losing a child in a crowd all at the same time." It's awful but think about it. If you, if all of a sudden the bottom, bottomed out on you, what would you do? You would do anything and everything you could to stay alive and stay safe. That stage three, survival instincts emerge.

It's the most practical of the stages. What do I do? Where do I go? How do I survive this experience? Who can I trust? How do I feed my kids? Like it's entirely practical, but here's the trap. Because survival, when we figured out how to survive, because it feels so much better than the shock and trauma, we just came from, we're like, "Okay, I can do this. I got this." You're not meant to stay here long, but people stay here. And this is the hardest space, the hardest stage to leave because we start planting deep roots here, because when we're here, now we start having these small self benefits for being here. We get to be right. We get someone to blame. We get a target for anger. We get sympathy from anybody we tell our story to. We get our story.

We don't have to do the hard work of learning to trust again. Should I trust you? Do I trust you? Ah, forget about it. I just won't trust anybody. And then we're, so we're planting deeper roots. And then what happens is now our mind starts doing things like, well, maybe you deserved it. Maybe you're not all that great. Maybe not all that. And then we plant deeper roots, and then here's what happens next. Like energy attracts like energy. So now, because this is how you feel, right? You're calling situations and circumstances and relationships towards you that confirmed. This is where you belong. It gets worse. I'll get you out of it. Don't worry because this feels so bad, right? We don't know.

There's even a stage four, stage five. So, because this feels so bad. Here's where we start using food, drugs, alcohol, work, TV, keeping busy reckless behavior. We're so unhappy here, but we don't know there's anything we can do about it. And now, once we've done that and we do it for a significant enough amount of time, and it's habit, that's where we stay. So we stay there for a year, two, five, 10, 20. And so you could say to someone, 20 years out who has an eating disorder and they're emotionally eating or who drinks and say, "Oh, you know, did you ever think that was from your betrayal?", and they would say, "Oh my gosh, that happened years ago." But do you see that's when it was formed, and we didn't move past that.

Anyway, if where if we grieve, we mourn the loss, all of the things we need to do to move from that stage three to stage four, that's exactly what we do. Stage four. Here's where transformation starts. And this is finding and adjusting to a new normal. So here's where you accept. I can't undo the betrayal, but I can control how I let it affect me. And I always liken this to, if you've ever moved to a new house, office, condo, apartment, whatever, all your stuff's not there. It's not quite cozy yet, but it's going to be okay when you're in that mental space. You're turning the stress response down a little bit. You're not healing just yet, but you're not causing the massive physical damage you were causing in stage two and stage three.

And what I found so interesting to stage four was think about it. If you were to move, you don't necessarily bring everything with you. You don't bring the things that don't represent who you want to be in that new space. And what I saw here moving from stage three to stage four was so often changes in friendship. If your friends weren't there for you, you've, you don't take them with you. You've outgrown them right here. Or if they're indulging and low energy gossip, whatever it is, you've outgrown them. So I hear all the time, "Oh my gosh. Why is that? I've had these friends for 20, 30 years. Is it me?" Yes, it is. You're, you're transforming. And you're just at a very different place. Anyway, when we settle into that new normal, we make it our own.

We can slowly move into the fifth, most beautiful stage, and this is healing, rebirth, and a new worldview. The body starts to heal. You didn't have the bandwidth for self-love, self-care, eating well, exercising. You were surviving. Now you do. Your mind. You're making new rules, boundaries based on what you now see so clearly, and you have a new worldview based on what you've been through. And the four legs of that table. Remember, in the beginning, it was all about the physical and the mental. We're solidly grounded because now we're focused on the emotional and the spiritual too. Those are the five stages.

**Evan H. Hirsch, MD:** Wow. That's so amazing. So how do we know if we have post betrayal syndrome?

**Dr. Debi Silber:** There are actually two ways I would love to answer that. The first is what we see. This is so classic. We see it in work, health, and relationships. So, for example, in relationships, I'll see it in one of two ways. It's the person who they go from partner to partner to partner, or boss to boss to boss. Friend to friend, to friend, and it's the same thing, different face, same thing. And they say, "Is it me? Oh, yes, it is." And it's because there's this profound lesson that we're supposed to learn about boundaries about that we are lovable, worthy, deserving, whatever it is. And we keep getting opportunities to learn that. And until, and unless we do, we will have repeat betrayal.

So that's how we know that betrayal hasn't healed, and we're struggling. The other way is that person who puts the big wall up, like, "No, one's getting near me again." And they're doing that as a way to protect themselves. They've been hurt, and they're just keeping everybody at a distance, and we see it in, let's say in health. Someone goes to the, well, the most well-meaning doctors, coaches, healers, therapists to manage a

stress-related symptom, illness, condition, disease at the root of it, is can be an unhealed betrayal or at work where we see that someone's confidence is shattered. So they want to ask for that raise or promotion.

