

Dr. Adrienne Youdim, Host 0:03

Hi, this is Dr. Adrienne. Welcome to Health bite the podcast where we explore all things health and wellness. This episode of health White is sponsored by Dell nutrition, a line of functional nutrition bars and supplements I've personally curated to enhance health and well being You can find out more at Dell nutrition calm. In this episode of health bite I speak with Dr. Nerissa Kreher. Dr Nerisssa is a pediatric endocrinologist as well as founder of Industry MD coach, where she helps physicians navigate a career shift into the pharmacologic industry. Dr. Nerissa's own path began when she was forced to explore new career options. Her ability to do this with a sense of purpose motivated her desire to help others do the same, among other things. Dr. Nerissa and I discuss how a sense of agency and autonomy in the workplace not only promote emotional well being but physical well being as well, I hope you enjoy this episode. Welcome, Dr. Kreher. I'm so happy to have you here.

Dr. Nerissa Kreher 1:06

Thank you. I'm happy to be here,

Dr. Adrienne Youdim, Host 1:07

you have an interesting background as a pediatric endocrinologist and was once working at the illustrious Mass General Hospital and circumstances got you to pivot your focus elsewhere and to found this organization or program, the industry MD coach. So tell us a little bit about how that came to be.

Dr. Nerissa Kreher 1:32

Right. So pediatric endocrinologist, as you mentioned, moving out of my fellowship, I stayed where I was in fellowship for about a year as a junior faculty. During my fellowship, I did a lot of clinical research. And so I very much wanted clinical research to be a part of my professional career, and a big part of it. So I wasn't planning to see patients day in and day out, I really wanted to focus on clinical research. So my family and I, at the time, then needed to move to the Boston area. And I had had some conversations at Mass General in the pediatric endocrine division, and really thought that there was a role for me there in clinical research. Unfortunately, when it was very close time to move to Boston, that role went away because of budget reasons. And they offered me a clinical position. And I'm happy that I was able to stay with that knowledge of what I really wanted. And what I was really passionate about that young in my career, actually didn't take that role at Mass General, and went looking for other opportunities where I could do clinical research. And pediatric endocrinologist, we need to be an academic centers, typically, we're not people who go into private practice. So there aren't a lot of centers where pediatric endocrinologists are hired. So there were limited opportunities for me, given that I started networking with everyone I knew. And one of

the people in my network asked me if I would be interested in having my resume sent to a pharmaceutical or biotechnology company. And at the time, I really didn't know much at all about the pharmaceutical industry. And so I said, Well, sure why? Why not? I'll take a look. Give me you know, a job description. Let me understand it better. And I realized that the pharmaceutical biotech industry would be a place where I actually could continue to do clinical research. So ultimately, I did land that job where the person in my network gave my resume. And that was my first entry into the pharmaceutical industry. And 15 years later, I've held multiple positions in our industry at large companies and small companies. And I'm really happy that I chose to continue utilizing my clinical research skills in a different arena than academic medicine.

Dr. Adrienne Youdim, Host 4:03

You know, what I find really interesting about your story is that what came to be began with an unfortunate circumstance, you're essentially stripped from the position that you were holding the position that you thought you would pursue, and yet your work as a coach is in the pharmaceutical industry, but specifically, it's in helping others pivot and shift in their work so precisely the thing that would have seemed in retrospect, and unfortunate circumstance is what you helped facilitate for others.

Dr. Nerissa Kreher 4:38

That's exactly right. Yeah, I actually call that experience as I look back on it, fortuitous, it felt very scary. I was a young mom, you know, I was going to be responsible for most of our family's financial responsibilities. And so I really felt a lot of pressure but now looking back, it really was fortuitous that that job went away. And I landed somewhere that's been incredibly fulfilling for me.

