

Episode 109 Transcript

Jaclyn Smeaton (00:01 - 03:14)

Welcome to the DUTCH Podcast, where we dive deep into the science of hormones, wellness, and personalized health care. I'm Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton, Chief Medical Officer at DUTCH. Join us every Tuesday as we bring you expert insights, cutting edge research, and practical tips to help you take control of your health from the inside out. Whether you're a healthcare professional or simply looking to optimize your own wellbeing, we've got you covered.

The contents of this podcast are for educational and informational purposes only. The information is not to be interpreted as or mistaken for medical advice. Consult your health care provider for medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. Welcome to this week's episode of the DUTCH podcast. This week, we're going to touch upon a subject that will probably hit home for a lot of you. It's about stress and the impact that stress can have on our bodies, specifically in women.

Now, this is not to say that men don't experience stress or that this doesn't have a similar impact, but the point of view of our guest today is one of a high functioning professional woman doctor who's a mom and can really relate to wearing many hats. And she brings that value to her practice and to her patients on a regular basis because she sees the patterns that come when women don't take care of themselves. Things like hair loss, fatigue, insomnia, depression and anxiety, gut dysfunction, hormone imbalances and so much more. You probably can connect with a lot or one of those symptoms because they're just so common. So I think as we talk about focusing on nutrition and on exercise and all these wonderful things that we can do for ourselves and for our patients, stress can be a really difficult one to wrap your arms around. But our guest today is all about flipping the script. helping people connect to the things that bring them joy and helping them change the story and their perspective to really downplay the expectations and think about living life a different way. Our guest today is Dr. Tricia Pingel. She's a naturopathic physician and she really brings a unique blend of medical expertise with a potent creative energy to her work.

She's founder and CEO of Pingel Progressive Medicine and Total Health Apothecary, and she's helped thousands of women overcome stress, fatigue, and hormonal imbalances. She's written a book called Total Health Turnaround with about 60,000 copies sold, and she's become a real trusted voice in holistic medicine. What's fun about Dr. Pingel is she combines the science of naturopathic medicine with personal empowerment, authenticity, joy, fun.

Really putting that all together to build a foundation of true health. think you're going to really like today's episode. Let's go ahead and dive in. Well, Dr. Pingel, I'm really grateful to have you. So thank you so much for joining us on the DUTCH Podcast. ~ I always love to start with just learning what your path is. You know, so many of our listeners are naturopathic or functional medicine doctors or healthcare practitioners that are in that integrated space. I'd love it you'd just start by sharing a little bit about how you chose to become a naturopathic doctor.

Tricia Pingel (03:14 - 06:02)

You know, there was a lot of different things that contributed to it as always. And as I look back and try to come up with that path, there's kind of a very quick little bullet point. So I never thought I'd be a doctor. I was a fashion model from the time I was born. So I was in the entertainment industry, theater, fashion, was going to go for the arts, but always had this fascination with behavior. What makes people do what they do? And I never really thought about that from a health perspective and went to college and jumped into psychology as many of us do and was like, ~ I don't know. And then happened to pick up a job at a veterinary hospital and started to learn veterinary medicine, which was very interesting for me because they can't tell you what's wrong. You have to read their body cues, you have to learn to read the labs. And I started to find this fascination with how do we look at biochemistry and make the diagnosis without somebody telling us what they think it is, right? And I started to really enjoy that and was gonna become a veterinarian. Fast forward, my dad had a stroke, a massive stroke, was put into a coma. I was 24 years old and was about to graduate with a biology degree, apply to vet school, and went up there and found this huge disconnect in the conventional medical model and healing. I kept saying, well, is he gonna get better?

Well, we don't know. We don't know. Well, what exactly happened? And I kept getting dismissed. And I started to think, hey, as the patient or as the caregiver, why am I treated like I'm an idiot? There has to be another option here. There has to be doctors that educate. There has to be doctors that look at why something's happening. This can't be what it is. And I got home. My dad, we did have to let him go. It was very sad. ~ And I went home and I was like, I want to see if I can help humans.

I want to help humans prevent this. I want to prevent somebody going through what I'm going through and decided to just on a whim, switch from veterinary medicine to naturopathic medicine. And then after that, it's been interesting. You know, I've lost my grandparents. I have lost my mom to cancer. All of these things that as we started to investigate and look, my dad had an MTHFR mutation. We didn't know that. Now, would his life have been saved if we knew that?

I don't know. So it's always interesting how you start on one path and then all your life experience just starts to lead you somewhere else. I literally say I like picked naturopathic medicine like on a Google search. Like I just was like, what kind of medicine can I do that helps patients from the root cause and boop, up pops. And there I was. yeah, so I've been a naturopath since then and love it. I'm glad I did it.

Jaclyn Smeaton (06:02 - 06:16)

Did you get that feeling when you saw that, that there was just some kind of like click, like a fire was lit or there was some kind of sign when you saw naturopathic medicine? Like that is what I've been looking for.

Tricia Pingel (06:16 - 06:48)

Yeah, but I didn't know why. my husband thought I was insane because I had a great job. I was working in PR. I was working in the dental field. I made a good living. ~ We hadn't had any children yet, but we had just bought a house. We were like, he was like, what are you doing? Like, why would you do this? And I had gone to vet school interviews. And the weird thing was, when I went to the vet school interview, I'm very dynamic and I'm very outgoing. And I walked in like, hey, I'm Tricia. How you doing? What are you here? And they're like, who is this lady?

Jaclyn Smeaton (06:48 - 07:00)

They're like usually people who choose to be vets are the people who don't like to talk to people. like to talk to animals. That's totally not true, by the way. I'm just saying. I'm just trying to make a joke. I love our vets. They're awesome people, people too.

Tricia Pingel (07:00 - 08:17)

Well, absolutely, but even in the interview, they were like, you got to see an organic chemistry. Why? And I said, well, my dad had a stroke the week before finals. And I said, so I couldn't prep for my final and my grade dropped. And they looked at me and they go. And I said, OK. And this goes into some of what I've turned into over the years was really looking at the adrenals is what are these expectations that we're putting on ourselves through medical school, through other people, what other people decide what we're supposed to be.

You know, I didn't get an A in organic chemistry, so I can't be a good veterinarian. And how much that hit me and hurt me too. You know, it's funny how that all comes first, excuse me, full circle. Because when I went to the interview, it didn't feel right. I got in there and I thought, if I can't live a life with balance, with being able to do what I love and have a career, you know, and not feel roped into just being perfect all the time.

