

EPISODE 83

“SB: Speaking to what you said about the gut and healing the gut, there’s definitely how long it takes for the initial healing is depends on how bad it is and how sick you are, right? That’s the first thing for sure.

I say six months to two years, depending if you stay on a very gut healing program and eat gut healing foods, and so there is a food piece to how you want to eat long term. The interesting — What’s lifelong, the interesting thing is that there’s a lifelong piece to this, because to have a healthy gut, you have to eat food plan, a food program. I don’t like calling it diet, it’s sort of making food choices that facilitate healthy microbiome.

Conventionally, every autoimmune disease has been split between different medical specialties, chopped up; the neurologists are studying MS and the rheumatologists are studying rheumatoid arthritis and the endocrinologists takes care of the thyroid people and the gastroenterologists takes care of the Crohn’s and colitis people. Everybody is in a different place and so the money for research and the unification of it all, which what’s really happening is an immunology problem.

There’s a problem with the immune system. In functional medicine, the approach in functional medicine is to try to figure out the root cause of autoimmunity. What’s the root cause? Why is the immune system not working right?”

[INTRO]

[0:01:33.9] AS: You know battling food in your body doesn’t work. You want to love and accept yourself, and because you’re insatiable, you want results too. You bring the same intensity to your life, wanting to maximize your time, potential, and experiences you have here on our beautiful and wondrous planet Earth. Fair warning, it will be a rollercoaster. But for those insatiable, this is your primetime to thrive. Here is just saying yes to the hunger of wanting it all.

I’m your host, Ali Shapiro, who is dedicated to pioneering a saner and more empowering approach to health and weight loss.

[INTRODUCTION]

[0:01:43.9] AS: Welcome to episode 83 or the Insatiable Podcast with Dr. Susan Blum, functional medicine pioneer on healing your gut for chronic disease relief. Most of today's chronic health issues, from psoriasis, to depression, to Hashimoto's, stem from an auto-immune response in an unhealthy gut. For two decades, Dr. Susan Blum has been providing relief to her patients [inaudible 0:02:04.6] addresses the physical and emotional roots of these issues.

In today's episode, I get the scoop from Dr. Blum on the most effective testing to see if you have gut issues and how this test is also a tool feeling relief you didn't know was possible. This is important because not all gut issues show up in your digestive system. We'll talk about the nitty-gritty details of gut healing including expected timelines, pre and probiotics makes sense and how you don't have to eat perfectly be able to get relief.

Lastly, we talk about how much stress influences gut issues and how much weight you give to stress relief in relation to dietary changes. The percentage with surprise you. This also led to a great discussion on Dr. Blum's own spiritual anchors and beliefs that guide her including her own health challenges she recently had and recovered from.

Here's a little bit more about the amazing Dr. Susan Blum. She is a true functional medicine pioneer and as an assistant clinical professor in the Department of Preventive Medicine at the Icon School of Medicine at Mount Sinai. In addition to being a specialist, she's the founder and director of Blum Center for Health in Rye Brook, New York where she leads a large multi-special team of physicians, nurse practitioners, nutritionist and health coaches all providing cutting-edge functional and integrative medicine services.

In her first bestselling book; *The Immune System Recovery Plan*, Dr. Blum offers her four step program which she used helped thousands of patients recover from autoimmune and immune related conditions without medication. She'll have a second book coming out this fall called *Healing Off Arthritis* which offers a unique groundbreaking approach to helping arthritis sufferers reverse and he even heal this program, and we talked a little bit about on the podcast today.

She is a member of the Medical Advisory Board for The Dr. Oz Show, the Institute for Integrative Nutrition, and a senior faculty teacher with the Center for Mind-Body Medicine in Washington, D.C., and she's been seen all over the media; on The Oz shows, FOX 5 News, ABC Eyewitness news, and is regularly quoted and real simple “Harper's Bazaar and Redbook” among other publications.

Believe it or not, she has even more credentials which you can get at my website, alishapiro.com/podcast, but you're going to love today's episode. It's really going to reframe how you think about health including how to prioritize your emotional well-being. Enjoy.

[INTERVIEW]

[0:04:34.9] AS: Welcome insatiable listeners. Today, we have such an extra special guest, Dr. Susan Blum. Thank you so much for being here. Dr. Blum, I was telling my Truce with Food group that I was interviewing you and one of my clients was like, “Oh my God! Her protocol saved my life. It sounds so cliché, but I was at the darkest hour and she gave me so much hope and her psoriasis, so many of her autoimmune conditions are healing.” That's kind of the intro I want to give our listeners, like this woman make miracles.

[0:05:05.0] SB: Thank you so much. That's really nice.

[0:05:07.1] AS: Yeah, thank you for being here. You're a real pioneer in adopting functional medicine. You had your Hashimoto's experience. What I find interesting was that you were board certified in preventative medicine before Hashimoto, so you always had this inkling. I'm curious, how that transition happened and how you knew to look at food in terms of your Hashimoto's and other autoimmune issues.

[0:05:36.2] SB: Again, thank you for having me here. I love hearing stories about how my book or listening to me or hearing me or see me speak gave people hope, because that's what I hope to do today, just give more information and offer another way just to share what I know and to help give people hope that they don't have to suffer especially with any kind of complex chronic illness, that there is another way and you can get to the root cause and treat it, and food is one of those things.

Now, how did I learn, and it's interesting, so many of my colleagues when I give a talk at integrative conferences and I always start on saying, "Okay, how many of you came to this field of medicine because you had your own autoimmune issue or your own health issue?" or, "How many of you figured this out because you yourself had a problem?" At least two-thirds of the audience raises their hand.

We figure this out on ourselves first often and it's what brings us to an opening. Now, you're right, me I was already on the path a little bit beforehand because I was already dissatisfied with conventional internal medicine, which is where I started out. I started out in internal medicine and did my internship and I just thought, "You know, this isn't right for me. There's a heart attack in room 12 and a G.I. bleed in room 14 and there's some algorithm for how to treat them." It's what we call downstream medicine. It's like way downstream. It's when everything's happened and you've seen the end results.

I was really — I now know the term for it, it's called upstream medicine was what I really wanted to practice, but at that time the only thing I could find, I said, "I want to have an influence in how they got here. I want to talk to people. I want to help figure out, sort of change of the story before their sitting in the room with a heart attack."

The only field that was available was sort of this field of preventive medicine. Also, which is taught in public health schools, is a preventive medicine track in public health schools as well as there's actually a very really — Actually, it just came this morning at the Icon School of Medicine in Mount Sinai, they've changed their name. At the Mount Sinai school of medicine in New York City, I'm on faculty in the preventive medicine department because that's where I took my residency and we had a residency advisory committee this morning.

I just came from there as a matter fact, but I really wanted to find a way to do upstream. I was interested in nutrition and stress, and so let's do that. The conventional world where I found that, I went and did my master's in public health at Columbia and that was great. It was interesting. There was prevention programs and corporate wellness programs. They were talking about clinical — But there's still no clinical prevention.

So I found a preventive medicine residency and I did that at Mount Sinai which is where I'm still affiliated, and that still — That was about immunizations and mammograms and early detection. That's not really primary prevention. Those things, screening programs, are secondary prevention. It's after you already have the beginnings of an illness. Let's catch it early and then we could treat you and you could have a better outcome, and that's all wonderful.

True primary prevention is root cause medicine, and there was nothing, there was nothing — I'm in my preventive medicine program and I'm finishing up and I happen to have had a child, a baby. So I had a child. It's actually my third kid. I was having children all along the way, and I said, "You know what? This isn't for me either. This isn't it. I'm still looking."

I took time off after having my third kid. What happened for me was the first thing — I was already — Sometimes you just know what you don't want as supposed to really truly knowing what you do. Isn't that true?

[0:09:22.9] AS: I think that's how you figure out what you want.

[0:09:25.8] SB: Exactly. I was just doing all these things and figuring what I didn't want, and in my second year of maternity leave or taking a break after having kids, across my desk came this — It sort of a brochure for the Center for Mind-Body Medicine Training Program for health professionals. I looked at this thing and I said, "I have to go." I just knew I had to go.

