

Episode 140 Transcript

00:00:00:05 - 00:00:11:02

Dr. Molly Maloof

I think a lot of doctors don't address their own issues first and because they're so busy. But like once you go through the process of fixing yourself, it's a lot easier to communicate to patients.

00:00:11:04 - 00:00:36:13

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

Welcome to the DUTCH Podcast, where we dive deep into the science of hormones, wellness and personalized health care. I'm Doctor 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 health care professional or simply looking to optimize your own well-being, we've got you covered.

00:00:36:14 - 00:01:05:08

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

The contents of this Podcast are for educational and informational purposes only. This information is not to be interpreted or mistaken for medical advice. Consult your health care provider for medical advice, diagnosis and treatment. I'm so glad that you've stayed with us today through our awesome Podcast. We are ending with a banger. I think one of the most important, impactful things to longevity that you are probably missing in your life, in your patient protocols and something that can feel tricky to address.

00:01:05:08 - 00:01:28:09

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

But really, truly, I believe that if you don't, you're going to not get the traction that you're looking for with your patients. Doctor Jonathan Sweeting, chief medical officer of the DUTCH Test and host of the DUTCH Podcast. Now, let's get into what we really came for. I want to introduce our guest, doctor Molly Maloof. Doctor Maloof is a physician and author and a longevity expert who really dedicated to radically enhancing healthspan.

00:01:28:14 - 00:01:33:00

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

And I have to say, I really admire that. In a world of quick fixes.

00:01:33:01 - 00:01:33:17

Dr. Molly Maloof

00:01:33:19 - 00:01:51:21

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

One of the critical things that you're talking about for longevity in even the data shows is the most important, but it's probably the least talked about in my experience in this field. So I'm really glad we're here. Doctor Molly is the advisor to more than 50 digital health and biotech companies, and she's a former Stanford Health stand instructor, which is pretty amazing.

00:01:52:01 - 00:02:06:22

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

She's the author of The Spark Factor and founder of Adama Bioscience. So thank you so much for joining me. Thank you. So I want to start by talking a little bit about embodiment and about mind body medicine. Why is this a topic that is important to you?

00:02:07:00 - 00:02:29:01

Dr. Molly Maloof

I think we are starting to truly understand that there is a lot more driving longevity than just small molecules, than just supplements. It's actually who we surround ourselves with that makes the biggest that is the biggest influence on our exercise habits, our sleep habits, our nutritional habits, even our toothbrushing habits. And the people that we spend time with also impact our emotional state.

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Dr. Molly Maloof

They impact the way that we feel. They impact the way that we resolve conflicts. And a lot of men and women find themselves in difficult relationships. And I myself found myself in one, in 2024, in 2023. And I found myself noticing my health was really affected. And I knew that there was definitely a relationship between relationships and health, but I didn't fully understand the fundamental science behind it until I started studying the science of love.

00:02:59:10 - 00:03:26:12

Dr. Molly Maloof

And it made me realize just how much we're missing as doctors when we don't fully understand the mechanisms of how our interactions affect our physiology. And it really comes down to our mitochondria. So our mitochondria are these it's not just metabolism metabolism regulators, but they're always sensing and integrating our environment. And there's their little literal mini supercomputers that are helping to determine how to partition energy for different use cases.

00:03:26:14 - 00:03:44:20

Dr. Molly Maloof

And so when you're in a state of chronic threat and your body has to produce more hormones, right, more stress hormones, more norepinephrine and epinephrine, more cortisol, the mitochondria actually play a role in producing stress hormones. And they also play a role in producing sex hormones. And a lot of people don't know this about them.

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Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

And so they just sex hormones are made there.

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Dr. Molly Maloof

Exactly. So they certainly play a role in determining whether we feel safe or unsafe. And typically, one of the major ways that we feel safe is being around people that we love and trust. Unfortunately, there's a lot of men and women that live alone. There's a lot of people who feel alone. There's perceived social isolation and there's objective social isolation, but both of them have real effects on the fundamental functioning of our mitochondria.

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Dr. Molly Maloof

I could go on, but we will go on.

00:04:13:09 - 00:04:23:15

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

That's great. I want to start with, like, how did you come to this being such an important element of health for you because you're a trained physician. You have the background, the small molecule background, let's call it.

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Dr. Molly Maloof
Just like the training. Yeah.

00:04:24:16 - 00:04:37:09

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton
This breaking down of systems into their most basic parts and components. What happened for you maybe academically or in practice that made you say, this isn't the whole picture, and I want to pursue this other area? Yeah.

00:04:37:09 - 00:05:05:00

Dr. Molly Maloof
I mean, it was the pandemic, really. So I remember I was isolated and alone teaching at Stanford online because they weren't teaching in classes in person. My students were suffering. They were having real problems mentally, and these were very high performing students. I was suffering. I was really struggling to keep it together for myself and my students. And I remember feeling like I'm eating the same foods, but I'm not metabolizing them the same, and something's different.