I thought there has to be a disconnect here as well. So the veterinary world hadn't caught up. There was no progressive movement at that time. It was very standard of care, you know? And I thought, okay, this isn't a good spot for me anyway. So it worked out in the end, although I still have a zillion animals and I still love them.

Jaclyn Smeaton (08:17 - 09:45)

That's good. are soothing to the soul. And thank you for just kind of transitioning us into the topic that we're really here to talk about today, which I have to say I'm really excited because I want to hear your perspective. It's something that I think affects so many people, myself included. ~ And I'm really excited to tap into your expertise on this, which is really, I would say, the nuances of stress in women.

And the complexities, and you mentioned this, like the expectation that we carry that sometimes probably causes us more stress that is not real, like a real situation, right? Like, so anyway, I want to dive into this. think first I want to just note, like, we're going to be talking about women here because that's the focus of your practice and who you work with. And of course that's our experience, you and I, right? As moms, as doctors, as working people.

However, this is not a gender specific conversation. I'm sure there's a lot of men and dads that could listen to this, that could feel the same way. And I certainly won't make assumptions around what their experience is. And I know you won't either because we can't, because it's not our lived experience. But we're going to be talking about women today, but I don't want people to perceive that we are in any way implying that men don't carry pieces of this that are the same, pieces that are similar. And then of course, there's pieces that are different because men certainly have their own different expectations.

Tricia Pingel (09:45 - 09:53)

And I have plenty of male clients and I work with adrenal fatigue in them as well. Yeah, this doesn't exclude it. You know, I just can't speak as a man.

Jaclyn Smeaton (09:53 - 10:56)

Yeah, exactly. I actually was listening to this podcast diary of a CEO, which I love. he interviewed, Steven interviewed Esther Perel. I don't know if you've ever heard of Esther Perel, but she's a, you know, world famous relationship and sex expert. And this was really more talking about like social, social structure and like men and women. And I think one thing that was so fascinating was Steven was bringing up some statements that she challenged. And one of them was around.

Like the differences between men and women and how they experience expectations and what's leading to men feeling more lonely today and things like that. All the things that

people are talking about in the media. Anyway, if you haven't listened to that or our listeners to check it out, cause she does talk a lot about like how she is, she's a woman, but like how women assume that they know what men are going through or what their hardships are. And again, men assume the same for women, but when you get people together and just have listening that it can be really eye-opening. So anyway, I say that with an open heart. I'm excited to dive in and talk about moms and working women and all of that today with you.

Tricia Pingel (10:56 - 11:01)

Great, I'm excited too, because it's a conversation we don't talk about enough. We don't talk about what it feels like, or we think we can survive through everything and that we're responsible for everything and we don't ask for help. And it's a problem. It's a real problem for our adrenals, for our health, for our mental status, for our wellbeing, just being joyful and happy. ~ And so yeah, I'm psyched to talk

Jaclyn Smeaton (11:01 - 11:39)

Yeah, well, let's kind of start at the beginning. In your experience, like with all the women that you've worked with in your practice, tell me a little bit about the patterns that you see that women are sharing with you, that you are connecting to stress and to HPA access function and to adrenal health. Let's start there.

Tricia Pingel (11:39 - 15:57)

Well, I think as a naturopath, we have a lot of people coming to us that are health conscious, right? So they've already, they've researched everything. They've, you know, they have all the supplement line. They're doing the diet or the diet of whatever it is. So what I find, a lot of people come to me and they think they're doing everything right, right? They're like, I do the diet. I take care of everything. I feed my family well. I take all the supplements. I do everything, but I still don't feel right. Nobody can find anything.

And I think that's one of the first signals is if you're doing everything, you're over controlling everything down to the calorie, down to the protein gram, down to what supplements you're taking, that is a sign that your body's already on an alert. I mean, as practitioners who are listening here, understand the adrenal system in general, but I like to talk to it as if you were in the woods and you were hiking and you come in contact with a bear.

Right? We have that fight or flight response. And if we do that enough, right? We walk around the corner, there's another bear, there's another bear, there's another bear. And that adrenal adaptation starts to happen. We start to anticipate bears. We start to think they're coming before they come. And as a mom, I get this all the time. The minute my 16 year old gets in a car, I'm like, he's going to hit a tree. my gosh, he's going to go the wrong direction.

Like we start worrying about stuff that's never happened. Right? And when we do that, we try to control it.

Because for some reason, especially as women, and I guess I can't speak to men on this one, but we feel like if we control everything, everything will be fine. And that is a myth. It is 100 % a myth. And when we start to control everything, we are signaling a fight or flight response with everything we do. And when we signal a fight or flight response, you know as well as I do, we're not repairing ourselves. We're not detoxifying our body. We're not balancing our hormones because our body is in a sympathetic state ~ instead of a parasympathetic state. So when we're in a parasympathetic state, we do all these things. When we're not, we don't and we stop sleeping. Our hormones become erratic, right? Now we're saying we're in perimenopause. We have thyroid issues. Our hair is falling out. We're not happy anymore. We're stressed out. We're overwhelmed. We're trying to balance multiple things. So what do we do?

And it becomes this control myth and this perfectionism cycle. And I see it all the time, especially in professional women, women that are managing a career, managing children, managing a household, and then trying to control their health. And there's a certain point where we really do have to stop. I love the empowerment, right? I love that we can do everything.

But should we? Should we be doing everything? For me personally, I lost all my joy doing that. Not only did my health fail, but I was so miserable all the time. I mean, to the point where I thought, I don't even want to go to work today. I don't want to be with my children today. God, just take me out of this. And it wasn't until I let go and was like, I don't have to have a perfect house.

I don't have to take on all this stuff for my husband. You know, we tend to think that we can do it better. My husband's perfectly capable of dressing the children for a photo shoot. Now, will I like what they look like? Probably not. Does it matter? No, because it's a great memory down the line where we go, see that picture where the kids aren't matching? That was the year my husband picked the clothes. now I find humor in it, right? But for so long, I lived that and I saw women coming to me with complete hormone dysregulation, whether that was progesterone deficiency, subclinical hypothyroidism, their nutrient levels were completely tanked, their serotonin was low, and everyone was looking at those pieces and trying to fix that piece. And I was sitting there saying, wait a minute, she's running from a bear. And when she's not, she thinks she is. So no wonder she's dysregulated. And often the best solution.