This, of course, appeals to the whole stress part which we're going to talk today about my mind, body and stress and emotions and how to fix health. That was actually the first thing that I did before I had Hashimoto's or was sick, was I started out in mind-body medicine. In that program, there was nutrition. There was nutrition lectures and nutrition discussion, food is medicine.

The Center of Mind-Body Medicine actually has a fabulous annual food as medicine program — Conference that they run for people who want to come. Anybody could go. It's health professionals a lot to go, but really it's open to the public and it's called Food is Medicine. I started to learn about food is medicine, and in that program I learned about the Institute for functional medicine. In 2001, I did 1998, I did mind-body medicine and then after doing that for

few years, which really gave me the tools to learn more about myself and I was able to really figure out that I want to do nutrition next. Then I went seeking nutritional medicine training.

I think that's how that all happened. Right at the time that I was diagnosed — Gosh! In 2000, I was diagnosed with Hashimoto's. I went and did my functional medicine training right after my diagnosis of Hashimoto's and I came home and I ordered every test on myself. I ordered — I put myself in the detox program. I checked my Mercury. I worked on my gut. I did stool test. I did everything I learned in the functional medicine training and I sort of worked it all out on myself. That's the whole story then, how that all unfolded.

[0:11:21.8] AS: I love that, because I think sometimes people think, “Oh, everyone knows what to do. There’s a set way to do things,” and it really is a lot about experimentation and that’s one of the things I was prepping for this interview. Someone asked you, “How long does it take to heal the gut.” You’re like, “Oh, this is a lifetime path.” Not that you’re going to keep pain forever, but it is a constant learning. I call it spiral staircase, like you get to one view and then you learn something else and then more and more. Kind of like your educational and your own intuitive path led you.

[0:11:55.0] SB: Right. Exactly, and there is a lifelong aspect to this that's really important. Actually, I'm happy to speak to that right now because I have a little bug in my bonnet about that these days.

[0:12:05.9] AS: That’s a great term, bug in my bonnet.

[0:12:07.0] SB: Yeah, I do. I have a bug in my bonnet about that because I'm now 15, 16 years out of practicing functional medicine and I am grateful that I have the experience, because I've been doing it a long time. So many times we do these jumpstart — You can go online, there’s detox program, it’s 21 day this, 30 day this, two week this, and there's a lot of jumpstart programs. I start out with people with a jumpstart as well because they'll feel better quickly, and you want that. You get them started.

I have a new book coming out in October called, *Healing Arthritis*, and what I really was passionate about in this book was step three is called finish what you start, finishing what you

started, because healing the gut and it's very much about healing the gut because arthritis is a — The gut arthritis connection, and there's a whole section on food and all section on trauma. Food trauma gut is the whole book, and then leaky gut and how it causes systemic inflammation.

Speaking to what you said about the gut and healing the gut, there's definitely how long it takes for the initial healing is depend on how bad it is and how sick you are. That the first thing for sure. I say six months to two years depending if you stay on a very gut healing program and eat gut healing foods. There is a food piece to how you want to eat long term, and the interesting — What's lifelong, the interesting thing is that there's lifelong piece to this because to have a healthy gut you have to eat a food plan, a food program. I don't like calling it a diet, it's sort of making food choices that facilitate a healthy microbiome, and a standard American diet does not facilitate a healthy microbiome. Too much animal does not facilitate healthy microbiome. It's food and polyphenol. It's fiber, polyphenol, a lot of vegetables, vegetables, resistant starch that's in legumes.

A lot of people, "I'm not paleo," but the diet should be more 30% animal and 70% of these vegetable foods as supposed to 70% animal. You could always do — It's about balance, but there's a way to eat that will support your microbiome.

Finishing what you started after healing your gut and then you moving on, you really need to continually, 90% of time, eat in a way that's healing for your gut, and that's the lifelong part. Not that you need to be on a leaky gut diet, restrictive, restrictive forever. It's about — Maybe there's more restriction at the beginning while you doing the intensive healing, but then you need some sanity. You need some balance about how you're going to live your life, but you have to understand the influences on your health that you want to adopt certain healthy lifestyle pieces.

Right before we got on, we were talking about how stress comes along and changes people's food choices. While stress comes along and damages the gut, and I see this all the time about people flare with whatever's going on in their pain, or their arthritis. You see flares in diseases or symptoms that people have after something happens, and that's a very common thing as well. Learning how to become more bulletproof to the stressors in your life is going to help you. That's a lifelong thing you need to work on as well.

[0:15:26.1] AS: I love that you said that because I — I had cancer as a teenager and I didn't realize that the steroids and the chemotherapy destroyed my gut, and when I was 22 I was — I had a colonoscopy at 22, early detection/not really, but healing my gut, I had reflux, I had IBS, depression, acne, all these stuff, and I had to be — I'm still gluten free because my sister has celiac and I just feel amazing off of it. It's been nine years. I'm not going back now.

The dairy, like for the first couple of years, I couldn't have it. I couldn't eat past 7 o'clock at night. Now, I can have dairy here and there. I really shouldn't, but it's not going to kill me, and I only feel my stomach flare up like once every couple of years when I'm under a lot of stress, and that's when I know I need to back off, but nothing compared to 10 years ago how rigid I had to be with enzymes and all that kind of stuff. Yeah, it's get better.

I want to backup though. You just said something I think that a lot of people are like, "Wait, what? Arthritis is related to the gut?" I would love for you to define autoimmune conditions and signs and symptoms of them, because it's really hard to get the clear diagnosis if you're going to a conventional doctors.

I think a lot of you are like, "Arthritis is connected to my gut?"

[0:16:38.2] SB: Yes, very happy to do that. The end first, just about arthritis connected to the gut and then I'll backup, I promise. There is a lot of research, and if your rheumatologist, if you have arthritis and your rheumatologist doesn't know that arthritis is connected to your gut, then you actually should get a different rheumatologist, because this is conventional rheumatology journals.

Because we're the poor kid on the block, sort of where the new specialty, I'm probably much more up on the rheumatology literature than some rheumatologist are because I read all sorts of journals, but even in the rheumatology journals, there's a lot of studies showing the connection between an imbalance in your gut flora, a condition called leaky gut, which the — What a leaky gut — Let's back up.

In your gut, there's 100 trillion — This is about autoimmunity too; so I arthritis, autoimmune diseases, we're talking like psoriasis — Yeah, I'll back up again. Anyway, we'll come back to the gut, I promise. Let's back up about what's auto-immunity. Your immune system, we all have an immune system and I like to think of the immune system as sort of an army. It's like an army of cells that — It's an army and they're there to protect you. That's what they're supposed to do. They have a job and they react when they have to and then they're supposed to go to sleep, like go back to basic and just not be so reactive. So they react and then they turn off. Turn on, turn off, turn on, turn off.

What can happen — A healthy immune system turns on when it's supposed to and turns off when it should, and then a healthy immune system also recognizes the difference between friend and foe. It recognizes that my cells in my body are mine and they should attack it because they belong to me and it recognizes that there's some foreign thing that's coming to the body whether the toxin or an infection or something, or damaged tissues. Your immune system clears out cancer cells. It clears out damaged tissues in the body.

The immune system has these jobs and it's supposed to know friend from foe. Under certain circumstances, which we'll talk about in a sec, the immune system cannot work right. What does that mean? Sometimes it turns on and attacks the body's, its own cells when it shouldn't. Its friend is actually a foe.

The immune system attacks itself. It's like a self-allergy almost, and that's called autoimmune, immune against myself. What happens is depending on which organ the immune system attack happens, if it's in the thyroid, you get diagnosed with Hashimoto's thyroiditis. If it's in the skin, you could get psoriasis. If it's in the joints, you get rheumatoid arthritis. If it's in the brain, you get multiple sclerosis. Actually, there's multiple different diseases in all these organs.

This is actually one of the reasons why autoimmune diseases are so behind the times. In cancer, you have the American Cancer Society which it's an umbrella for every kind of cancer. Well, conventionally, every autoimmune disease has been split between different medical specialties, chopped up. The neurologist are studying MS, and rheumatologists are studying rheumatoid arthritis, and the endocrinologists takes care of the thyroid people, and the gastroenterologist takes care of the Crohn's and colitis people.

Everybody is in a different place, and so the money for research and the unification of it all which what's really happening is an immunology problem is. There's a problem with the immune system. What in functional medicine, the approach in functional medicine is to try to figure out the root cause of autoimmunity. What's the root cause? Why is the immune system not working right?