Dr. Adrienne Youdim, Host 5:05

And I think this conversation is so timely, right, because we are on the heels of the anniversary of one year of pandemic and quarantine, and as a result have suffered so much financial instability and insecurity. And so many people have experienced insecurity in their jobs and positions necessitating that they switch over or do something new. And others have had the time to really reflect on what they do, and maybe reckon with the fact that they were not happy in their positions or in their careers, and so are voluntarily switching. And in that moment, there is a lot of fear, because a lot of these people, you know, we're all financially responsible for our families and for our lives, in addition to wanting to achieve joy in our work. So I wonder how did you at that time, come to terms with that fear? How were you able to manage it, or maybe channel it and not let it get the best of you so that you would take the kind of obvious, I think, option of just taking the job that was given to you,

Dr. Nerissa Kreher 6:12

I was really true to myself from the standpoint of listening to what I really wanted. And I think that can be hard. Sometimes you feel like you have to take the first opportunity, because maybe it will be the last. and in this situation, I really stepped back and said, What do you really want? What are you really passionate about? What will you be good at, and let's wait for that opportunity to come. Although it was still scary. I think that I was able to focus that energy from being scared on the new job and actually learning everything I possibly could, once I took that new job, even though it was scary to be in a place that I had never done that before, I really wasn't exactly sure of what my role would look like, I was able to use some of that maybe nervous energy to really focus on learning about the job.

Dr. Adrienne Youdim, Host 7:09

And you know, it may seem strange to have this conversation on a health and wellness podcast. But as we were chatting before the recording a sense of agency or a sense of autonomy in your work, the feeling that you have the ability to make decisions in your work. And in your day to day affairs is actually a health attribute. They've associated that lack of autonomy to poor health outcomes, like cardiovascular health. So for example, people who don't feel like they have that agency in their lives or autonomy in their lives, are more likely to suffer heart attacks. It's quite fascinating that that can be a determinant of health. Right? I

Dr. Nerissa Kreher 7:49

think it completely feeds into that right that we think about if you have that opportunity of choice, really spending the time to find what's right and find where you will have that autonomy, and even the autonomy of thinking that too. I made this choice, right? I was responsible for it. And I get to be empowered by making the choice that was right for me, right for my family.

Dr. Adrienne Youdim, Host 8:17

And also, I think as you're talking I'm thinking also of purpose and meaning, which there's also data for that being a determinant of health outcomes, the sense of having a purpose or finding meaning in the work that you do. But I wonder, you know, for the average person listening, it sounds beautiful, right. But there's practicality there. And in your case, it sounds like you had a significant financial responsibility in the household, which I think is that pain point for a lot of people. Can you speak to the practicality,

Dr. Nerissa Kreher 8:49

I think I was lucky in the situation that this opportunity would allow me to be financially responsible for our family, it was a great opportunity from that perspective. But at the

same time, just like I didn't let the decision to just take the clinical job drive this, this wasn't a decision only about financial outcomes, right? So I think, yes, we want to be able to take care of our family. But at the same time, I think you always have to think about are the extra dollars worth some of the trade offs that you might get with losing time with your family? So all of those things have to go into any career decision. I think it's not just about money, but it's also about time, it's also about do you feel empowered, like you were mentioning before, so any career choice, I think really has to take a very global perspective and how you decide what job is right for you.

Dr. Adrienne Youdim, Host 9:55

So let's say an individual comes to you and tells you that they're unhappy. In their current work circumstances and wanting to shift and for you, you're you're channeling that energy specifically into the pharmaceutical industry. But let's leave it open. And I'm interested specifically in your coaching tactics, what are some of the barriers? First of all that you come across?

Dr. Nerissa Kreher 10:20

I think when people are looking to make a transition, often they do find themselves in a place of unhappiness, or in our physician world, sometimes the term burnout is utilized a lot in that setting, I really want to have clients be in a good place when they're making a decision to transition. So I think that's one of the biggest barriers to get past with people is they aren't making a decision out of necessity or desperation. And they're making a decision out of being in a really good place. So some of the things that I work with people to do is, you know, make a pro and con list, what do they like about their current career? And what is a weakness of their current career or something that they don't enjoy? And really, we delve into that and think about, then is a transition into the pharmaceutical industry really going to fulfill the need that they have? Or is it something that maybe the same weaknesses or negatives in their current job would overlap in the pharmaceutical industry, so I don't want people to move from one negative to another negative. So we really do a lot of exploration of that piece. Before we move into the discussion of how to make a transition. It's really should you make a transition? And then how to make the transition?