As I found in treating adrenals is calming the body and backing off and giving ourselves some grace and finding something that brings us true joy.

Jaclyn Smeaton (15:57 - 17:53)

I think that's a critically important and oftentimes missing piece of life. And it is, it's a philosophical piece. think, you know, just speaking with healthcare providers, I could do a lot of business coaching. And one of the things that we start with is what do you want your life to look like? Because you should build your practice to support that life, right? And I think a lot of us driven professionals, we build the practice we think we need and our life suffers. because we have to make sacrifices and accommodations to divert time to our practice. And it's a luxury to be able to flip the script, right? And think about the life you want first and building the practice around it. But one simple example was like when telemedicine came in, a lot of people viewed that as an opportunity to be able to travel and work from wherever they were. And that was great during COVID. But that's just one small example. Now I want to...I want to dig into this control myth that you described. Can you tell me, and you started to get into this, but I want you to really break it down. What's the pattern that you see that leads into that? Because I can see that generally when people feel like they cannot control something, they dig in to try to control it harder or control something else in compensation.

You mentioned diet, exercise, lifestyle. That is something that a lot of people wrap their arms around as something that they can make sure that they are doing. And there's an element that that's so great, right? It's self care, it's commitment. It can bring joy, it can affirm and build confidence. I really believe that when you are putting time into something that is meaningful to you and achieving a goal, that is what builds that resilience and self-confidence. But I can absolutely see what you're saying, that it can become a problem as well.

Tricia Pingel (17:53 - 19:24)

Think it roots back to childhood. think it roots back to what we were taught. mean, I, for example, I grew up in the modeling industry, so everything was diet restriction, restriction, restriction, control, look good, look good, do that, right? Now that's not unique to the modeling world. think especially now looking at our kids now in social media, they're paying attention to what everyone else says is success. And I think it comes down to what is your definition of success in the long run. Like you were saying, you create the life that you want. But I think when we're younger, we're taught that the harder we work, the more we work, the more hours we put in, the more we sacrifice, the more successful we'll be. Right. So the more we do, the better. And I do think that was ingrained. I don't know if it was just generational, you know, from my parents teaching me that, you know, you can do whatever

you want if you work for it. You know, I mean, I was told that my entire life, if you work for it, you can do whatever you want. I agree with that. But what is work?

Does that mean 12 hour days for \$200 an hour? Or does that mean four hour days for \$400 an hour? There's different ways to make the same amount of money. There's different ways to create your life. And I think it goes back to self-worth and who we thought we were growing up. As a model, as a teen model, a high fashion model in the 90s, you were supposed to be basically a size zero.

Jaclyn Smeaton (19:24 - 19:28)

And I can't imagine that pressure. That must have been a tremendous amount of pressure.

Tricia Pingel (19:28 - 20:13)

It was a lot of pressure, but like I said, I don't think it just applies to models. know, back then, maybe like when I look at it back then, maybe. But, you know, my mom was a model as well. My whole family was in entertainment. So I grew up on diets. Like that's all I was on was diet. And you show up, you're on time. You do exactly what they're going to say. You restrict everything. And so what did I start to do? I started to control my food. Right. And had a variance of an eating disorder because of that trying to control my food, but that's what I was taught. So when I started actually learning nutrition, when I started really learning about what my body needs to make serotonin, to break down hormones, to build muscle, what I had learned I had to ditch.

Jaclyn Smeaton (20:13 - 20:21)

So that must have been hard too. We all grow up with these like constructs, right? Exactly. Yeah, it can be really difficult to break those.

Tricia Pingel (20:21 - 26:53)

really difficult. And I think like you were saying, I agree with you that when people have a healthy diet and supplements, it's rewarding. But I think a lot of people are doing it with the old myth of what they were taught was healthy. And so I think we're taught this and this is ingrained in our brain. It becomes part of our subconscious, right? It becomes part of our chemistry to react to everything, to overreact to everything. And that's a habit that has to be broken. And that is really scary. Like when you finally say, I'm not going to control this or I'm gonna let this go. I'm not gonna worry about this. I'm gonna let someone else handle it. It's very frightening. And a lot of people, when they get that fear response and that cortisol response, they retreat.

And we see this in health too. We see this with diabetes. We see this with obesity. We see people that are hard to break that habit. People with drug addictions, really hard to break

that habit. ~ Abusive, women in abusive relationships trying to leave the husband and they can't because there's a security, there's a fear about them leaving even though everything around them says you're supposed to leave, right? This isn't easy. And I think, I don't wanna make it sound like it is easy, but I think at some point you have to wake up and you have to make a choice to do it differently. And if you'll allow me, I'll tell you what that point was for me, because maybe it will relate, because I'm as victim to this as everybody else. you know, I'm an overachiever. I became a doctor, you know. I came out of school. I started my own practice. I was like, I can do this on my own. I learned how to build a business. I put everything I had into it at the same time that I had a baby.

I decided for fun in my senior year of medical school to have a baby. thought, okay, let's just do that. Let's get that out of the way. it all at one. Yeah. And so even going through the last year of school and having a newborn, talk about being guilty. I wasn't with him. My husband was with him while I was in med school and started a practice, decided to have another baby. Fast forward many years, my mom had cancer. She was my office manager, so we built it together.

We did naturopathic therapies, kept her around probably six years longer than it would have otherwise. But at some point it did hit and I lost her in the practice and I started to watch her decline. I was honestly, I was just powering through. I was going as a caregiver, watching my mom waste away. I was trying to continue to run a thriving practice. I had just written a book.

I had my influx of patients was high. mean, I was doing 12 hour days. I have obviously my home. I would come home and my husband and be taking care of the kids. He was stressed out. So the whole environment I was just powering through. I mean, I can't say it any other way. And I honestly thought, and I'm sure many of you listening can relate to this. I thought, okay, if I'm not breaking down, if I'm not like having full on panic attacks and stuff, I'm fine. Like I can deal. I'm happy.

My patients didn't know I was going through anything. They're like, Dr. Pinkle, you're so helpful and so great. And I'm smiling and I'm giving my usual energy. But when I got home, I was miserable. And when my mom was dying, I could feel this. Like I could feel it in my body, but I was kind of putting it aside. I was like, no, no, no, I'm fine. I'll just take the adrenal supplements. I'll take my B vitamin, right? I'll take my adaptogens. I'll be fine. Like I'll just, you know, I don't eat gluten. I don't eat dairy. Everyone has told me that this will be fine.