The other thing that could go wrong as it could turn on for a good reason but never turn off. Then it just renegade cells running around and attacking your tissues. A good example of that is like Epstein-Barr virus and lupus, or a positive ANA and a condition called lupus which is a systemic autoimmune disease where your immune system attacks every cell, like all the cells in your body, because the Epstein-Barr virus is hiding sometime — I'm not saying everybody has it because of Epstein-Barr virus, but like a virus can go into one of you tissues and then your immune system is attacking that tissue to try to get at it.

Actually a good case in point is, well, this wasn't autoimmune, but in January, I got Coxsackievirus from one of my kids and I got a terrible inflammatory thyroid thing. My thyroid went crazy. The virus attacked my thyroid gland. That's one of the things that can happen and you can end up with Hashimoto's. Thankfully, my Hashimoto's didn't come back, but that's just an example of if the virus gets stuck in there and you don't clear it, the immune system can keep trying to get at it and then it attacks your own tissue, because the virus is hidden inside yourself. There's all sorts of reason this happen.

[0:21:49.8] AS: Yeah. You mentioned the Epstein-Barr virus. For some reason, I feel like the — have you heard of the medical medium. He wrote this book and he basically brings everything back to —

[0:21:59.5] SB: I did hear about that.

[0:22:00.7] AS: Epstein-Barr virus — I'm more curious why everyone believes the medical medium. I even read the book, but it's like this phenomenon. He goes, "It is all about the Epstein-Barr virus." I'm just like, "How did the medical medium stick?"

[0:22:15.6] SB: Yeah. Listen, I have people — Lime people who think everything's is lime. I'm more moderate than that and I tend to — I don't think there's any way you can say that everybody has the same thing, be everybody is different.

[0:22:31.0] AS: I find — I'm kind of hot on this trail of like if someone tells you it's very simple, it means they're new to the problem.

[0:22:33.6] SB: Yes. That's a very good thing. I like that.

[0:22:42.2] AS: The more you learn, the more you're like, "Okay —" Like when I first — Going up, gliten changed my life in the beginning, I was like, "Everyone should do this." and even though I think a lot of people by the time they come to me, it would benefit. Not everyone needs, in my opinion, to follow the same diet that doing. At the beginning, I was like, "This is the answer," and I'm just so humbled by how complex the healing.

[0:23:03.0] SB: Right, and that the gluten-free is an important part. For autoimmunity, it definitely is in general, but there's a lot of a whole big story to gluten as we know. I think — do you think that answers about what autoimmunity is? In general, that's what autoimmunity is, and so we look for the root cause.

In the medicine, we're the whole person. Instead of cutting up into specialties, it's really holistic. We're really looking at the whole person and looking at how to connect all those dots and figure out, "What the trigger for the immune system?"

Now, it turns out that 70% of the immune system rests in the gut lining, like in the intestinal system. In your small and large intestine, on the others it's like a tube that's supposed to be closed, a closed tube. On the inside of your body, right below the surface, is 70% of your immune system living in these clusters called Peyer's patches, and it's called the GALT, the gut associated lymphoid tissue. That's where your immune cells are laying and wait to develop. It's like little military bases.

As soon as afar, they perceive a foreigner, they go action and they replicate and they sort of mount an immune response. The other really important thing that they make in your gut is these

cells that regulate everything. They're called your T-regulator cells and they help turn things off. When your immune system turns on, the T-regulators turn it off. It turns out an autoimmunity as well as arthritis, the T-regulators aren't working that well.

What helps the T-regs work right is you gut flora. Really good, it's hundred trillion bacteria that live in your gut, they are — Like what's in yogurt, lactobacillus bifidus, and really good studies on this in my new book. I spent a whole — I review all the literature on the connection between the microbes and you gut and your immune system, the microbes in the food you're eating, all that stuff, and really good research.

This is not —when conventional docs say, “Whoa! We're practicing evidence-based medicine.” I say, “Well, no you're not, because you're not reading the evidence.” What I'm doing is practicing evidence-based medicine, and so we have — The gut is really really important. The other thing I just want to put — Say for listeners is that in addition to — You want to have a healthy gut, microbes, all those bacteria.

What can go wrong — And you want to have a really good barrier function between the inside of your gut and your body, the intestinal lining, it's called. Needs to be a barrier, so what you — You bring the outside world into your mouth every day. That's your biggest exposure. It all comes in. If you eat raw food, like sushi, you're bringing in a lot of live little critters into your stomach. And so you're breathing the outside world, and every day, there's toxins, and pesticides and live things and mold on the fruit and your gut has to sort of take that.

You want to have a barrier between what comes in and the inside of your body, because you don't want that all just drifting willy-nilly just easily into your body because your immune system will be overrun with a lot of foreign looking things, which is what happened in autoimmunity, because in autoimmunity and arthritis, the barrier function is damaged. The barrier of the gut, the lining gets damaged, and you get a condition called leaky gut. That's one of things that gluten does.

In addition to its role in just triggering an immune response in susceptible people, gluten — and the other big thing that really damages the gut lining is this compound called glyphosate roundup. Have you been reading about that?

[0:26:44.5] AS: Yeah. So wait. Before you — I'm so excited you're going to go into gluten. If someone is experiencing autoimmune symptoms, [inaudible 0:26:51.7] they do have leaky gut. Even if they're not bloated, they could be having joint pain and migraines and their poop could be regular, but that —

[0:27:00.0] SB: Right, and that's a really good point. All my autoimmunity people — Let's talk about symptoms for autoimmunity and then is your gut okay, and you have to assume your gut is not. Even though I do stool still testing and everybody that comes in and people will be like, "My gut is fine. Why am I doing a stool test?" I'm like, "Well, because I want to see what's going on and if you have — chances are there's going to be some hidden things in there even if you don't have symptoms," and 95% of the time there's definitely something going on in the gut. There's definitely an overgrowth of candida or a bad bacteria. These are conditions called dysbiosis. Sometimes I find parasite. Sometimes a lot of yeast, and sometimes there are harmful microbes, potentially harmful microbes.

Particularly, there are certain categories of microbes that can become overgrown. They're like weeds in the garden. We use the analogy of the inner garden. A lot of people use that analogy. It's helpful, because you can think of the harmful bacteria and microbes as weeds and you need to get rid of the weeds in order for the flowers to be vibrant and healthy. You also need to have healthy soil, and that sort of the lining and what you're feeding yourself and the environment, the microenvironment in the gut. That's where stress and food come. The terrain has to be — Your lifestyle will help the good flowers grow.

If you have an autoimmune condition, there's some that are obviously, like you might have joint pain. Often, some people come in and they just never felt right after they were sick. They had a virus, a terrible viralness or traveler, something happened after they traveled, and so infections can definitely trigger a latent imbalance in the body and sort of start the process that doesn't stop.

Fatigue, really bad — Feeling really tired. Difficulty concentrating in brain fog, these are sights you might have a leaky gut in addition to — and you might not have any autoimmune markers in

the blood work when you go to your doctor, but if you don't do something you might be on the road to ending up with something, with autoimmune issues.

Those sort of things where no one could figure out what's wrong with you. The doctor checks you for anemia on all the obvious conventional things and nobody can figure it out.

Autoimmunity can also — Especially systemic autoimmune conditions like lupus and Sjogren's and things like that, you can end up with muscle, joint pain muscle pain, anything that sort of chronic and doesn't go away, feeling really uncomfortable in your body for some reason. Any kind of pain anywhere, and definitely like headaches maybe, but I don't even know that headaches are — I think of it more like — Even mood stuff, like anxiety and health anxiety and brain fog and can't concentrate and really bad fatigue, those sort of things. Definitely, joint pain and muscle pain.

I think those would be the most obvious things, and sometimes people will just say, "I just don't feel right. Something is not right with me."

