

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 Dehl nutrition, a line of functional nutrition bars and supplements I have personally curated to enhance health and well being You can find out more adult nutrition calm. Well, thank you for coming back. I'm so happy to have Today on our podcast health bite, Dr. Prianca, thanks for being here.

Dr. Prianca Naik 0:33

It is great to be here. Thanks for having me.

Dr. Adrienne Youdim, Host 0:35

Yeah, it's lovely to have you. So you are an internist and you kind of veered paths to create your own coaching practice called STRESSCLEANSE MD. And given that we are at the tail end of one year anniversary of the pandemic, I think a stress cleanse is precisely what we all need right now.

Dr. Prianca Naik 0:56

Yes, I would agree with that.

Dr. Adrienne Youdim, Host 0:58

You've made this segue before the chaos of the pandemic. So I'm interested to hear how did you shift from busy clinical practice as a hospitalist into this kind of work?

Dr. Prianca Naik 1:10

most physicians are type a stressed out, I was like that always I had my son, and then my stress level just went into like a whole nother level working full time as a physician, as well as being a mother. Also, whatever energy and vibes I had, I was going to pass on to him, I almost owed it to him to be in a better state, I suppose. So when I found myself feeling kind of stressed and anxious, as I started working full time again, I knew that I had to do something differently. So I turned to all kinds of lifestyle changes, I actually was in a like a stress and anxiety support group or professionals. And that's what got me into life coaching stuff, which basically transformed my life because that had such an impact on me, I figured that there were probably other women out there suffering that I could help to. So that is what brought me to that specific subject.

Dr. Adrienne Youdim, Host 2:03

Yeah, you know, I love how it's often the kids, right, it's often you hear from professional women, because they are so used to just piling it on and dealing with whatever that comes. When you have kids, you kind of realize it's not so much about just doing more, it's about time and space, you know, creating that time and space for your child, which sometimes also opens your eyes to the fact that like I say sometimes to my patients, you're someone's child, too, right? And that we need time and space in order to navigate all of that. So your story is unique, but like i think it resonates with a lot of people, what are some of the ways in which stress and anxiety manifests? I mean, I think we talk about anxiety, and there's of course clinical anxiety, but

there's low level anxiety that I think everybody no matter how well compensated they may or may not be right now are experiencing, talk about some of the ways that that shows up.

Dr. Prianca Naik 3:00

Yes, it shows up in the mind and the body and the mind body connection. So in the brain, for example, a lot of it is ruminating on the future, your brain spinning in just complete circles. I had a friend who called them brain NATO's, and it's just chaotic, and it makes you feel ungrounded I think is the best way of putting it. But then also it has physical manifestations. It's different for everybody. Some people have chest pain, some people have shortness of breath, for me, like I usually have a tightening or squeezing sensation in my throat is discomfort. And I think the more that we can actually recognize it and notice it, the easier it is to live with it because we can never really banish it. Because there are always going to be triggers and anxiety provoking situations, that's just life, life can't be perfect all the time. It rarely is. So if we're able to notice when it's happening, then we can kind of just let it and and sit with it. Especially the bodily sensations, I think sitting with whatever kind of discomfort one may have, it really helps to let it in. And the last you argue with it and repel it, the more it actually will just dissipate on its own. But I think when we don't want to feel that way, it gets stronger and worse.

Dr. Adrienne Youdim, Host 4:11

And that's when we start having, you know, problems, it cascades on itself. I want to kind of point out the obvious because you said life can't be perfect all the time or something to that effect. Of course, you know, when you hear that it's it's obvious and I think everybody would agree with that fact. And yet, I think the way we operate is with this concept of when this happens then that right when the pandemic is over, things will be okay, when I have job stability, I will be fine. When I lose 10 pounds, you know I will be fine. And so while we would all agree conceptually that life isn't perfect and all those other things that our mom's told us or you know, the colloquial phrases, we don't really operate most often in a way That really embraces that knowing. And so I think it's like I said, worth pointing out that you we may know something, but yet it's valuable to notice that we're operating on a different principle that things really should be the way we wish it or will it to be in order to be happy or comfortable or what have you. I also want to point out that the physical manifestations and I say this is important as a physician, and also for people out there can be things, the common symptoms of like heart racing, chest tightness, tightness in the throat is a common one. But I even had a patient who had tinnitus and like ringing in the ears, and we went to Mayo Clinic, and did you know all of this workup and and in the end, it was stress related as well as other kind of important or significant physical manifestations. So it is something to note that the mind is connected to the body and can manifest in physical symptoms,