Like as long as I do all the things, I won't go into adrenal fatigue. I'll just stay, which was a myth. When my mom died, it hit me. It hit me hard because I realized I lost my identity. I had

no idea who I was. I had lost my dad at 24. I had two grandparents that were very close to me that I had lost. I had my mom that I lost and I'm an only child. And I found myself going, wait a minute, am I a doctor?

And I was modeling, by the way, full time, this whole time. So modeling, doctor practice, mom, Trisha. So what I did is I got rid of Trisha. I lost her. I put her somewhere. I don't know where she went. And I sat there and I said, I don't know who I am. So my mom dies. Do I take time off? No, because I was booked out a month. So said, I'll just get through the month, and then I'll take time off and then I'll just do another month and then I'll take time off. The money's good. Doing my thing. I'll just keep working. And my body said, no, no. My hair was falling out. I was muscle wasting. I was exhausted. I wasn't sleeping well. I was grinding my teeth. I finally did a nutrient panel on myself. I had zero B vitamins. I had zero minerals. My digestion was a mess. I was bloated. I was constipated.

I didn't have any joy with my children. I had no joy in my job. Everything went to have to, I have to clean the house. I have to go to work. I have to go to the grocery store. I have to do this or that. I never got to do anything. I didn't see gratitude or love at anything. And I found myself really depressed, like bottomed out and I had to make a change. And I knew I had to make a change. And that was that moment where I woke up.

And everyone needs to get to that point, I think, where you wake up and you say, OK, I have two options here. I'm either going to die. I'm either going to live a miserable life or I'm going to decide that I am worth it, that I'm good enough as I am. And I don't have to be this for everybody else that I can actually say I'm not going to do it. And I ditched my regular practice when in the concierge medicine changed my entire being and went back to dance and started hip hop dancing again and found joy again. And now fast forward, four, that was, I was 40. So now I'm 49. I live every day with love and gratitude and just want to help other people, particularly women realize that by controlling everything and powering through, we are causing what we're trying to avoid.

Jaclyn Smeaton (26:53 - 27:03)

Wow. Yeah, I want to just really, well, thank you for sharing your story and the amount of tremendous hardship you've had to go through in the last 10 to 15 years. It's lessons and I know we all carry, you know, it's like you always want to be kind to people that you meet because you never know what they're going through. That's what your story makes me think of because that's a lot. So I really appreciate you opening up and sharing that because I think that regardless of the circumstance around it.

Tricia Pingel (27:03 - 27:23)

Lessons though, right?

Jaclyn Smeaton (27:23 - 27:35)

your story is so relatable with the like the just keep going. Just keep going. Just keep swimming. Just keep swimming. Just keep swimming.

Tricia Pingel (27:35 - 27:40)

forget who you are. It's okay. You can just be what everyone else wants you to be. can do those roles.

Jaclyn Smeaton (27:40 - 30:10)

You had that phrase like mom guilt that you've talked about on social. And I want to just talk a little bit about that because sometimes it shows up in real ways where you feel guilt. And other times it shows up as feeling responsible, feeling obligated. And of course we are responsible. If you have children, you're responsible to care for your children. But that piece that you mentioned that really hits home for me is that you are a doctor. You are a mother, you are a daughter, you are a wife or a partner. So all these hats that we wear and maybe you're a volunteer, there's so many other things that when things get overwhelming, your identity as self goes down, down, down, down. And the reason why I think that's important is it's not like a victim mentality piece of it. It's that this is a really common thing to happen that leads to a feeling of burnout. And I think that this is where the mom guilt comes in. And I'll just give you a quick example. And then I want to hear your take on it. But I think you're probably going to tell me, yeah, absolutely. This is what happens is like we were going through our finances and looking at, you know, what we spend money on. I was wanting to do a yoga, like a 10 pack yoga class. And this is not, this is like me thinking about it. This is no one putting this expectation on me. It was a hundred dollars, something for a 10 pack of class.

And I thought, well, you know, I really love yoga, but like, I don't know that I can spend a hundred dollars on myself. Like that feels a little bit too indulgent. And then when I was going through our finances, I realized we spent \$800 a month for Taekwondo for our kids. spent, you know, soccer. was like, I don't know, 300 bucks per kid per season. Whenever, when I started to go through all that and how much I was investing in my children's activities to bring them joy, friendship, partnership. And then I realized the...way that I looked at that investment in myself was so completely different at odds that it was actually really shocking. And that really hit me like, wow, this is an expectation that I carry where I don't think twice about doing those things for my kids, but I do feel guilt around like that it's too indulgent or too, and there's a lot of things I'd love to do, a pottery class or whatever. My point is that it's, think, a very common experience for us to prioritize our own needs last.

And there is an outcome to that when it comes to our health. It's like, if you're not filling your cup, how can you serve?

Tricia Pingel (30:10 - 31:33)

Well, as a mom, if your child had no activities and was going to school eight or nine hours a day and coming home and cleaning the house and not getting out to play.

You would put a stop to that because you love that child. You would say, no, no, no, honey, you need to go to Taekwondo. You need to meet friends. You need to play outside. These are important. These are healthy, right? I mean, our goal is to raise a healthy child. Yet what are we modeling for them when we're not doing the same thing? Because anyone who's watched behavior or learned behavior knows that the child learns by watching the parent.

They don't learn what we say. We could say a thousand. They don't even hear what we say. I have teenagers. They have no idea what I'm saying. But they watch me. They watch me go to dance class six hours a week. They watch me go and get a massage. They're like, where are going, mom? Oh, I'm going to get a massage or I'm going to go out and walk around and go through Hobby Lobby because I don't have anything to do this afternoon. And I just want to walk around. Right. I just want a window shop. It makes me feel good. I want to go get a cup of coffee, latte and wander through the mall. I don't know whether I buy anything or not. Or I want to go meet up with a friend for dinner.

They see me doing that, which as a parent, because this is what we worry about, is if we do this for ourselves, our kids will suffer. I have found by experience completely the opposite. My kids are like, you're going to the gym to do that. I want to go to the gym. Can I go to the You know, so I think we have to think about that. If our kids came to us and said the same thing that we're saying about our own happiness, what would we say to them? Right.

Jaclyn Smeaton (31:33 - 31:47)

Yeah, that's great.