[0:29:54.0] AS: They need to trust that, because a lot of times if they go to a conventional doctor, they must just say, "Oh, you have autoimmune," or they'll say, "There's nothing in the blood work," and yet — I was at a cookout last night, or this weekend and it was a very traditional psychiatrist too is here in Pittsburg and she was saying — she talked about heavy metal that how it's very rare for people to have heavy metal toxicity. I said, "Well, is it rare or is no one testing for it?" Because I think it's probably a lot more common. He's like, "I don't you know." I know that's part of your protocol is heavy metals. We're kind of jumping around, but my point is is that a lot of conventional doctors aren't testing for the stuff, so they're going to think that they don't know what they don't know or they don't know what —

[0:30:34.9] SB: Right, and that also reminds me a very common thing that happens is people come in and they'll say, "I went to my conventional doctor. Here is my blood work. Everything is good. I had my checkup. I have nothing. I'm good." I'll go — I'll look at it and I say, "Well, they tested three things, and in those three things you're good, but there's about like 25 other things that are part of my annual routine blood work that I don't know if you're good."

What they tested for, they're good, and so they'll say, "My doctor didn't find anything and so

there's nothing wrong with me." Well, if they only tested for three things, then those things aren't wrong with you. I think it is really important to make sure that, like you said, keep going.

[0:31:20.3] AS: Go with your gut.

[0:31:21.8] SB: Go with your gut. Keep going and if you know something is not right, you keep going. At the very least though, you can start to treat yourself. This is what we've been talking about today, is you don't need if you can find an integrator or functional medicine doctor or something like that, great, but you can — There's a lot of us functional medicine folks who have written books to help you get started and that's sort of how you found me and I'm here talking.

Because there aren't that as much of us is there are people who need us to, so books are a good place to start. One of the things that makes functional medicine so amazing from my perspective is not only are we trying to figuring out root cause, and we look at things like metals and we have different ways of testing metals and we look gut and we have different ways of testing the gut, but we're very very much focused on using lifestyle medicine to help as the core foundation of the treatment programs.

Lifestyle medicine is what you're eating and how you're living your life; emotions, thoughts; feelings; mind-body, how that's connected helping get that — Helping not only treat an imbalance that might be in that system, in the stress system, but also helping people learn tools and teaching tools for how to eat, how to have better balance in your life and stressing why that's important.

[0:32:43.9] AS: Yeah. Let's talk about food, because you started about gluten. I also liked how you distinguished — Because a lot of people — I think a great first step for people is this elimination diet. I loved how you have talked about it as both a diagnostic tool and a treatment.

[0:33:00.8] SB: Therapeutic. It's Therapeutic and diagnostic.

[0:33:02.6] AS: Can you explain so people can have like something to start with.

[0:33:07.4] SB: Yes, exactly — and I'll tie this into the beginning of our conversation, which was I view what's called an elimination diet as the way we start, and we always start that way. But it's not supposed to be forever.

I invite — It's an invitation to do an experiment and I think it's a lot easier for people to sort of adopt this or sometimes it can be very overwhelming to look and say, “Oh my God! How am I going to do that?” I always say, “Look, plan for it. Take your shopping list. Make a start date.” We do it for three weeks, so that three weeks is sort of the minimum amount of time to let your immune system cool down before testing the foods again.

The goal is to remove a list of foods that are the most triggering foods for most people. The classic ones are gluten, dairy, soy, corn, eggs. That's the top five, and with that it's processed sugar, processed flour, its quality. Choosing that are quality oils. Choosing grass-fed organic beef. If you're going to eat red meat, look at what the animals are eating. Make sure that any animal food you're eating that you're choosing, you're paying attention to what those animals are fed because that comes into your body. Cleaning things up, so cleaning up the processed food and that kind of stuff, but in addition to just eliminating these food groups.

There is a certain amount — That's lifelong. Really paying attention to your processed food consumption as well as paying attention to the quality of the actual food you're choosing is something that that remains lifelong, and that's a permanent change that you have to start making now because sugar is inflammatory in the body. It facilitates the growth of the wrong bacteria in your gut as well as the feedlot animals. Beef also facilitate bad bacteria in your gut as well as our inflammatory in the body. Those are things you want to limit. That's lifelong.

That being said, the elimination diet part is testing you for food sensitivities. There's a general cleanup and then there's testing you, and that's the 21 day program where we make this list of foods that you remove. Now, the reason why we call it therapeutic and diagnostic is because therapeutic, because the majority of people feel better when they take those foods out. Most people will say, “Oh, I'm fine. My digestive system, I don't have food sensitivities. Why would I give up, I could eat anything my whole life.”

What I would invite anyone listening to contemplate is that you might not know that you could feel better, and so sometimes you take those foods out and your head gets clear and you're remembering people's names and you didn't realize you were forgetting them. All of a sudden your energy is great and you're looking and all of a sudden it's 7, 8 o'clock at night and you're still going strong and you didn't realize that you are getting tired at 4, 5 o'clock.

Things, all of a sudden, you might not realize that you really could actually feel better or that you're having better elimination and you didn't realize it could be better. All those things sort of can happen. For the first three weeks, you eliminate those foods, and there's really other options. There are so many other options to eat. There's so many dairy alternatives out there. There is coconut, almond products, there's so many gluten-free options.

The other thing about corn and soy to keep in mind is that one of the reasons I think — I think a lot of people feel better taking corn and soy out, and I think it's one of two reasons. Either they have a true sensitivity to those foods or there's other aspects of those foods that are giving them trouble. Soy and corn are the highest pesticide laden foods that we have in terms of this glyphosate roundup, and people have terrible digestive symptoms from just that and aren't they the most highly genetically modified foods.

GMO soy and corn, because they're genetically modified to resist the roundup pesticide, the field of soy and corn are sprayed with like enormous amount of roundup because the plant is still standing strong while all the weeds are killed because the plant is bred to resist the roundup. Those foods have an enormous amount of this compound called glyphosate which causes leaky gut and damages your gut.

I don't know whether it's a true soy, corn allergy or sensitivity, why people feel better when they take it out and then worse when they eat it. That's the one reason why soy and corn need to come out. The other reason is that if you look at processed food and you look at a box of macaroni and cheese, or you look at muffin mix. I don't know. I'm picking just things off the top of my head, people that eat processed foods, or just regular crackers even, like Ritz crackers. You'll see that there is corn syrup solids, and sometimes in fake state proteins, there's like soy protein isolate or soy this. This processed corn and soy in all process foods. It sort of makes up the groundwork of those foods, and so you're getting a lot more soy and corn than you think.

When we ask people to remove soy and corn, they have to become a label reader all of a sudden. All of a sudden, 80% of the processed foods from the diet come out. The education that you're going to get when you try to take all the soy and corn out of your diet is priceless.

[0:38:44.2] AS: If you're not like, "Oh my God! What's happening to our food supply?" Shock and awe.

[0:38:47.7] SB: Right. It's shock and awe. You went to IEN, and these are the kind of things you learn at IEN, and the videos of the way they feed the chickens. It's really believable, the food supply. You have to become an educated consumer of what you're eating. You have to know what's in the food, all the ingredients. Doing an elimination diet forces you to look at every ingredient, and you will not look at food the same.

It's great — you might still eat those foods sometimes, I'm sure you will, but the education you're going to get and how different you're going to feel by switching over to a whole foods diet that doesn't have list of ingredients like that in the food, you're just going to feel a lot better.

[0:39:32.9] AS: I want to circle back with the glyphosate, you were talking about that with gluten too. For people — You may not have celiac disease or gluten intolerance, but again, this glyphosate, especially if you have gut issues, you're probably not detoxing as well, which means that stuff gets stored in you. Just because you get a celiac blood test and they say, "You don't need to stay way from gluten. You're fine." You're saying eliminate it for three weeks and then added back in.

[0:39:57.6] SB: We're talking about people who don't have celiac, they test negative.

[0:40:00.5] AS: Yeah, testing negative for celiac.

[0:40:02.2] SB: Yeah, testing negative for celiac. Coming back to gluten then, gluten has its own story. As we know, there's so many books and everything, but gluten has its own story. For these reasons, gluten is associated with autoimmunity. It causes celiac disease, which is not autoimmune condition, and gluten is associated — There's really good article, articles that have been written looking at the data about how gluten is associated with other autoimmune diseases

as well. You must — anyone who has any autoimmunity needs to take gluten out because it's a trigger to the immune system. Your immune system responds to it.

Now, the food supply is different than it ever was before. There's a lot more — There's 42 gluten proteins now in the wheat and they used to be seven. That's just hybridization over the years. Our wheat is just different than the ancient wheat that our ancestors ate. There's just a lot more gluten that we're exposed to, and wheat is also doused pretty well glyphosate, with roundup.