00:05:05:00 - 00:05:26:16

Dr. Molly Maloof
And I didn't fully put it together that it was just being isolated. That was changing my physiology. It was changing my metabolism, and I didn't. I really wanted to understand why. And so I started going down this whole pathway of wanting to study the science of human connection. And I met some really amazing mentors. I met Susan Sue Carter, who pioneered the study of oxytocin neurobiology.

00:05:26:21 - 00:05:53:07

Dr. Molly Maloof
She's married to Sabin. Poor. Guess who founded the poly bagel theory? So he studies stress and she studies love. And she taught me all about oxytocin and how it really is healing medicine. And we evolved oxytocin so that we could actually survive. And it's actually necessary for our survival. It's necessary for birth. When people take pitocin that is synthetic oxytocin that helps provide the enhance the birthing process.

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Dr. Molly Maloof
When, you breastfeed, you're producing oxytocin. You're helping to nourish and bond to that child. When you hold a baby, you produce oxytocin. When you just touch your partner and hug someone or get a massage. You get oxytocin. And of course, orgasm

produces oxytocin. And it's it's like we evolved this attachment hormone in order to survive because we are safer in numbers in primitive times.

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Dr. Molly Maloof

If you were alone and this is so funny because I actually go out hunting and I remember what I see when you see elk in a herd, they're a lot safer. Oh yeah, they have protection. And actually the interesting thing about elk is they're matrilineal. So the female elk actually protect the men because they need to make sure that they can survive and reproduce.

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Dr. Molly Maloof

Right. But interestingly, when I was going out hunting last week, there was this, the first elk I saw was a lone elk, and it was running like hell throughout the Elk Refuge, which we were hunting on. And, not exactly a refuge, but ironically, they call it that. But, I remember thinking this this is an example of an isolated animal, right?

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Dr. Molly Maloof

Like you're you're at risk for, you know, being attacked and humans evolved these natural systems in our brain to sense isolation as danger and as the end to create essentially a, hypervigilant state. And so I personally believe that generalized anxiety is very much driven by people living isolated people living alone, people feeling alone. And we really do need to reconnect in a real way and look at this as a necessary part of health.

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Dr. Molly Maloof

And it's not just about having a good social life, it's about your actual longevity. There's real evidence that, as people get older, their social circle, their physical, distance between people changes. They actually start having fewer and fewer social connections, and they start seeing fewer, fewer people physically. And that actually is related to health decline. So I felt like I kind of started to understand life itself when I started understanding metabolism.

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Dr. Molly Maloof

But when I finally understood human connection and how mitochondria are social

organelles and actually behave as though groups of people do. I was like, oh my God, life is organized really for us to survive and reproduce and relationship and relationship like that's what it's about. And and it's, it's it's almost like it's, you know, it's funny because it's, it's organized this way on the macro level and the micro level.

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Dr. Molly Maloof

And it's really beautiful when you think about it.

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Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

It is actually a very beautiful thing to think about. You know, I've been thinking about like the Dan Buettner work and the Blue Zones work. And when that came out, I know there's been flaws in the data, but when that came out decades ago, at this point, social connection and personal purpose were some of the things that were identified as factors in these centenarian groups totally.

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Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

And I know that every analysis more recently actually raised the importance statistically of that compared to things like nutrition. Absolutely. And so and I just when I think about longevity and all the things we're doing in longevity, you're honestly the only person that I know of talking about this when we think about the data driving no relationship being critical.

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Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

And I think about this a lot as well. Well, I'll give you another example in a minute, but why is it that it's so hard for us in the medical field to be promoting this? I mean, obviously you can't bottle it and sell it, which has an impact on it. True.

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Dr. Molly Maloof

But are there any guidance problems? Are there? We're not trained in this. I mean, I did not learn in medical school that loneliness is worse for your health than smoking, drinking, sedentary behavior and obesity. And you're telling me that I have learned all about smoking, and I've learned all about drinking, and I've learned all about weight. And I didn't learn about this.

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Dr. Molly Maloof

It's because we didn't know. We didn't we? This is very new science. We didn't even know the part of the brain that even registered loneliness until MIT researchers found it recently in, like, the last ten years. And so I think it's honestly just it takes about 15 years from science to go from the bench to the bedside. And, you know, Sue Carter has been studying oxytocin biology for, for like, her entire career.

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Dr. Molly Maloof

And she's like, you're one of the few doctors that's actually interested in this. And like, Helen Fisher was one of my advisors when, and she sadly passed last year. But she was the most cited women on the science of love, on romantic love in particular, she stood the massdot.com data set. She actually had to be privately funded to study love, because it's actually been very taboo in medicine and even in science.

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Dr. Molly Maloof

It was actually kind of looked down upon to study love because they wanted to basically think that think of love as this, like, beautiful thing. We don't need to understand. It's just but it's actually really important that we do understand it, because unhealthy love has real devastating physical health consequences. It can damage and dis regulate your nervous system.