Dr. Prianca Naik 5:58

I wanted to actually rewind for one second, what something that really stood out that you said to me talking about happiness, and it's a conditional happiness, a lot of my coaching practice, and what I do for myself is trying to find unconditional happiness within myself, because we are the only stable factor actually, in our lives, like everything around us is constantly changing, we have no control over that. So if we're able to tether ourselves to the present moment, actually, like

breathe in the fresh air and notice things around us, I think that that can be very grounding. And actually, it gives us a sense of peace and calm. And then we don't have to wait for that next 10 pounds to lose or the next thing that's coming in the future, which may or may not come just more like being grateful and mindful for what whatever positives happening in this moment.

Dr. Adrienne Youdim, Host 6:44

expand on that a little bit, right? Because I think it sounds really lovely. But one of the things that is an obvious response, I think is how can I be grateful right now when maybe I've lost my job or someone I know, got sick or even die? I mean, you know, people are experiencing significant hardship. So is there a way to like functionalize that doing what you describe?

Dr. Prianca Naik 7:11

Yes, I think you bring up a really good point. So tragedy strikes, things happen that are awful. And I think the important thing there is to really let ourselves experience the negative emotion, the grief, the sadness, we don't have to try and be grateful in that exact moment or be happy at all times. But if you allow yourself the space to cry to grieve, whenever you're having a bad day, you can lean into it a little bit and feel it and the idea is you feel it, you sit with it, because I think most of us have a tough time sitting with the pain and the negative emotions, we're just not conditioned that way we want it to go away. If we allow ourselves to feel that way. give ourselves a space then we can process it and then move forward and then maybe in a more calm or you know stable moment, then you can think about whatever you know, and you don't have to be grateful. It could be that you're having a bet like this happened man had a horrible day, I go outside I'm taking a walk and I just enjoy the sunshine or the fresh air that's it Am I still having a bad day? Sure. But I'm able to just soak in my surroundings I feel better. You know, I'm not cured from feeling sad or whatever it is, but it definitely is more helpful than not noticing what's happening around me if that makes sense.

Dr. Adrienne Youdim, Host 8:21

I think I like the idea or the concept of containers for myself for example, this came to mind several months ago we were faced with an illness you know in the family and I think it's important for people to know that even those of us who talk about being grateful and mindful and you know, Joy practices, we're all experiencing collectively what we are all experiencing so we're all in it together and yet you know, having that hardship of sitting with difficult news and then sitting in bed with my daughter you know, and having her snuggle or morning coffee for me is a big one. You know savoring that sip of coffee that diagnosis is still looming, right unfortunately but in that moment, that container of like gratitude for my daughter for example, or even for a nice cup of coffee right? Is there so I like to think of it as containers you know that you can have the grief or the sadness and yet holding the separate container the happiness This podcast is called health bite while I know that everything is a journey, I like to give people actionable bites, right, this concept of sitting with what does that exactly mean? And how do you operationalize that? How does someone really sit with that difficult feeling? What does that look like?

Dr. Prianca Naik 9:35

I'll give an example my toddler just screaming like a banshee and I want to tear my hair out and I want to scream also. But I want to try to not scream but I feel frustrated right? So I might feel that frustration. I feel it bubbling up. I can feel myself wanting to externalize that and let's say scream also, but I noticed where it is in my body and let's say I'm getting like some sweets. In my chest or my throat, I sit there, and I'm sitting on the chair, I know it's a mindfulness practice, but I sit and I know this, where that uncomfortable sensation is my body, I feel the stability and weight of gravity of my body. So I focus on that. And then I breathe with noticing the sensation. And as I breathe, if you actually just focus on your breath, it can kind of take you out of your head in a way and really soothe that feeling. So you you sit with that it kind of this, as I said, dissipates on its own, because hey, you're not externalizing it but be you're also not saying oh, my gosh, I feel frustrated. And I just want to stop feeling frustrated, and you kind of just lead into it. And and sometimes I'll even you know, say to my toddler, I feel frustrated right? Now, I'm just going to sit here and take a few deep breaths. And I find that to be useful for him, hopefully, that he can do that someday, or even now, like as he gets older,