What I would say is — That's the first thing about gluten in general. The other thing is there's something called non-celiac gluten, NCGS, and it actually has a name now. It's called non-celiac gluten sensitivity and I think was Alessio Fasano who's the original leaky gut researcher, the gastroenterologist showing the mechanism for how a leaky gut happens. I think she's the one who wrote that article. could be wrong.

Really, though, a bonafide new emerging new diagnosis, and it just means that because gluten comes into the body and people react to it. Part of it is a gut reaction — Sometimes it's a gut reaction, but sometimes it's a systemic reaction. It's just triggering inflammation in the body, and inflammation just means that you your immune system is reacting and it's sending out these chemicals that are zipping around the body causing irritation.

Inflammation means redness, swelling, pain, and heat. If you see it on your joints, you see it. It's red, swollen, hot, and it hurts. If it's in the organs or in the inside of the body, it just impairs the functioning of that tissue. It's just an irritation that you don't feel good, and that's just how information feels inside you where you can't see it, and gluten triggers information. It triggers an immune reaction in a lot of people.

You have to remove it to see. The therapeutic part is three weeks should take these foods out and you see how you feel. I always tell people, "You might not notice that you feel better. Maybe you won't. Maybe you're like, "No." And people will come in and say, "I don't really know if I feel any better."

I always invite them to hold their judgment until they start reintroducing the foods, because you might not realize you feel better. You felt better until you reach just the food in a triggers the

symptom. What the program is doing, the elimination diet, is it's going to take everything out, everything calms down in your body. Your immune system comes down. Your inflammation levels go down, and it sort of gets you ready to have like a heightened reaction when you eat the food again.

When you go back and let's say the first thing after three weeks, "I miss my gluten. I want to eat some wheat," and you eat gluten a couple of times that day and the next day and you just watch what happens. If you have gluten sensitivity, you're going to trigger an immune reaction to the body that you're feel. The goal is to feel it strongly, because so that you're aware of it. That's what we talk about that it's diagnostic. It's therapeutic to see if you feel better, but then we want to diagnose food sensitivities and that's how you do it.

Every three days, you reintroduce in the next food on your list. If you have a reaction, you have to take the food out again and wait until the reaction goes away and then try the next food. You just sort of roll your way through reintroduction. I always tell people the data — This is experiment, and the data collection happens in part one, but especially in part two.

Before I get off this topic and pause, because I know I'm just going on and on, I do want to just say that sometimes you might — There people who are going to do elimination diet and not be able to identify anything, maybe like, "I didn't notice difference when I removed it and I did noticed a difference when I reintroduced it." If that happens to you, then chances are you have something else going on that just masking everything. If your gut is in really bad shape, bad dysbiosis, severe leaky gut and you're not working on — And the gut work hasn't been done yet, the healing the gut part is not underway. Until you heal your gut, you might not be able to notice, you're not going to feel better even from removing foods. Sometimes that happens.

If something else is going on, if you're in the middle of a viral illness or something and you do an elimination diet, you might not notice you feel better, because there's outside triggers. A way to think of — it's just there are other — I love this new way. I used to always talk about sitting on tax, I'm removing tax and finding the tax removing them. I heard one of my colleagues say, "If you're in a building and the roof is leaking and the waters is pouring inside and you're inside the building and you find a couple of holes and plug them, unless you find all the holes to plug them, it's still going to rain inside.

Food, you might have some of those holes are related to food, but while you have all these other holes in the roof, it's still raining and you're not going to be able to determine the food. I would invite you to take a look at your gut, especially, and work on the gut healing program. I do have an online resource for you to heal you gut at blumhealthmd.com. You can go there, and I have a whole heal my gut program, but makes sure you go back later on and do the elimination diet again, because you have to — Once your gut is healed or you've done some gut healing work, go back and see whether or not to test your sensitivities again.

[0:46:06.2] AS: I love it. I want to leave some time so we can talk about the emotional and spiritual stuff. I'm just going to ask you a couple of quick questions about the healing part and we'll be quick. When people are healing, do you recommend like pre and probiotics right away or is there a rate of introduction or can they just go at them which will help re-stabilized that gut biome?

[0:46:27.5] SB: For healing the gut, I always recommend you start out with some simple wheat killer, and that's just the easiest way to say it. I used herbs, and so I have favored products. They are tried and true herbs that are out on the market and that supplement companies have to clean out sort of the bad bacteria and the yeast. I use a lot of oregano. I use a lot of berberine, and I use it in products. I like GI Micro-X from Designs for Health. That's the one I use, and I have packets. I use them in with oregano.

You find gut cleanse sort of herbs that have things like — and I took about this as — I give all the different kind of herbs in my book, *The Immune System Recovery Plan*, that book that's out already. I'm a whole healing my gut — Oh! Actually, on my website, on blumhealthmd, if you go to the book, The Immune System Recovery Plan page, I have a free download for the whole chapter; healing your gut. The whole chapter is a free download and it will talk about all the herb.

Anyway, step one, total explain tool. It's all there. That's the quickest way. First — so to answer your question, in functional medicine, healing the gut is a multistage process. The first R — It's the five R, the five R program. The first R is remove, and that's where you remove the food, so

that the elimination diet, but you have to remove the bad actors that are in the gut. That's what you need the herbs for, remove the bad bacteria and yeast.

You have to do that first. It's sort of like if your garden is overgrown with weeds, you can't just plant flowers and think the weeds are going to just go away. You have to weed the garden in order to really get your good stuff in there. That the first thing. Treat your gut with some sort of herbal program.

I always use probiotics. Probiotics not only are great for helping restore the gut bacteria, but really, food is the best thing to help you restore bacteria, which we'll talk about. Probiotics have an immune function. They actually — When you take probiotics, it reduces inflammation in the body. It helps heal your leaky gut. It increases your functioning of those T-regulator cells that are really important, reduces inflammation in the body. Really good study that's just done, people taking probiotics and how it changes your immune function.

[0:48:49.3] AS: Do you think everyone in the West, even if we're relatively healthy, should be taking probiotics given —

[0:48:53.9] SB: I think if you're healthy and you don't have any immune issues, you do not need to take probiotics, but you need to be eating probiotic foods. You need to eat cultured foods, which is i.e. coconut yogurt. I put coconut yogurt in my shakes in the morning, and so you can — I don't believe in cow dairy. I think it's very inflammatory. It doesn't agree with me. Some people can tolerate it, and yogurt is the best choice as far as I'm concerned, because dairy is on the alkaline acid spectrum. It's a very acid kind of food in the body and how it behaves in the body.

I'm not big on dairy, but I think there's a lot of cultured milks that you can do, cultured almond yogurt, cultured coconut products, and there's fermented foods. So there's kimchi, and there's pickled radishes that I — [inaudible 0:49:40.6] and there's kombucha. You can drink kombucha tea.

I think that rather if you're generally healthy, I don't — and you just need to attend to your gut microbiome by eating cultured and fermented foods, which cultures, peoples all around the

world. There are cultures where they have that staples in their diets. In the Middle East, they have yogurt. India, they eat yogurt. They live with yogurt, and God knows this parasite and crazy stuff in India. Have you ever went there? I know. I've been there and I treat people when they come back.

I think food and fiber and colorful fruits and vegetables, they grow the good bacteria. If you're a person that has any kind immune issue, if you find you're getting sick a lot, even just getting sick a lot, like I get a cold all the time, probiotic is really good for that. If you have digestive issues, probiotic won't necessarily — Food is going to be the first thing for reflux, and an elimination diet is a perfect way to test your — To try to help your reflux to see why you're getting reflux.

Gluten and dairy I think are the numbers one and two culprits.

[0:50:47.4] AS: Yeah, I was just wondering if you thought because of that terrain. I always think get the probiotics and prebiotics in there.

[0:50:53.1] SB: Yeah, let's talk about prebiotics for a second. Food — I believe — Right. I am talking about prebiotics. Yes, prebiotics in the form of food, and that's just all your fruits and vegetables and fiber. Yes, prebiotics in that form.

There's sort of an epidemic of this gut condition called SIBO. I don't know if you've been digging in to that.