Dr. Adrienne Youdim, Host 11:52

I want to double back on the first thing you said, which is making the transition from a good place. And what strikes me is that when somebody wants to leave a position, they're usually not in a good place right there. It's usually anger there or frustration or perhaps there's, you know, altercations with management or bosses or coworkers, I understand what you're saying about really evaluating the position that you're in and being mindful, I guess about what your limitations are presently and what you're seeking

to improve. But can you talk a little bit about how you help people? Or what do you suggest to get them in that quote, good place?

Dr. Nerissa Kreher 12:33

Yeah. So I think that it's really exploring and being understanding of what's driving you. So one of the things that I do in my coaching is actually some personality testing. So we utilize a tool similar to the Myers Briggs personality type indicator, this is a Type Indicator, and it basically talks about four different preferences that we have. And so one of the preferences that's probably easiest to explain is either your an introverted or an extroverted preference. And it's not about being shy or not. It's just where you derive your energy from, if you're an introvert, you derive energy from being more alone, having more alone time, if you're an extrovert, you derive energy from being around others. So that's just one of the four pieces. But you can learn a lot about a person's tendencies and things that drive them from doing tests such as this. So I utilize this early in the coaching so that we can talk through if something wasn't working at a previous job, and the person wasn't in a good place, we can analyze some of that and think about maybe there was something about their preference that didn't fit well with that choice. Or maybe there was something about their preference that didn't match well, with their manager, for example. So if they can come into it, understanding some of their own preferences, it's not about changing other people, right? It's about understanding and being mindful of yourself so that you can then be true to your needs. And I really think a lot of us aren't as aware of our own selves as we should be. So that's where a lot of the mindfulness and my coaching comes in is all about, let's figure out who you are as a person and make sure that you as a person understand that and find the best role for you.

Dr. Adrienne Youdim, Host 14:40

That's so great. And it's true that people can look up Myer Briggs or similar tests and do it on their own. But also I find that a journaling practice where people just write down the things that give them joy, you know, like review their day and even the little things that give them joy. That is a good starting place. One thing I've heard from a lot of people myself included is that during this time where our work habits have changed and a lot of us are doing, for example, in my case for telemedicine, there is definitely a part of me that misses interaction with humans. And you know, really feels like I'm missing the energy of the extrovert part of me, right. But I'm also finding that there's a part of me an introvert I joke, it's like my, I found my inner hermit that I've really been enjoying that maybe I wasn't even keen to before. So I think being like you said, We don't always know what turns us on, so to speak. But being able to do that is really important in creating a career or a job or a daily activity paid or otherwise, that that is fulfilling. Along those lines. It also makes me think of values, right, like people's core values. And does

that go into your decision making? And can you even just talk about, you know, what, those examples of some of those things? And maybe how you utilize that?

Dr. Nerissa Kreher 16:01

Yes, I think that core values certainly go into this, you know, again, as we've talked about, most of my coaching is with physicians, and so one of the things that physicians go into medicine, because they want to care for people. So when I have clients who come to me and say, Well, I'd like to learn more about the pharmaceutical industry, but I'm worried because I will no longer be caring for patients, I think I'll miss that or that gets away from what I went to medical school for, you know, that is a core value, that one, I want to help them understand how a career in the pharmaceutical industry does still help patients. So we talk a lot about that, that's one of the key things that comes up with many clients is that ability to care for people and why they went to medical school. So I would say that's a big core value. The other one, of course, is related to time with family, we have a very different attitude these days, not just for women, but for men as well, right? People want time with with their children, with their families with their pets. So thinking about how their career allows them some freedom to have weekends available, I think those are two of the core values that often come up in my coaching,

Dr. Adrienne Youdim, Host 17:24

to speak more broadly about that some of these core values are like you mentioned, family, or even autonomy, right being in a workplace in which you have more independence, so to speak, or caring for others, financial independence, for example. So there's a lot of these various core values, there's a great Institute called VA Institute where people can actually go and take these character tests that address not only values, but also key strengths, though, kind of trying to elicit what you said before, which are, you know, what were the areas in which they are really feel comfortable, and I've done it is an interesting exercise. So part of your prep, so to speak, is to address personal barriers, making sure that they're coming from a mindful place in making this transition addressing values. Is there anything else that you consider in this preparatory phase for transition?