Dr. Adrienne Youdim, Host 10:51

I think it's important to point out that there's physiologic things that happen, because, you know, for me, especially coming from being a very Western, trained and practicing doctor, I didn't really get turned on to these things until I had evidence right the science behind it. But what happens in those moments when your toddler screaming like a banshee, and I really love that analogy, is that the sympathetic nervous system is going off the charts. And what that breathing or just that sitting does is that it literally and physiologically triggers the parasympathetic nervous system, which does help reduce heart rate and open up blood vessels. So the blood pressure goes down, and then that information gets relayed back to the brain. So you get this circuit of, oh, the heart rate is going down, and therefore, I'm safe. And okay, so I think it's important to know that this is not just like, sit on a lotus pad, you know, practice, but there's actually a physiology that drives that calming aspect. The other thing I love about that is that it creates what you said that space, you know, it creates a little buffer between you and the the reaction, which for us often is if you're not noticing, like a nanosecond, right, it's a nanosecond before, you're right there screaming alongside them. But by creating that space, it gives you the option of at least you have maybe a little bit of a choice, do I scream? Or do I not? So there is that too, we're already talking about this a little bit about what the practices can be. So you have a client who you've noticed their stress and anxiety, it may or may not be manifesting as physical symptoms. And so what are some of the strategies we're already getting into them? But what are some of the other strategies that you recommend?

Dr. Prianca Naik 12:42

Yeah, so in addition to mindfulness, you know, you I think, of course, as we know, like exercise is a big one, just doing a little bit of that taking a walk. Also, sometimes just walking yourself through like a really anxious moment, I had a client who she was seeing patients in the clinic, she was really anxious about COVID. So she would have like a few steps she would do you know, why do I feel anxious? Like what? Why is a part of me anxious? What's the worst case scenario? Like? What's the likelihood of this worst case scenario? That it's actually going to happen? Like, let's say we COVID? Like it would be death? Right? So what is the likelihood that

I'm gonna die from COVID? And then if it's happened before, like, have I ever been in the spot before, let's say with a health issue, or whatever, it is something similar? And what did it turn out to be? So like, if you can walk yourself through, like those concrete steps, a lot of times, it'll help pull you as you're approaching that rabbit hole, or like, pull you out of it completely. And a lot of times, I think we spend a ton of time and energy wasted on planning for the worst case scenario. And then that worst case scenario never even happens if you can get into the habit of noticing when you're going to that place, and kind of pausing. My automatic is to go to worst case scenario, like pretty often. But once I started noticing that it was happening, I could actually notice before I dive headfirst into the hole,

Dr. Adrienne Youdim, Host 14:02

yeah. And I think you know, an example you brought up, that's kind of an extreme case, right, of something tragic, that potentially could happen. But oftentimes, we do this with very small things. And I have a teenager. And so what I always tell her is, you know, for example, when she's stressing about the potential of a test, and I used to certainly do this myself, but I always say you are living that worst outcome twice, right? it very well may be that you'll fail the test, or you'll lose your job or you won't get your work done in time or whatever the case may be that you know the many things we stressed about. But not only is that worst case scenario, unlikely to be true. But even if it is true, we are living it out much more times than we necessarily need to. You did bring up time though. And I know that there's a lot of like work and research that's done around our perceptions around time. And how just our perception of time and being time strapped or time poor, affects our emotional and even our physical well being. Can you talk about that a little bit this concept of time? And, and how people can really shift their perception of it?

Dr. Prianca Naik 15:17

Yes. So time bends a lot more than we think it does. Laura Vander cam actually, she's an author who specializes in this. And she has a book called what successful people do before breakfast. And I read that book, and it completely changed my life on time management. But one of the examples she gave was that if you have, let's say, a pipe burst or something like that, and there are five hours back that week, or five to seven hours for the workers to come and fix it, somehow, you will manage to find those five to seven hours, maybe when you need to be home. And yet you finish everything for the most part, but you already have plans. So like, where did those hours come from? How did you manage to get those in, and I think people jam packed schedules who are working full time and they wanted to take some time for themselves. They want to do things with their kids. It's very tough. I talked to somebody like a client, and she was saying, Well, my ideal workout is an hour and 20 minutes, you know, four or five times a week. And I said, Well, okay, what is your schedule? Like? What time do you get up, I mean, it was impractical that amount of time. And yet, you could get a perfectly good workout in even, let's say, 15 minutes, 20 minutes, or whenever you can get it and just do a little bit, it's always better than zero because I think we either go for zero, or we go for like two hours of something. And just finding that happy medium of being able to do things in short chunks of time, I find that to be the most practical way to get things done. Or like if there's a project that you want to do, and you're just not finding the time, can you do five minutes in the morning, there have to be five