Tricia Pingel (31:47 - 31:52)

Would we tell them you're right? You shouldn't do anything for yourself. You should just work hard all the time and be unhappy. We have any self-compassion for ourselves. And I say this as a woman who has had to go through this transformation and watched so many of my patients. As soon as I get that mindset shift in people, I can see it. I literally in a moment, I'm sure you have too, with patients, the minute that they go, ~ I'm going to do that for me. The next time I see them.

Jaclyn Smeaton (31:52 - 32:17)

Grind and grind and grind.

Tricia Pingel (32:17 - 32:18)

There's a twinkle in there.

Jaclyn Smeaton (32:18 - 32:53)

Yeah. Well, I think there's a, there is a joy that comes with taking ownership of your own needs, honestly, or wants maybe not even needs, maybe just wants like there. It's okay to do that. And I think that it does when you actually make that investment, it's like a pat on the back. That's true self care, in my opinion, is like thinking about how you want to spend your time and then taking some time to do that thing. You, maybe it's just reading 30 minutes a day, whatever it is, setting a reasonable goal and then like, prioritizing it frankly, like over other things.

Tricia Pingel (32:53 - 33:34)

To be calm while we do it. It's whatever makes you, people go, well, how can you hip hop dance? That's not calm. That's fight or flight. Actually, it's not because I have to think about, have to listen to the music. I have to put my hand in the right spot at the right time. I have to listen to the teacher. have to pay attention to the people around me. I'm socializing with the people next to me. I'm interpreting the music. So it hits different aspects of my brain where the last thing I can think about during that hour is where my kids shoes are or like, you know what I mean? And so I think it really comes down to whatever you choose to do. And I do love creative things. ~ My mom started painting again when she got the diagnosis of cancer. But I think anything that makes your body really relax and hone in on something that's making you smile, something that's bringing you joy. Because the more that you get into that parasympathetic state, the more you start to override.

Jaclyn Smeaton (33:34 - 33:46)

Really.

Tricia Pingel (33:46 - 34:14)

That ingrain subconscious in what feels good. And what do they say? Like 21 days of consistent habit, right? Can totally rewire your brain. And we're starting to hear so much, heavens, finally on stress response and neuroplasticity. I've been out here for years going, we're dying because we're stressed out. Everyone's like, yeah, whatever. It's just stress. It's just stress, whatever. No, it's the thyroid. It's the hormones. No, it's stress.

Jaclyn Smeaton (34:14 - 34:21)

Stress is the root like yes, might be the hormones secondarily. Absolutely. Yeah.

Tricia Pingel (34:21 - 34:24)

Absolutely, because they're all part of the same system and we can't...

Jaclyn Smeaton (34:24 - 34:32)

And affected by, you know, affected by stress, you know, there is not a single cell in the body that's not impacted by glucocorticoids and stress.

Tricia Pingel (34:32 - 34:40)

I know. And what's the therapy for it? Nothing. Nobody talks about it. They're like, just go see a therapist. No.

Jaclyn Smeaton (34:40 - 35:57)

Sometimes, mean, that's definitely a great thing, but sometimes it's not enough, right? Because it's the practice of it. It's basically rewiring yourself for when you see a squirrel, you don't think bear, you know? And I think that's another piece that I wanted to talk with you about because I think you talked about this pattern of like bear, bear, bear. And what can happen over time is that you mount an unreasonable response to the trigger because your body's patterned that way. And this is biochemistry.

You know, and I want to shift and talk a little bit about biochemistry. Maybe now's a good time to ask. Like we've talked a lot about the experience of stress and the experience of women, but you've mentioned and you started with these symptoms that you shared of thyroid dysfunction, hair loss, fatigue, insomnia, ~ perimenopausal symptoms, sleep disruption, you know, all the things you talked about earlier. Can you help us make that connection? Help our listeners understand how to stress lead to these physiological changes. And the other piece of that is that in my experience with patients, usually the body's signals start as a whisper, but if you don't respond, they escalate to a scream. So I'd love to know what you are seeing for patterns and why that happens.

Tricia Pingel (35:57 - 38:22)

Yeah, absolutely. So let's start with why does stress impact all of these. So cortisol will always win no matter what. So for example, if we go into hormones, let's talk about perimenopause for a minute, and a woman sees that, does labs or whatever, and their progesterone is dropping. The question comes down to, is the progesterone dropping because you're really not making progesterone or don't have the ability, or is the progesterone dropping because cortisol is taking over? So if the body is running from a bear and you're in the woods, it's not going to stop to have sex. It's not going to stop to hold a baby. It's not going to stop to manage your metabolism. It's not going to grow your nails or your hair.

You know, we're not even going to digest our food. We're going to run. So what happens is if your body gets down to this situation and whether this stress is external or internal, and I'll talk about that in a second because I think that's a misconception that a lot of people have.

But whatever the stressor is, the body is always going to choose to run because if you don't, the bear is going to eat you. So the key when you have to overcome that, because people say, well, Dr. Pingle, I can't get rid of stress. And they're right. ~ News flash to everybody.

The stress is not going to get any better. It's not going to be better after Christmas. It's not going to be better when your kids graduate. It's not going to be better next month when you get that great paycheck. The stress is going nowhere. Our society is building us to adapt to stress at such a rate due to technology. We are going to continue to be taxed with stress. We cannot change that. What we can change is how we perceive the stress. What the inputs through our eyes, through our senses, all these senses that we have, we intake the stressor.

Our brain decides, are we scared? Are we not? Right? So if we're scared, it's going to have an impact on every single cell in our body, our detoxification, our thyroid conversion, our hormone manufacturing and conversion, our gut health, our absorption of nutrients. And then guess what? If you're not absorbing nutrients, that's another stress, right? So as these things, as you start to, it impacts our inflammatory response. It changes our insulin. It changes the way that we produce ATP for energy to make anything else. So if our body thinks it doesn't have to be in stress, ladies, listen, it does not actually have to see real stress to have this response. You just have to think.

Jaclyn Smeaton (38:22 - 38:57)

You have to think it. That is such a fascinating truth, which is you can get yourself worked up and have the same exact physiological response by thinking something, not even experiencing it, which I think is such a powerful, let's frame shift that, right? Let's shift that and flip it over because that's kind of the shadow side. The light side of that is that if you can rewire your assumptions and your story and your thoughts, you could probably reduce the reactivity to a real stimulus.