Dr. Nerissa Kreher 18:24

Yeah, I think the other thing that comes up is confidence. And so this is really you know, another thing about wellness right? Do we feel comfortable in our own skin? Are we confident in who we are? And it's very interesting to me actually, that regardless of the clientele, right, I again, I coach physicians, and so one might think physicians would be a group of people that generally are very confident. But it's very interesting that a lot of people that I work with, don't feel that they bring much to the table. And so I work a lot with people on confidence and self esteem, belief in themselves, and really helping

them to understand that they shouldn't downplay the things that they've accomplished, what they bring to the world. And I suspect that for all of your listeners, there are many of us who may appear externally as highly, highly accomplished, but maybe underneath aren't always feeling that confidence. So that's something that I work a lot with clients on as well. Yeah, I

Dr. Adrienne Youdim, Host 19:33

think it's also along those lines important to point out that you don't need to have all the answers or know all the answers now. But that having confidence in the ability to figure things out, and I know that a barrier often for women, specifically, is that when they apply for a job or when they look at a job description, they only feel comfortable taking that position when they can with 100 percent certainty state that they can check all of the boxes, whereas men are more likely to not feel that they need to be certain about their abilities in each of these areas, or whatever the job description may be, but have confidence in being able to figure it out. And so that's really important for transition to because no matter how accomplished you are, in one profession, for example, being a physician, if you're jumping ship to something completely different, and you you feel like you must know everything before you jump ship, then you never will, right.

Dr. Nerissa Kreher 20:33

Absolutely, I, I was just, you know, nodding my head the whole time you were speaking because exactly what you were saying that statistic, especially about women, but even I see this with some of the the male clients as well, looking at a job description where it says, you know, you must have three plus years of experience in XYZ. And if they don't have that, they'll say, Well, I can't apply for that job. And I say, no, that's not the approach, the approaches we're going to try. There are some kind of buffers, you know, if it says 10 years of experience, maybe that's not the right role. But if it's two years or three years, you know, again, like you were just saying, you can figure this out, you know, you come with a skill set. So what you have to do, is really, in a way, sell your skill set to the person that you're interviewing with, and tell them why even if you don't have that certain experience, that you do have experience that will allow you to do the job? Well.

Dr. Adrienne Youdim, Host 21:41

We've been speaking for about half an hour now. And I'm hesitant to shift gears, but I really am curious about your passion in the pharmaceutical industry. And I know that for you, it really matched your desire to do research, you know, way back then. And so it made sense. But here, you are now kind of siphoning people off from other areas, right, and positioning them in this industry. What is it about the pharmaceutical industry, which

sometimes gets a bad rap, right? That you find so intriguing, and why do you think it's something worth pursuing.

Dr. Nerissa Kreher 22:20

So the reason I feel it's worth pursuing is the pharmaceutical industry is developing new drugs for patients all the time. And the area that I specifically work in is rare diseases. So people with rare diseases are people who until about 20, or so years ago, really didn't have much drug development focused on them. And then there were some legislative changes. And that led to more focus on developing drugs for patients with rare diseases. So I'm very passionate about that I get to meet many of these patients with rare diseases. And I really know that when I go to work every day, when I'm working on a clinical trial, I know the patients that I'm there working to bring something or bring a cure to or bring a medicine that will help them tremendously. So that's really the pull for me every day. And the passion is that although I'm not seeing individual patients, I know that I'm helping a population of patients with diseases that don't always get much attention or clinical drug development position towards them.

Dr. Adrienne Youdim, Host 23:31

What comes to mind is that one of the criticisms, right of the pharmaceutical industry is cost of drugs. But I think what people don't recognize is the tremendous amount of money and energy that goes into successful drugs, as well as all that is lost, right in unsuccessful drugs. So how many drugs are out there, that they've invested so much money and that have failed at the end? And at the end of the day, somebody has to pay for that? Can you just without getting too technical? Can you go through that pathway of what it entails to bring a drug to life?