to 10 extra minutes that you can scrounge up during the day like via in the middle of the day or morning, I think is a really good time. If you can go to bed on time and get up with a whatever like a liveable wake up time for yourself. And you can usually squeeze in some activity, whatever that might be for you, like 30 minutes, be a gratitude, practice journaling, a walk, exercise, etc. also creating boundaries for work life balance in the sense that like turn off your work emails at five o'clock, or if you're a physician, like if you're not on call, put your phone away. If you track your time for let's say she has people do this, she'll say like track your time for a week, like minute to minute, you will see how much time that you actually lose scrolling aimlessly and be more purposeful with whatever time you have, you'll see if you actually examine your schedule, you end up having a lot more free time than you think

Dr. Adrienne Youdim, Host 17:33

that you said a lot. And so I wanted to tease out some of that we can start with, you know, the time that you spend in between on things that you don't really intend to. So you pick up your phone to answer a message, and then you get a notification for something that that takes you into your email. And the next thing you know, you've been there for 30 minutes. And so really setting boundaries around your use of technology. I think first of all, and also, especially right now setting boundaries around your time at work, because time is bleeding into your work and work is waiting into time. But the first thing you mentioned was waiting for like that perfect amount of time, which I think is a really common one, right, I always think of the analogy of making the time to call a friend you haven't talked to in a long while you feel like you need a good chunk of time. And so you wait and wait for that good chunk of time to arrive and it never does. So really just trying to capitalize on this, you know, take what you can get get your foot into the door. I also wonder if you've heard of this concept of time confetti, if you have five minutes in between meetings like zoom calls, again, what do we typically do, we typically will pick up our phone. But if we can make a list of all the little things we want to get done, you know off of our to do list or even five minutes of meditation or even five minutes of going outside and getting fresh air. And using that time confetti in a in a functional way it actually makes people feel less time strapped. And that's important for not only well being but also health parameters because they know that people who are feeling time strapped have negative outcomes. So we talked a little bit about your top tips, time management or time awareness exercise, of course came up what are maybe a handful or a couple other of your top tips to help manage stress and anxiety and the chaos as you say on your website.

Dr. Prianca Naik 19:23

Yes. So to do this work, you really have to put in an effort but it's small little things you do on a daily basis that has an incremental payoff in the end. So very simple things you can wake up and set an intention for the day. don't check your email, don't check your messages. Don't scroll on social media and say you give yourself 10 minutes of just time to think plan out your day. Maybe like reflect on gratitude stuff that's always really helpful. It just sets your mind in a positive mode. I think a lot of times when we're scrolling aimlessly, we feel empty. Our brains are kind of there but not there. So it's this very purposeless, almost like draining process. If you That's one big one being able to say no, especially as I think type a women tend to be people pleasers, they want to say yes to everything, they want to put people first all the time, and really

practicing saying no to things, because it's very much against our grain. So that's very useful. And just cleaning up, you know, the time and where we're using our brain space and energy. One other really big one that I think makes a huge difference is do something nice for yourself every single day. And it could be simple, like what you talked about, I'm also a big believer in the morning cup of coffee, like my creamer and like, and I put soy milk in there, it has to be perfect and just write with just the way I enjoy it. And if it's not only a brew another cup, because it's so important, the quality of that, if there's one nice simple thing you can do for yourself, do that just to kind of nourish yourself because nobody else is going to do it if you don't also outsourcing I think is a really big way to unload things with the pandemic, it's been a little bit tough, but under I guess, quote unquote, normal circumstances, if they're things you really hate doing, then see if you can unload them, like cooking, for example, can you get somebody to come over to your house and meal prep, do the cooking, the planning, the grocery shopping, if that's something you hate, or whatever, like I hate errands, there was a lady who used to help me running errands before the pandemic, and it was wonderful, it just freed up so much time and space for me. So that really allows us to spend our time in a way that aligns with our values, and that we see fit so that we don't resent like whatever duties and we're also enjoying our time.