They deserve it, but they don't have the confidence to ask, and they're bitter and resentful instead. Or they want to be a team player or collaborate on that project. But they're terrified the person they trusted the most proved untrustworthy. How can they trust that boss or coworker, or collaborative partner? So, so many ways we see it, and it's in, and I see it so often in these symptoms where we just have them for so long, and we think, "Oh, it's aging. Oh, it's stress it." No, it's your unhealed betrayal.

**Evan H. Hirsch, MD:** Gosh, it seems like it permeates into everything.

**Dr. Debi Silber:** It does.

**Evan H. Hirsch, MD:** And that's probably a large part of my tribe who are suffering with fatigue have some sort of betrayal.

**Dr. Debi Silber:** Absolutely, because your adrenals are just tanked, it's, so you could sleep a whole night long, wake up. You're absolutely exhausted, and it's not just the physical exhaustion. There's such mental, emotional exhaustion with this, too, because we're spending so much time trying to make sense out of the senseless. It's exhausting.

**Evan H. Hirsch, MD:** Yes. And so I know that there's the quiz on your site. And so, after people take that, they realize they have post betrayal syndrome. What do they do next? How do they heal? How do they move forward?

**Dr. Debi Silber:** Yes. Well, what they'll do is they'll take the quiz to see to what extent they're struggling. So we'll either let them know they're very likely to be struggling. They're likely they're unlikely. And we know that by the responses that they, that we received. The first thing I would say, and this is going to sound really silly, but this makes so much of a difference. Check your level of resistance. Because what I see is that person who is so bent on their story and sharing it as much as possible and owning that story, and that's their whole thing.

They're not going to move nearly, nearly as well as the person who says, "Okay, this was awful, but I'm going to make this a pivotal chapter of my story, not my whole story." That's the person who's going to take off versus that person who's like, "This is what, this is what happened to me. And you know what this happened. And then this happened, and this happened." And they get a lot of sympathy from other people. They get a lot of attention. They get a lot of benefit from that. They're staying right where they are.

**Evan H. Hirsch, MD:** And so then it, so then people are ready to move forward. And so what do they do? I imagine you have a program.

**Dr. Debi Silber:** We do. We actually have an entire membership community. There's nothing like it that exists at first. I just had the program, which was predictably walking someone through the five stages. And they'd be at a certain module and say, "Okay, this is stage two. What do I do to get to stage three?" And it was wonderful. And then I certified coaches and practitioners. And then I saw that, really. There were just support groups out there that would kind of keep you stuck. So what we did was we took everything to study proved do we need. I saw that the numbing and avoiding that was going on wasn't helping.

The therapist, who, let's say, wasn't highly skilled in helping someone heal from betrayal that was doing more harm than good. So it was like, I don't want that. And then that type of support that keeps people stuck. So I was like, all right, none of that works. So we took what the study proved do we need. The 10,000 plus people who've taken the post betrayal syndrome quiz saying what they want.

And we put this in everything and the programs in this very unique membership community, where there are live daily classes with my certified coaches, the programs people can access them 24/7. I'm in there a bunch of times a week. We bring in experts to teach master classes and the most amazing forums and clubs. So members can just all lift and inspire one another.

**Evan H. Hirsch, MD:** Sounds wonderful.

**Dr. Debi Silber:** It's really an interesting space. We even have this great charity component too. We choose a member of the month. Just someone who's working really hard. And I take a percentage of everybody's first month of membership and besides all the accolades and certificates and celebrations that that person gets the one who's chosen. They decide to which charity those funds go.

**Evan H. Hirsch, MD:** Wow.

**Dr. Debi Silber:** So they could either do that, or if they choose to put that towards a scholarship for someone, we do that too.

**Evan H. Hirsch, MD:** Nice. So then how do people then learn to trust again? I know you have the book. Maybe you can tell us a little bit about them.

**Dr. Debi Silber:** Yes. Sure. So there's actually a four-step trust rebuilding process that I teach because betrayal shatters the very foundation. We don't trust our betrayer. We don't trust ourselves. We don't trust in anything. So we need to build that all back up again. So trust again, has the four-step trust rebuilding process. There's a story of all of my study participants. My story's in there as well. The five stages, experiential activities. It's not the type of book you read. It's the type of book you do.

And it could really take you a while because I would really encourage people to take their

time with it because there's a reason why it's in the order that it is. And some of these activities are a little bit hard, and if you're not ready for them, you don't want to rush to it because it'll backfire.

**Evan H. Hirsch, MD:** Wise. So then where can people find you learn more about you?

**Dr. Debi Silber:** The best thing to do is take the post betrayal syndrome quiz, and they could just find that at the pbt, as in post betrayal transformation, [thepbtinstitute.com/quiz](http://thepbtinstitute.com/quiz).

**Evan H. Hirsch, MD:** Nice. And we'll put all the links below this video and on the podcast. So Dr. Debi, thanks so much for being with me today. I know that you provided a ton of knowledge and I just really appreciate you.

**Dr. Debi Silber:** Thank you so much. Thanks. It's people like you that give people like me and an opportunity to share. Thank you.

**Evan H. Hirsch, MD:** 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 desperately needed. Sharing all the experts I know and 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 fatigue 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.

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