[0:51:12.2] AS: I am, and one of the function forums I went to, they were kind of now toying with, "Do we not treat it and just crowd it out with all the good stuff because—" This was in New York two years ago. I don't know if you were at that one, but they were saying —

[0:51:25.0] SB: I've been there. Yeah, I know. Yeah.

[0:51:26.7] AS: Sometimes the antibiotics can be worse if the terrain isn't really strong in the body. They were postulating the question, "Do we treat SIBO or do we just try to crowd it out with all the good stuff?"

[0:51:39.6] SB: Right. Sometimes, SIBO — Just, what's SIBO is small intestinal bacterial overgrowth. Normally, 90% of the bacteria is supposed to be in the large intestine and only 10% in your small intestine. That's the normal spread in the intestines.

SIBO is when you might have normal bacteria but they're just congested up in the small intestine right after your stomach. They're in the small bowel where they shouldn't belong, and those are people who have bloating and gas and just respond — The foods they eat trigger all these reactions because all these bacteria are there where they shouldn't be ready to ferment those foods and make gas. Those of normal bacteria for the colon, often.

Often, they're just your normal flora and they're in the wrong place and they're overgrowing and you have too much of them. The problem is that they can impair, cause digestion and absorption issues in the small intestine. You can get malabsorption of your nutrients from having SIBO.

Some people — Gosh! I've had some patients who couldn't leave their house because they were passing so much gas and they were having so many loose stool. Some people have diarrhea from it. Some people have constipation. I've had some people who were so uncomfortable that they needed treatment.

I agree with you. Some people — Then I have some people where the SIBO is contributing to their leaky gut and they have autoimmunity or arthritis and they have SIBO. In those cases, I do go ahead and treat them.

People who have no symptoms and their immune system seems okay, sometimes all that — Not do any kind of aggressive treatment, because conventionally they're treated with antibiotics. I use the same herbs for SIBO that I use for dysbiosis. I'm not really causing any damage, but what I want to say is from root cause medicine, which is functional medicine, you have to figure out why someone has SIBO. Why do you have SIBO?

The answer is to find out why you have it, otherwise it will still keep coming back. Sometimes the biggest culprit is stress, and I know that we need to dig into stress a little bit.

[0:53:41.4] AS: Yeah.

[0:53:43.7] SB: The biggest biggest culprit is stress.

[0:53:46.7] AS: Yeah, one more question on the physical stress is when someone healing and they're getting better and better and then they have a slip-up, what's your philosophy on that? I'm kind of like, "Okay, use that as a reminder of how bad you feel and to keep going," and like you said, real life. I'm curious, I tend to think like a little bit of inflammation isn't as bad as the whole cake. A little isn't —

[0:54:12.0] SB: Oh! Absolutely. I think that as their coaches, you're a coach, I'm a coach also, while I'm doing everything, but I'm coaching. My job, like your job, and I know you believe this — We talked about this before, is to meet people where they are. You can't — If you hold such a high bar and tell people you expect them to be a hundred percent, not only will they feel like they failed, and when that happens sometimes they just give up. They throw the whole towel in and just don't even and just come back and, I just gave up because I couldn't do it.

Sometimes they won't come back and see you because they feel ashamed, because you gave them this total sort of expectation that was unrealistic. Actually, I encourage people to be a hundred percent if they can for the three weeks of the elimination diet because you need to be a hundred percent first to be able to collect the data. If you cheat along the way, you're not going to be able to see if the food triggers you after three weeks. The reintroduction part after the 21 days are up, the reintroduction part is not as effective. You can't really know if you have a food sensitivity unless you really are a hundred three weeks.

That's the only time when I'm really — If people come back and they say, "I really couldn't do it." I'm like, "Fine." We won't have that information. We just don't know, because that's — And I try to encourage them at some point maybe to try again, but coming to what you said, you're not going to throw it all away if you go to a wedding like I did on Saturday night and whatever you want. You're not going to. You have to live life and have fun. Oh, God! I was so hangover on Sunday. I felt so sick. I had French fries. I really ate everything. I'm way down the road on this, but the trick is to not do that too often, because then your whole baseline can start going up again.

One day like that and you'll just really feel crummy the next day. You have to be clean, clean, clean. I actually — Monday and Tuesday, I did a juice cleanse for two days. Of course, I'm involved with this company called organic farmer and so there's all hundred percent organic, low sugar. I helped designed all the — With the chefs, all the food, and so I know that a really good, clean juices. I rebooted myself to get back on track and to just clean that out and to make sure that I didn't continue.

One night is fine every couple of weeks but — It depends on far along you are in your process. If you're years and years and years and you're generally healthy and feeling good, it could even be a little bit once a week, and that's fine. Saturday nights, go out to dinner, cheat a little bit, but you have to go back to being really — To really maintaining your vigilance on the other days, because you can slip back into bad habits very easily. I definitely allowed the 90% rule after they're healed.

[0:57:18.4] AS: What about in the healing phase though?

[0:57:20.4] SB: Right! In the healing — Yeah, I was going to say. So where are we with that? It depends on how — I guess I just have to say it depends on how sick you are, for people listening. If you're really really sick and you're suffering, you really want to be as close to a hundred percent as you can because you feel better. You don't want to take the chance of not feeling good, but you'll know, and so this is a bit of a process, because — You'll know that you can test yourself as you go. Let's say you start program and three months into it, or after the 21 days you reintroduce and you realize that gluten and dairy and corn are the three foods that give you like your hands well the next day.

I had a patient whose feet — She couldn't get — She had terrible pain in the bottom of her feet when she stepped out of bed in the morning. Corn was the culprit. You realized that's something, you identify a food trigger. You want to remove those foods as best you can for three months. Now, if you eat that food, you're going to notice, and you probably will. Let's say you go out and you have some gluten or something. See what happens. You might find that while you're still the early phases of your healing, you're going to have symptoms for three days from

cheating. I don't even want to call it cheating. From eating foods that you know you're sensitive to.

You might have symptoms for like three days. Whereas now, from me, I'm years in, I'll just have symptoms for day. That's a sign that I have more resilience in my body. My terrain is in a better place. I'm not as sensitive to that food as I once was. Your food sensitivity will get better as your gut gets healthier and as you move your body to a healthier overall place.

I would say that at the beginning of your journey, you want to not try to limit the time — Really restrict the foods as much as you can and slowly but surely you can see how you feel each time you eat it, to see how bad your reaction is. If it stays pretty bad, then you need to still cut it out. How's that for an answer?

[0:59:22.3] AS: I love that, and I think this is a great bridge to the stress, because in my work I see how stress, emotional stress, people know they're feeling better but then they also don't know how to cope with the emotional stress in their life. I see that in a lot about emotional safeties, so it's like I know I'm going to feel physically bad, but risking my emotional safety right now feels worse. This is all unconscious until it's brought conscious.

You were saying stress is so important, and I'm curious about your beliefs around how much of — Especially autoimmune, which I always look on an emotional level. What's the metaphor here? How are we emotionally attacking ourselves? If the body is physically attacking ourselves, how much — We've spent a good portion on the food, and I feel like that is something concrete for people, so that we want to grasp on to that. Also, like you said, cut your teeth in mind-body medicine. What is your view on equal weight to the emotional and spiritual and my client who totally — You've changed her life. She's like, "I want to know, because I've also noticed as I deal with the ghost from my pasts, things seem to get better even if the food is still a little wonky." She's like, "I love to know what Dr. Blum thinks."

[1:00:34.6] SB: I actually think this probably equal weight to both. Gosh! I have so many stories in my head that I could share. I find that people flare — I find my patients flare with symptoms when they have stressors and anything traumatic or difficult, just parent gets sick and ends up dying and all the — The gut goes wonky again. Stress has a huge effect on the gut.

I hear what you're saying about stress influences your food choices. It influences — You know you want to choose those comfort foods. You don't want to. I just actually had a very — One of my Sjogren's patient I've been working with for a while, I spoke to her yesterday and she did so — Her husband was so sick for so long and she's still stuck with like really taking good care of herself, and that now her daughter has an abusive husband and she's going through that and she just lost — She said, "My symptoms are flaring again and I'm just been eating off the wagon. I can't do it anymore. I just lost it."