Dr. Adrienne Youdim, Host 21:27

Yeah, and you know, even though in a way like the pandemic has taken away is, you know, maybe some outsourcing in terms of help in the home, like you were mentioning, but in a lot of ways it's opened up such novel and creative ways for outsourcing. You know, even though it was available, I don't think a lot of people took advantage of like delivering groceries, for example, or even the dog rumor coming to the house or, you know, a lot of the things that have kind of been made so much more systematic as a result of the pandemic. And I think these are practices that will we'll be taking into our future. The other thing is, you know, we keep circling back to this concept of boundaries in terms of time in terms of saying, no, it's a very difficult thing to do, not only as women, but I'm also thinking like certain cultures are really tough in terms of creating boundaries. But this is such an important way of preserving or managing the chaos, as we were saying, and preserving some time and space for the individual, I want to get back before we end to kind of the physiology of it all, because I really love how the things that are good, you know, feel good are actually good for you, and are grounded in science and physiology. You talk about rewiring neural pathways, and a lot of these practices actually do that they really change our neural pathways in physiologically in something that's called neuroplasticity, talk about that a little bit or what that means for you when you talk about it.

Dr. Prianca Naik 23:00

Yeah, so getting into the practice of certain, for example, meditation, mindfulness that we know changes the way our brain functions, it will decrease let's say the the function of the amygdala, which is the signal of our brain to panic, you know, things like that. Also, just practicing being kind to yourself, because some of the things that are detrimental to our well being like self criticism, and perfectionism, these things have been ingrained in us so deeply that it takes a lot of work to be conscious of that like negative self talk and whatnot. So the more you practice, being kind to yourself, watching your language with yourself, being mindful of what you're thinking, because our thoughts really aren't facts. They're just our narrative of how we're

experiencing life. But that doesn't mean that that's actually true. So the more we understand, and notice that, the more we can actually take control of that, and eventually, with practice over time, the neural pathways are gonna rewire.

Dr. Adrienne Youdim, Host 23:57

So yeah, the idea that what we say to ourselves, or what we do becomes kind of automated because we keep doing it and have done it for so long, so that we don't even think about it. The thought pops into our head before we're even really keen to it. But by doing some of these practices, including the mindfulness practice, there is a rewiring that occurs in the brain, as well as parts of the brain. You mentioned that amygdala involved in reactivity, emotional reactivity that actually dampens and they've shown this on functional studies, right, like functional MRI is which I think is amazing. Any last thoughts in managing the chaos I keep coming back or organizing the chaos is I think how you put it, I think a lot of us just go about our lives willy nilly, and having some intention and deliberation with what we do every day. And it may sound silly to you know, be mindful of your phone usage, you know, set intentions for the day gratitude practice, but all these small things we do can do. really contribute to our own sense of well being and emotional stability as unnatural as they may be. Because over time, those kinds of things, especially the gratitude, for example, it really will shift the way you see things because our brains naturally go to the negative. That's just how we're wired. So over time you you, if you do kind of try and focus on what's working in your life, it does give you a different perspective and you will find yourself more content.

Dr. Adrienne Youdim, Host 25:24

Well, you've given us a lot of tips. And I think for the listeners out there to maybe take note of the ones that resonated and even pick a couple or one to try and and give it a go and see maybe how the practice on a regular basis or semi regular, which may be all we can expect from ourselves these days, how it has an impact, but agree that when people do do this work that we will feel the difference, we will feel the shift, slowly but surely. So thank you. If for our listeners who want to learn more about you, where can we find you?

Dr. Prianca Naik 25:56

Yes, you can find me at my website, [www dot stress cleanse](http://www.dotstresscleanse.com), MD calm and there's all kinds of resources on stress anxiety, I have an anxiety ebook toolkit PDF that you can download there as well. So check it out. And you can also make an appointment me there. It's all there.

Dr. Adrienne Youdim, Host 26:13

Wonderful. We'll make sure to put that information in the show notes as well. It's been really nice speaking with you.

Dr. Prianca Naik 26:19

Thank you so much.

Dr. Adrienne Youdim, Host 26:20

We know that you've had a toddler that you've been keeping at bay throughout this interview. So thank your toddler on our behalf as well. I will. Until next time Thank you. As always, thank you so much for listening. I love having you with me and sharing these conversations with you. I hope that you have taken away a health bite, a small actionable step that you can implement in your life to help improve your own health and well-being if you want to know more about me or get more inspiration, please follow me on Instagram at Adrienne Youdim. You can also join me on my website at dradrienneyoudim.com and look out for my book coming up hungry for more a blend of story and science to inspire weight loss and well-being lots of good tidbits and actionable health bites that I'm super excited to share. Talk to you again next week.

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