Tricia Pingel (38:57 - 39:05)

100%. I mean, so our body doesn't know the difference between a beeping cell phone and a car crash. It doesn't. It just knows that it's it's been stimulated.

Jaclyn Smeaton (39:05 - 39:12)

Are those three dots that are like, you're waiting for someone to respond? That's the most stressful thing that could possibly happen on a cell phone.

Tricia Pingel (39:12 - 39:29)

I had to someone, couple things. Someone said, well, how does someone know if they have adrenal fatigue? was in an interview and I said, okay, try this. Leave your phone at home

and go somewhere. Cause you're like, I forgot my phone. ~ shoot. I forgot my phone. Why do we hear? Like it's just a phone.

Jaclyn Smeaton (39:29 - 40:00)

I don't want to take us too far off track, but that is so, I've actually been intentionally like going for walks without my phone and I'll be gone for 40 minutes and I intentionally leave it at home because I want to be more present and it's really hard to be present with a phone. That's been one of the best, like jumping to the conclusion of this, that's one of the best stress reducing things because I know I'm not going to be interrupted and I get to carve that time out. It drives other people crazy. My husband's always like, why did you leave your phone at home because I don't want to be reached. I want time.

Tricia Pingel (40:00 - 42:06)

But I say that because most people, if I ask women, are you stressed? Oh, no, no, no, I'm blessed. I have a great job. I have a great husband. I have great kids. Yeah. Oh, I'm busy. I do this or that. I'm involved in this and that. And they start giving me a list of everything they do, but they're not stressed or they're stressed. But it's quote normal. Right. That's where that mom comes from. So when you're asking like, what are some of the things like, how does it impact? I don't think people realize that it comes down to what you think about the thing. You could have two people in the same room facing the same stressor.

And one rolls off the back and the other one doesn't. And the other thing to remember is that these external stressors that we don't even need to spend time on, we all know what those are, right? Death, finances, whatever. They turn into internal stressors like nutritional deficiencies, inflammatory responses, irregular hormones. Like as soon as you start to have that misbalance and progesterone and estrogen, that's another stressor on the body. So the external stressors turn internal, the internal stressors continue the stress response you the only thing you can really control on your own is the external, how you interpret the external. And then you bring in people like us to help balance out the internal. And that's where you do the testing and you figure out what the nutrient deficiencies are. That's when the supplementation in the diet that we talked about earlier become rewarding because you're to make sure that you're inputting in a way that causes a calm response rather than a freak out response and go from the frequency of fear, blame, anger, to love, gratitude, and appreciation. And that's our job as humans. Right? And then we mix it with you or me or any practitioners out there to just really take it to the next level. And I think a lot of people do the practitioner part. Practitioners excluded, we do all the things right, but we don't change the way we perceive the stress. And I do think that's a huge point when it comes to actually recovering adrenal fatigue, not only in yourself, but in your patients as well. There has to be that.

Jaclyn Smeaton (42:06 - 43:28)

Definitely. So, you know, when we talk about adrenal fatigue, one of the things I want to kind of frame shift is, think, really just redefining that so that our listeners know what we're talking about. So I think what we have here is you have the hypothalamus and the pituitary gland in the brain that communicate with the adrenal glands, which produce your epinephrine, norepinephrine, and your cortisol that we think about all the time in response to stressors. And what happens over time is not that the adrenal gland can't make cortisol, it's that you get a lot of dysregulation where the communication is essentially thrown off or it gets triggered to release cortisol with too little of a stimulus would be kind of what you're describing here. But there's more to the story too. And I think one reason I want to kind of pull it into DUTCH, this is a DUTCH podcast. So people that are listening, one of the couple of things that are so nice with the DUTCH pod, with the DUTCH, the way the DUTCH assesses HPA axis function and adrenal function is we look at a couple of other things. We look at cortisol to cortisone balance, and we look at the metabolism of cortisol, because sometimes when you look just at the diurnal pattern, it might look normal or high or low, but the metabolism of cortisol can be off as well. Actually, a lot of those internal stressors can drive that too. So let's talk a little bit about the DUTCH test and how you utilize HPA axis evaluation and adrenal evaluation in women who are under this chronic stress to try to figure out how to help them and what they need.

Tricia Pingel (43:28 - 44:25)

Yeah, I think with any testing and the DUTCH Testing is great because it's comprehensive and it gives you a lot of different aspects to what's going on. And I think information is good. I think information like that needs to be with a practitioner that also allows the woman to not freak out. Because I do a test like that on some people. I do it on some people and they're like, my God, my arm are all over the place and they start freaking out about it. And it's like, of course they're all over the place. Of course. Look what you're doing with your life. So yeah, looking at how everything is responding and balancing to each other is what's important. Just because a level is low does not mean it's just low. Like you're saying, ~ a big mistake I see is that the adrenal fatigue definition, a lot of people assume that means that they're not making cortisol. And to your point, that is not the case.

Jaclyn Smeaton (44:25 - 44:28)

The adrenals are like the ovaries, right? The ovaries stop making estradiol. It's like an aging process. does not happen with the adrenal glands.

Tricia Pingel (44:28 - 46:11)

They need to keep us alive, right? So ~ we need to look at this as a rhythm mean, if you're scared of getting your blood drawn and you go to get, and I know the DUTCH doesn't do

blood, but let's say you go get your blood drawn, it's going to jack up your glucose. It's going to jack up your cortisol, right? Does that mean that your cortisol is always high? No, of course not. So I think when we look at this, we have to look at it as a balance. And it's also really important to look at trends. And I think the other thing is to take a really good lifestyle assessment because are you eating on a regular basis? Are you giving your body predictability? Because if you were in the woods, imagine yourself in that woods and you see a bear, what do you need? You need nutrition to run. You need to be able to divert resources. If you don't have that predictability, the body is going to create it for you. It's going to increase your insulin. It's going to put more fat around your abdomen. It's going to divert resources from things that make you look pretty or feel pretty. It's going to do what it has to do to survive. And I think testing can be so helpful with that because it lets you see the extent of which those and how far those imbalances have gone to know where's the route when we treat that, what happens when we treat that? Can we rebalance these hormones by simply putting you into a parasympathetic state, you know, for 21 days saying, do this routinely for 21 days? How much movement do we actually get? Does the body take back over? I tend think we tend to over treat with traditional testing, we just see one frank number and we say, okay, well then you need progesterone or you need estrogen. And really it comes down to that balance. So that's where some of the more extensive testing can come in very handy because it looks at it as a whole in a holistic type picture as opposed to just one number.