[1:01:36.5] AS: Her resilience was probably — It was there, but it was depleted at the same time.

[1:01:40.1] SB: Her resilience wasn't — She wasn't completely resilient yet, but she — The stress just — I was surprised that she stayed so well during the first traumatic thing that she went through with her husband. I guess for people listening, the message really is to — I want you to understand the importance of what you're going through and how that's affecting your physical body and just give it a nod. Just understand that.

When I give lecture — Now, one of the things I always say is, "Okay, who here knows that stress is really important?" and everybody raises their hands. Then I say, "Well, so who here really knows and is really doing something about it? How are you emphasizing these with your patience? How are you doing this with yourself? Are you really attending to the issue of stress in your life?" and like a quarter of the people raise their hands.

We all know it intellectually, and it's really — But it is really really that important. I think that we have to do really put a practice into our lives that, "Well, it's more than that." It's about cultivating some way every day to have a daily practice of some sort to turn the stress off. There's two aspects to the mind-body connection and the effects of stress on your health. One is the actual physical response of your body to a stressor. The stressors are around us. It's if somebody gets sick. A kid calls you 3 o'clock in morning at the police station. I have that. I have three sons. Each one did that to me once.

[1:03:18.4] AS: Depending on how resilient, your gut was, right?

[1:03:20.3] **SB:** But that's stress response. There's all sorts of reasons why everybody is going to have traumatic things happen. Everybody's going to have stressors happen, and those of you — And people with autoimmune disease or any kind of chronic illness — Look, you are you something really stressful. It's very very hard to — you have to knowledge — I acknowledge with people all the time that they come out of that almost like a PTSD with health anxiety. Everything becomes a worry.

There's always opportunity. There's plenty of opportunity of stressors in our lives, and then the question is are you going to live in a perpetual on-switch where your stress response is the fight or flight they call it, the fight or flight system is activated and stays on all the time. I guess when you think of the immune system, autoimmune, immune system staying on, well you can have your stress system just staying on. You need to find a way to regulate it and to turn it off. Everybody has to, and this is a conversation I have with every every everybody in my office.

Every time I see everybody, "So, what are we doing? How is your mind-body practice? What have you decided to do?" Sometimes I give them links to apps and we brainstorm if you commute on the train. You can listen to your app. What would you like to do? Do you want to do something more moving? Do you want to yoga? Do you want to do meditation? I give them resources for learning. I give CDs. I give downloads for — We have a learn to relax kit on our website, there on my website that has an MP3 guided thing. it's that important.

The first thing is recognizing that it is that important, staying in the on-switch and excepting that it's part of everybody, and we all have to find a way. You cannot get around this. You will stress in your life if you allow your stressors to come into your body, they will make you sick. They will affect your immune system. They can cause other symptoms other than autoimmunity, but it can contribute to that, and triggering inflammation.

Then indirectly, because physically, stress will damage the gut. It causes leaky gut all by itself, stress hormones. It changes your gut flora all by itself. It causes reflux. It causes SIBO, small intestinal bacterial overgrowth, because it decrease the motility of your gut. It's like if you chronic constipation or lack of motility through the gut, the bacteria get jammed up in the small intestine and so stress is a huge component of that.

There's all sorts of ways that I can go through and prove and we can all understand it intellectually, but as coaches, we have to not only walk the walk ourselves — I meditate every morning, but I walk my dog, I leave the phone home. I go out with the dog.

You have to set an intention that this is that important and you won't get better. Sometimes, in somebody's healing journey, they're getting better better and we're working on healing the gut and the stool tests are improving and everything so going great. Then, and then some reason that they're not using a football metaphor, you're on a field-goal range but you're not in the end zone yet. No touch down. What's that last piece? 90% of the time it's stress. There's that emotional piece, the emotional — They're falling into some emotional eating or they're falling into some — There is just stressors that they're just bringing in that are preventing them from full recovery or a full health.

The other thing that mind-body medicine does with these mind-body practices, like meditation, so they're going to help antidote and give you the bulletproof vest for your physical health, but they also provide tools for self-awareness. We all are — I was going to say we're all alone. We're not alone, but you know what I mean. We all are in charge of our own health. We're all in charge of our path through life. It's a journey where each individual is on.

How do you know what comes next? How do you know how to navigate? How do you know what choice to make with the help decision you might have? how do you know? I believe we all have an intuition. There's an intuitive voice that helps us all know what to do next. Decisions whether it's about health or family or anything and finding some practice every day or some way to quiet your mind so you could get in touch with you own intuitive voice which is what happens. When you quiet the noisy mind that's busy talking to you and making just a lot of distraction, these practices, these meditative mind-body practices can help quiet your mind so you can hear your inner voice. I call your inner North Star.

In order to navigate through our healthcare system, through getting better from having chronic illness, what comes next? Being able to notice when your emotions are getting the better review and you're making those choices. Sometimes you'll say, "Dammit! I'm just going to eat that

anyway. I know making emotional choice. I don't care. I feel like having it," and I believe you should eat it then. I'm like fine with that.

Somehow you have to reground yourself and you need tools for that so that you don't completely fall off and that you're mindful as you doing it, mindful choices. It's been my experience that to really really stay on the path and finish what you start, the mind-body peace and understanding your own sort of the way your own emotions and mind works to trigger food choices or to trigger your symptoms or to trigger stress responses, you have to understand that and you have to understand it. You have to acknowledge with yourself the importance of it in your health and you have to commit to doing something about it.

[1:09:20.2] AS: I love that you brought up the self-awareness piece, because what I do with my clients is show how stress from the past, they're re-creating their story today. I always use the quote made famous by Erin Brockovich and Gloria Steinem that says; the truth will set you free but first it will piss you off, and how they're re-creating stress and they have to become self-aware of how they're doing that. Then you can make a new meaning out of your health symptoms and it can be this invitation into power and resilience.

I'm curious for you, do you think with your Hashimoto's, it was almost a spiritual redirection or fine-tuning of your path, and I find it interesting that then you got a virus the beginning of this year but it didn't take you down the same way because you had all these emotional resilience because you're on your North Star path.

[1:10:11.7] SB: Right. I do want to clarify one thing about that for complete transparency about my path. We'll do that first. I actually got — About a year ago, I got — I am back to resilient now because I did about two years ago, I got a little arthritis and I panicked and I was like, "Oh my God!" Actually, it was that I developed this inflammation in my eye. I got an inflammatory thing and I was like, "What's going on?"

I had written a book. One of my kids had a traumatic brain injury. We're talking about — This is my own experience of going through several terrible difficult years, and one of my kids had to leave school and take a gap year because he was having some emotional stress and the other

kid — and I open Blum Center and I was doing way too much in addition to having these family issues.

A year into this whole thing I got this inflammation in my eye, and it was a wake-up call for me and I realized I was having swelling with my fingers and I put myself back on the program, like 150% strict. I picked peppers out of the food. I was just eliminating — I took out nightshades because of my arthritis, which is tomatoes, potatoes, eggplants, and peppers.

I went about healing my gut and meditating every day and recommitted, and so yes, when I got the virus now, I was back to being resilient, but I did fall off the wagon, so to speak, from stress. I really do — in terms of my gut. My gut went completely wonky because of everything I had gone through. I was still eating very healthy.

To speaking to what you had said about — I think you said this earlier, that eating fine, but you could be doing the food plan just fine and really being clean with food, but stress alone can cause autoimmunity or can cause a leaky gut and can be the only culprit. It absolutely can, and that's what happened with me the second time around.

I didn't have an autoimmune thing even when I say I had arthritis. It was not autoimmune, but I have these inflammatory symptoms. I caught myself early, got myself his back on the wagon a hundred percent and really I needed to gut work and I needed to really do some self-awareness. I started doing acupuncture every week. I really worked on my stress system, like with outside help, with a therapist, like an acupuncturist and really committed to — Because I got scared. I could end up with rheumatoid arthritis and that's the last thing that I needed, and so I did.

When I had the bars this year, I did recover very quickly and didn't end up with something, but I had already — Yes, I'm back to being resilient again, thank God, but I did have a another thing that I did have to go through and it was all stress related.

[1:13:06.5] AS: But I would still think that it went from bouts of it, whereas Hashimoto's is full on systemic. Even though — You don't have any more in your health, it just —

[1:13:16.6] SB: Right, it was bump. It wasn't so much — It wasn't like the Hashimoto's.