Dr. Nerissa Kreher 24:12

So you're right, you know, it does take many years, and there are many drugs that unfortunately, might look like they're going to be successful. And then they ultimately fail and can't get approved or come to market to be utilized in patients. And that might be because they don't work well to do what they were supposed to do. Or it could be because they're not safe. And certainly we wouldn't want to bring a drug to the market that wasn't safe. So the process actually starts in what we call preclinical development, where we're testing drugs or chemicals in cell lines. We're testing to see if we're getting effects we're testing to see about things like safety. So there's a lot that happens. Even before we start doing clinical trials in humans or patients, once we get into humans and patients, that process even can be 568 10 years to get a drug from the first studies, which are called phase one studies, all the way through the studies where a group like the FDA, or food and drug administration would look at those studies and ultimately make a decision about approving the drug. That's called a phase three study. So it's

many, many years to get from deciding you have a potential drug, to moving it into human subjects, and ultimately getting a drug approved,

Dr. Adrienne Youdim, Host 25:43

right. And then, and then paying for all those resources, including the researchers who are involved in those tremendous number of years of work. I love that your work is in developing drugs for rare diseases, there are few individuals that come to my own mind of friends and children of friends who have rare diseases, and I know that it can be so filled with hope and triumph and also so difficult, you know, to endure this process of, of hoping for a cure or a treatment, I would love an anecdote or a story of one of your successes.

Dr. Nerissa Kreher 26:23

Midway through my career, I had the opportunity to work in a very rare disease, you know, rare enough that physicians who specialize in these rare bone disorders, which is what it was sometimes had never seen one of these patients before. So it was a very rare disease, which meant that unfortunately, it sometimes went undiagnosed, or the diagnose was missed, because it just was something that most people had never seen or had any experience with. And this disease could be fatal in young, you know, infancy or young childhood. So very serious disease. And I had the opportunity to work on a drug that ultimately was approved for these patients. And what that has turned into over the course of now almost 10 years, maybe eight years is that many, many more physicians know about this disease, many more of these patients are being diagnosed appropriately. And not only are they being diagnosed appropriately, but now there's a drug to actually help them to live much, much longer and have, you know, really good quality of life. So it's really changed the trajectory for these patients. So that's been really just a fantastic opportunity to have been a part of, again, as I mentioned earlier, you know, being able to get to know families of these patients, mothers, fathers that have really poured all of their energy into helping their children. So it's, it's a very rewarding thing to be able to accomplish.

Dr. Adrienne Youdim, Host 28:02

Yeah, that's beautiful. And as I'm watching you speak, because we are on a zoom together, I could see your face light up. And so not only is that benefit to society, but of course benefit to your own health and well being I appreciate your time. Dr. nervosa, I think that this was a nice conversation, like I said, I think it's a timely conversation, because so many people are grappling with their own positions and their careers right now. And it sounds so hopeful, you know, a path towards transition that while scary is optimistic.

Dr. Nerissa Kreher 28:41

Definitely. Yeah, I definitely think that there's the right career pathway out there. And you just have to spend a little bit of time finding it. But definitely, we should all be hopeful.

Dr. Adrienne Youdim, Host 28:52

So if people want to learn more about you and your work and your coaching practice, where can they find you?

Dr. Nerissa Kreher 28:58

So on my website is the best place it's industrymdcoach.com, or www.industrymdcoach.com, I have a blog. So I publish different stories, I published tips and pointers, some of the confidence work that we talked about, and stories there on the blog can be really helpful for people.

Dr. Adrienne Youdim, Host 29:20

That's wonderful. Well, we'll make sure to put those in the show notes. And once again, thank you for joining me for this lovely conversation. I enjoyed it.

Dr. Nerissa Kreher 29:27

I did too. Thanks so much for having me.

Dr. Adrienne Youdim, Host 29:30

I hope you've enjoyed this episode and are inspired to take a small bite towards your own health and wellness. If you love what you heard, please subscribe on iTunes and Spotify or anywhere else you podcast and share us. If you're looking for more info you can find lots of content and sign up for my newsletter at [Dell nutrition.com](http://Dellnutrition.com). There you can learn more about me and my curated line of supplements and functional protein bars. Thank you for listening, and I look forward to seeing you again next week.

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