Jaclyn Smeaton (46:11 - 46:39)

Yeah, and I love that you start with like, how can we get into more of a parasympathetic state? Because I love adrenal adaptogens, they can be really powerful. you can't, it's my point of view that you can't out supplement a lifestyle issue. And I think with stress, it seems to be the most overlooked, even with us as healthcare providers in functional medicine, maybe because it's the hardest for us to change, you know, and it's the hardest for us to support patients.

Tricia Pingel (46:39 - 46:41)

Work hard, work hard. Yeah, it's like burning yourself out in making those changes.

Jaclyn Smeaton (46:41 - 47:05)

Absolutely. It's breaking the ingrained pieces that define who we are, like who we are as a person. I am someone who works hard. I am someone who shows up at every event. I'm someone who is a top performer at work. I'm someone who helps patients. What are all those things that, unfortunately, the basket can start to overflow, right?

Tricia Pingel (47:05 - 48:39)

Yeah, why are we why do we need that validation? If we truly believe in what we do, we truly

love what we do. Why is that not enough if we're taking care? But I think when we're very empathetic people, I mean, that's just what we are. We want to help everybody. And we've all had people that have come to us that we know what they need, but they're not ready to do it. And then we fight for them to do it. And it's like, OK, when they're ready, they'll come to us and we'll change their life.

But why do we always feel like I look at that as a practitioner say, why do we always feel that we need that extra distinction or that we have to attend that event or that we have to be seen here or there? What made us think that in the first place? Why is just helping people with true genuine interest and care not enough? Because as you know, like the conventional world, a lot of times we don't even see that. So the fact that we are putting so much care to them is enough. And I think practitioners need to hear that your care, that one-on-one, your interest in that person and using the skills that you've learned to help them is enough. We don't need to do more than just give that person our time, our energy and our full investment. And when you let go of some of those things and you ask yourself, well, why do I need that distinction or that extra degree anyway? Why do I need to go to that event and promote this or that? Like, why do we do it?

If you're finding yourself saying, have to, instead of I get to, or I'm excited about it, then we need to let that go.

Jaclyn Smeaton (48:39 - 49:20)

Yeah. I want to talk about one more concept before we get into like, how do we reset our parasympathetic nervous system in those 21 days? But this is really coming up for me, which I think we've spoken about women who give too much and the impact that can have. What do you think about people's ability to receive and how that impacts stress? Cause I think that's the other side of it. And I'm guilt as guilty as anyone for this, like, do you see that as an issue too? How can we get better at it? Receiving help, asking for help, you know, even just accepting help that's offered, I think can be very difficult. It feels like weakness for a lot of people.

Tricia Pingel (49:20 - 52:20)

It does. And I think they don't do it as well as we do. So we don't let them do it. You know, I say, hey, kids, I want you to do the dishes and they don't do it as well as I do. So I think I decide it's my job to do that because I do it better. And I think we are afraid to ask. ~ I don't know why other than saying that we feel it's the control thing. We're so in a fight or flight state that we can't allow somebody else to walk on the path in front of us. We feel like we have to be the one that encounters the bear. I think that's a really strong sign. If you're someone that views asking for help as weakness, or you find that you're taking everything on, or it's like the next thing comes along, you're like, ~ great, another thing. That's a very

good sign that your adrenals are very much adapting and very much needing help. And that it is time to take action because ultimately you will end up where I was, where you didn't want to go on.

And that is not where you want to be. So yeah, I think ~ it's kind of the ingrained. Like I said, I love women's empowerment because they're right. We can do whatever we want. But that doesn't mean we're supposed to do everything. And I think we've kind of interpreted that is I'm a woman. I can do everything. I can take I can do the home. I can do the work. I can do kids. I can do the PTA meeting. I can do all these things. ~ And we need to start saying no.

Do you like doing it? I don't like doing laundry. I don't. Probably my least favorite thing. So I didn't want to delegate it to my husband though, because I didn't think he could do as good of a job. I didn't want to give it to my kids because I figured they'd never do it. And then there was a point where I was like, I don't have to do this. I don't like it. I'm going to give it to them. And I'm going to accept that it may not be perfect. But it's done. And they're learning. They're learning how to do laundry. My 16-year-old is not going to be as good at it as I am, but that doesn't mean he can't learn. What am I teaching him if I'm doing it all the time? I'm teaching him nothing, right? And I think we do that with our husbands too. We assume that they can't handle it because they wouldn't do it exactly like we would. And as women, we have to let that go. When we look at Blue Zones, we look at cultures that are healthier than us. They eat together, they share responsibility, they all contribute. Yes, we drop the kids off with grandma and grandma may give them candy that we wouldn't give them. They may give them gluten. God forbid, you know, and we're sitting here saying, well, don't don't don't don't let them go near the swimming pool or don't let them, you know, I mean, the bottom line is we teach our kids different personalities and different situations by putting them in different situations. So we need to let go of some of that and see that as a strength. And if our goal is to be healthy and to portray health to other people we have to start getting back to a community model, which we have.

Jaclyn Smeaton (52:20 - 53:06)

I couldn't agree more. So social connection is the key to longevity. And it's very interesting because if you look at the Blue Zones with Dan Buettner's work, really interesting work, you'll find that there's this connection to purpose, connection to community and people.

And that's probably the most important common thread. mean, it's one of the other things that's interesting is that like he found that people had alcohol like one or two cups a day. We now know that like bigger research shows that's probably not beneficial and no alcohol is great. But I think the point is that that social connection piece is the thread that binds probably because it helps so much with resilience and stress response. And having a

purpose brings joy and brings connection. You can't biohack your way to longevity. have to connect your way to longevity.

Tricia Pingel (53:06 - 53:13)

And the wine, it's not the wine. It's that they're all sitting there. I you could do it with, you would have this, I believe you would have the same results if not better. If everyone had a wine glass of sparkling water in it, they were sitting around for two hours and talking over a slow dinner. We eat on the run. How many practitioners out there listening? Now be honest, how many of you power through lunch? How many of you do chart noting while you're eating lunch? How many of you even take a lunch, right?

Jaclyn Smeaton (53:13 - 53:33)

We're it together.

Tricia Pingel (53:33 - 53:42)

We have to set that example. We have to slow down.