[1:13:19.4] AS: Yeah, because you don't have all these like principal interest —

[1:13:24.0] SB: That's very true. Yes, the Hashimoto's, I was very — That's exactly. I was very resilient coming into everything I was doing, and then I went to all these things and I did have like a little bump that surfaced but I was able to treat it, yeah, pretty quickly because of the resiliency I think of all the years of being very — Taking good care of myself.

[1:13:45.8] AS: Seeing how miraculous the body is and your own amazing stories, what's your spiritual beliefs? When do you lock into when times you get stressful? I'm always interesting, because these — I think of you as a healer and there's a mystery —

[1:13:59.7] SB: Yeah, there is mystery. I guess — Let me think of — How I would answer that would be to say that I believe there were all here for our own reason and that I'm here to learn lessons, like being a human being. I believe in reincarnation. I believe in coming back and learning and spiritual growth during your lifetime. When these things happen, I take it really seriously that I need to understand the lessons I need to learn from it. Yeah, I do a lot of spiritual work too.

[1:14:32.6] AS: I love that, because I believe in reincarnation, that I'm going through a phrase where I'm kind of questioning it and — I don't know.

[1:14:38.3] SB: All it means is that you believe that there's someplace your spirit lives somewhere, then goes somewhere and it's a great mystery about where your spirit goes at the end of life, and that comes back, and that I'm a spiritual being inside a human body and we come back.

I do believe — My belief is that we do choose some of the circumstances before we come in to this life. Everything that I'm going through in my life in some ways, I'm here — I knew the lessons that I would be facing to potentially learn in this lifetime. I just tried to step up to the plate and sort of dig in to that. It's like, "Okay, what do I need to learn here."

The nice thing about that approach is that it releases judgment and blame from and it allows forgiveness, because the most important thing — I guess that my spiritual belief is forgiveness, because people — This is the circumstances that they were born into and sometimes they're not to learn their lessons in this life and you just have to let it go and there's no blame or judgment and some people are really trying to learn the lessons and grow from their experiences.

Some people — I have family members who I think are just sort of stuck and they're not going to learn their lesson, and you just have to go, "Okay." I do the best I can to take responsibility for my own life and to encourage everyone else to do that and I'm not responsible for other people's lives. But we're here to learn. We're here to learn and grow. I'm always looking for, I guess, the silver lining around everything.

[1:16:22.0] AS: I love that, because for people who listen to insatiable frequently, we talk a lot about — I talk a lot about agency and I feel like agency is an important health metric. What you're doing is making the choice to make something really stressful a meaningful experience. You're choosing what the meaning is and I think that's so powerful because then you can come out stronger the moment where you went in rather than it taking you down that rabbit hole. I think that's really important for everyone.

If you're struggling with autoimmune or whatever, this could be a really big invitation into a lot of growth, and you can choose to make that if you follow your gut, like you're saying.

One more question, it's kind of less spiritual, but do you think with people who are inflamed or struggling with autoimmune, exercise — Is there any — Because movement is important, but do you think too much exercise throws them over the edge.

[1:17:14.7] SB: You don't know that for each person. I mean I would just say people should only do what they feel like they should do, but they should get up and moving if they can. We say motion is the lotion.

[1:17:24.1] AS: Oh! I like that. I've never —

[1:17:25.9] SB: Motion is the lotion for — Especially joints. You really want to move. It is going to help you feel better. That's like the fibromyalgia, arthritis people, for sure.

I tell people who are so tired that if you start — Let's work on the fatigue first and try to help you feel a little bit better from them. I'm not going to push you for exercise, but at least try to walk two hours a week. Just get up and walk. Go for a walk even if you can.

I do think — Is important and it helps detox — Muscles sort of help move the lymphatics, which will help you blood flow and your lymphatic flow which helps clear that the debris out of all your cells. So you got to move.

The amount of exercise, absolutely no overdoing it if you're really sick. There's no need to over exercise. Aiming for just two hours total week of walking and some sort of movement would be a good place to start. Yeah, absolutely not.

[1:18:24.3] AS: Okay. Yeah, I love that. Tune in to that North Star as best as you can with —

[1:18:28.9] SB: Right, and do what your body — Tune in to your body, but that's why you have to have some way of quieting your mind. For some people, it's knitting, or needlepoint. It doesn't have to be meditation, if that's not true, "to sit" and not know what to do, but sit and close your eyes. You need it.

Most people that want to learn meditation, which I encourage you to do, you need a teacher. My cousin is a Zen Buddhist. She taught me how to meditate Zen, and then I went to meditation retreats. I recommend people go to places like — You live in —Where are you?

[1:18:59.8] AS: Pittsburg.

[1:19:00.4] SB: Pittsburg. There are places all over the country that you can find to go to. I'm in New York, so I go to Omega Institute. I spent every summer for 10 years, I went for a workshop there, and it was some sort of a learned — I did to meditation retreats there, vipassana, insight meditation training. I've gone to Kripalu, which is in Massachusetts. There's just places you can go, and all communities have spiritual workshops, yoga kind of places you can learn these

things. Most people do need a teacher, and that's really good. These practices will help you learn to be your own guide, which is what we all need.

[1:19:42.2] AS: Did you do that 10-day silent vipassana?

[1:19:45.2] SB: I've never done that, but last summer I went and I did a spiritual retreat in Northern California with — Her name is Gangaji. She is like a guru kind of a retreat, and that was a five day silent retreat, and that was great. I love that. You see, I have been meditating a long time, but for me, who live such a noisy life and you can hear from how fast I talk, I'm a New York, I'm busy, I'm doing, I'm talking, I actually crave the silence, like going and being silent is like heaven for me.

To be able to spend that time just with myself is giving me the space that I really enjoy. I like that, but I've also been meditating since I'm 35 — How old am I now? 20 years I'm meditating. I'm uncomfortable with that and I like it. I sit down to meditate and it's like, "Ha." and everyone can get that. It's a practice though. You have to practice it.

[1:20:41.1] AS: Yeah, it's just so refreshing for our listeners to hear a physician say, "Go on a meditation," of that stress matters as much as what you eat. I just thank you so much for — I think that channel has enabled you to pioneer and give all of us. You've thrown the rope back to say — Or the bridge. You're building a bridge back for your colleagues and everything and all of our listeners. I just thank you so much your time. I know we went a little bit over. I could ask you like a thousand more questions of —

[1:21:09.1] SB: I'll come back. I'll come back and we'll do it again.

[1:21:11.1] AS: Good. Well, tell them again the name of your book and the website of where —

[1:21:14.7] SB: Okay! Yup! My website is blumhealthmd.com, and we have free downloads of all sorts of information on there, so you can tool around and look what's going on on there. I do Facebook live. Oh, I have a lot of YouTube videos. You can go and find me on the YouTube channel. I've done so many topics and Facebook Lives, so there's a whole library of me talking on different topics. That's the place where they can find me.

My book is *The Immune System Recovery Plan*, that's a couple of years now. My newest book is in October. We're going to be doing — I'm actually hosting an arthritis summit, which is a free online with — I'm interviewing all of my colleagues in functional medicine about arthritis, and that's going to be in October as well.

So a lot going on, but I think there's all sorts of places to find me; Facebook. I have a whole — I'm very active on social media as well.

[1:22:04.3] **AS:** Wonderful. In the show notes, we'll have Dr. Blum's website and background and everything, so you can also find it there. Thank you so much for your time and for your willingness to go against the grain.

[1:22:16.0] **SB:** Yeah, no problem. Thank you so much for having me.

[1:22:17.8] **AS:** Putting recommending brains.

[1:22:19.3] **SB:** Yeah, right. Exactly. That's true too. Thank you for having me and —

[1:22:26.0] **AS:** We definitely have to have you back.

[1:22:28.0] **SB:** Yeah. No, I'll definitely happy to come back.

[1:22:30.0] **AS:** Great. Thank you.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[1:22:33.6] **AS:** Have questions or reactions about the episode? Reach out to me on Instagram and Twitter @alimshapiro, or Facebook at facebook.com/alimarieshapiro. If you love this show, please leave an iTunes review and tell one friend this week about how to get the Insatiable Podcast on their phone.

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