Jaclyn Smeaton (53:42 - 54:12)

Okay, so let's shift to this. I love your concept of like you got to do it for 21 days. So people that are listening that if they are wanting to think about reducing stress, reducing that react to that bear like reactivity, really helping to reset their HPA access and get their brains wired differently for peace and calm and joy and parasympathetic activities. Let's talk about your favorite recommendations. What should people be doing in order to try to achieve that?

Tricia Pingel (54:12 - 55:10)

So it's kind of two part. have one part, which is how we start to get back to the joy and the other things you can do every single day to release a good 80 % of your bears. So the first thing is number one, I do think routine, morning routine in particular is very important. ~ The phone should not be next to your bed. So you wake up and start working right away, right? Wake up, deep breaths. Breath is very important. And I know we all know this, but we don't practice it all the time.

Find a routine in the morning that's quiet. And that might be sitting with your kids and having breakfast and making them breakfast. It's not like I'm asking you to go to the spa. I'm just saying don't over-stimulate. Have it a routine and be present in that routine. Be present with your kids at the breakfast table. Be present when you're getting ready for them for school. Don't be trying to do 8,000 different things, right? Number two, ask yourself what brought you joy when you were a kid.

Hip hop dance, music and dance. And you know, I dance six hours a week now. I dance hip hop with teenagers and I love it. And I love it because they're in the same space I am.

They're trying to figure themselves out. Right. And what did you used to do when you were a kid and figure out, start, just do the homework for after this 21 days if you have to, to figure out how you can start incorporating that back into your life. Start with just an hour a week. Make it to move on from there. OK. On a day to day basis.

Jaclyn Smeaton (55:10 - 55:37)

I love that question. What brought your joy as a kid? Okay.

Tricia Pingel (55:37 - 55:57)

Obviously, I think most of the audience here would know that we have to stop and breathe, right? That the best way to calm your body and put yourself into a parasympathetic state is to use the vagus nerve, to tug on it by breath, humming, singing, doing something with joy.

Jaclyn Smeaton (55:57 - 56:00)

Do you have, I mean, those are great, but for people who need more guidance, do you have like favorite apps or tools that you recommend a lot?

Tricia Pingel (56:00 - 58:03)

He is the Mindvalley app a lot, ~ which has a lot of different courses in it, but it also has meditations that has a lot of ~ sounds. Like I use a lot of alpha wave to gamma wave type sounds to change the patterns in my brain. Like when I'm getting ready for sleep, I listen to that type of music. When I feel stressed out, I listen to that type of music. ~ Obviously we can use things like phosphatidylserine, L-threonine, GABA, things like that to help. What I do is, and this is the hard work. So every single day, every time you start to feel that bear, ask yourself, one, do I have control over the outcome? Number two, is it worth my energy to take this on? And then based on those two questions, you have to make a decision. Are you gonna take it on? Are you gonna delegate it? Are you gonna let it go? And I found when I started asking myself, excuse me.

When I started asking myself this question, I found that a good 80 % of the things that were pissing me off were not in my control or they were not worth my energy to do. So here's the cool thing is if it's worth your energy and it's in your control, the solution is so quick and so simple that it's off your plate and heartbeat because it's in your control. Right. If it's something that you could do, but it's not worth your energy, you delegate it to someone who can do it for you.

Great, done, off your plate. The rest of it is not worth your time. And I think those are the things that'll help you identify what's keeping your brain in a fight or flight that you need to start looking at differently from changing that bear into a cute little bear cub and start writing that down. And over that 21 days, you're gonna spend every single day really looking at when those things come up, okay, how should I view this? Is this worth my energy? And

then you have to make that shift turn it from fear, blame, and anger into love and gratitude, right?

Jaclyn Smeaton (58:03 - 58:08)

I love those. Those are such really wonderful suggestions and I think really tangible suggestions that we can all do. ~ So thank you for sharing.

Tricia Pingel (58:08 - 58:54)

Yeah, it's made me a lot lighter and happier. And it also, to you practitioners out there, it gives you a lot of time freedom. And when you have time freedom, you feel better about signing up for the yoga class or leaving your kids to go do it. I mean, my kids get mad if I don't go to dance class now. I used to feel guilty. And now they're like, mom, why aren't you going? Like, you're supposed to go. Like, don't you have class at 6.30? And I'm like, yeah, I gotta go.

So I think it's really important to have that time freedom because with that time freedom comes your health freedom. It comes your self-care freedom. So if you're finding yourself saying you don't have time, I'd like you to do that exercise because you do. You do have time. And it's important. It's important to evaluate.

Jaclyn Smeaton (58:54 - 59:28)

Well, this has been an awesome conversation. really appreciate you spending the time with us today because I think this is such a, it's like a construct that affects all of us, right? I'm relating as a woman, but I'm sure everyone listening can relate to that. The outside expectations or the stories that we tell ourselves about what we have to do in the impact that that has on our stress and on our long-term health. mean, you're talking about things that are very physical that can be a response to the stress.

It's really such a critical topic. So thank you so much for joining us. If people want to learn more about you or follow you, learn about your practice, what are the best places they can tap into that?

Tricia Pingel (59:28 - 1:00:22)

DrPingle.com is the best place, D-R-P-I-N-G-E-L. I am all over social. I do interviews about this concept on YouTube. ~ My social is fun because I always talk about social media being a bear. So I thought if I'm going to show up there, I'm going to make it fun. So I dance on it. I do lighthearted jokes. I talk about mom stuff all the time. And it's a place to actually learn, but from a place of love and respect and grace for yourself. So please, I am all about community. So if you do find me from this, please say hello. Put in a little comment that says, hey, heard you here so that I can meet people. Because if we're not growing

community, we're not growing health. So thank you so much for having me here. I really appreciate it. And I hope that somebody got one little tidbit out of this that brought joy.

Jaclyn Smeaton (1:00:22 – 1:00:53)

I'm sure they got a lot. Uh, and thank you guys, all of you listeners today. I hope you got a lot out of our conversation. If you liked this episode and you want to hear more like it, we are live every Tuesday. We release a new podcast episode through all the channels that you could possibly be listening in. And I also encourage you to follow us at DUTCH test on all of your social media channels. We post a lot of hormone content, all of our upcoming podcast episodes and so much more. Um, we really appreciate having you here, Dr. Pingel. And everyone, thank you so much for listening. We'll see you next week.