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Dr. Molly Maloof

It can cause PTSD. It can cause domestic abuse. When a woman is attached to an abuser, people who are walking around with unresolved parent trauma or parent conflict are reproducing those patterns in their adult relationships.

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Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

It's almost epigenetic where it carries on. Exactly, you know, until you get a cycle breaker.

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Dr. Molly Maloof

Until you decide that you're going to be the person to break the cycle. And the unfortunate truth is that doctors don't talk to psychologists enough. There's actually a

necessary overlap between the physiology of relationships and the psychology of relationships, because the psychology of our relationships is fundamentally our programing from our parents. Right. But our hardware is what process is all that programing, right?

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Dr. Molly Maloof

It's the computer. But like the programing comes from the interactions and the way that we saw our parents behave. That's our pattern. That's the that's the software running. And I didn't learn about NLP hypnotherapy in medical school. That's been one the most powerful things that I found to change my own patterns. And yet that's not even considered mainstream psychology.

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Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

Yeah, there's not a lot of tools out there that are being promoted regularly. I mean, I'm seeing like eMDR talked about.

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Dr. Molly Maloof

There is really great.

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Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

Psychedelic meta psychedelic.

00:11:41:05 - 00:11:56:07

Dr. Molly Maloof

Medicine is making a come back primal trust. The Gupta program knows I didn't know about these things, but like, they're fundamentally about creating a sense of inner safety and more doctors should be prescribing them, but they don't know about them. I didn't know about that.

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Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

I mean, not to get so esoteric, but I think a lot of this is until you go through a personal experience like that. Yeah. You don't recognize the value of it or know how to talk about it, or you think it's woo woo or whatever. And I wonder about the busyness of physicians. I think the kind of the opposite of relationship is like busyness, right?

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Dr. Molly Maloof

There is that.

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Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

If this contributes, like if you're not getting that personal experience yourself, how would you even know the power of.

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Dr. Molly Maloof

I mean.

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Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

You could have on a patient.

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Dr. Molly Maloof

I am fundamentally guilty of being the kind of doctor who's trying to multitask, like checking my patient texts while I'm going from point A to point B at a conference and getting do a Podcast. And and it can really impair relationships to just not be not be present. Right. Becoming a doctor requires so much multitasking. And it's unfortunate because it's actually not the best way to actually bring yourself to your patients or bring yourself to your partner.

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Dr. Molly Maloof

But we have to honestly, we have to really reexamine the way we train medical students and the way that we, the way that we practice. And I'm very fortunate to have a concierge practice. So I kind of get to do what I want. And I got to I get to spend as much time as I want with my clients.

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Dr. Molly Maloof

But that's not the case for most physicians, right. But, you know, getting back to the point around having personal experience with this stuff, I think I think everybody knows someone who went through a major health breakdown because of a

relationship. And the thing is, when I finally started studying the cell danger response and it made me realize, like a lot of chronic illness is compounded, massive major life stressors, including things like divorce, car accidents, losing a family member, losing a child, maybe having an injury, maybe having a major toxicity exposure.

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Dr. Molly Maloof

But it's all those compounded together that create that mitochondrial allostatic load. And when that mitochondria allostatic load breaks down and you literally have overload, what can happen is your cells get stuck and they can't complete the healing cycle. When I realized there was a parallel in human relationships that led to relationships breaking down, where when people get into these ruts, they get into so much stress.

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Dr. Molly Maloof

The relationships are so toxic and so difficult that they're unable to complete that rupture and repair. That's when things break down. It's literally both in relationship and in our physical health.

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Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

I love that you make that connection. Can you talk a little bit more? Let's talk first about stress and about bad relationships. Can you describe what is the biological impact? You've talked about this on the cellular level. Of course there's hormonal impact. How do you talk about this with your patients?

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Dr. Molly Maloof

Well, I try to tell them that, you know, when you feel safe and you know when you feel good, you just close your eyes and think about a place in your life where you could always go, you know, that person that you know, like grandmother, that that family home, that vacation spot. Everyone knows what safety feels like, but they don't always recognize what dysregulation feels like.

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Dr. Molly Maloof

I actually had to get a therapist to really help me define this. You have to actually sit down and ask yourself, like, ask your patient. The simplest measurement is like you

ask them, tell me what's safest felt like to you over like go into the safest place in your mind. I want you to visualize that and I want you to define it verbally.

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Dr. Molly Maloof

Describe it. What does it feel like? What does it taste like? What is it touch? What does it feel like and touch. Touch. What does touch feel like in that space? What does it sound like? Get into the sensory experience of it. And then what is your inner inner sense feel like? What is introspection? Basically, what is your inner?

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Dr. Molly Maloof

What does it feel like for you to feel safe? And then on the flip side, close your eyes and think about what does it feel like when you were in the presence of someone that makes you feel unsafe? Your heart rate goes up, your chest gets tense, your hands get clammy, you don't feel like you can relax. That creates a lot of nervous tension in the physiology that that everybody knows what it feels like to have, like tense muscles.

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Dr. Molly Maloof

Right? But like, it's a problem when you can't fully relax with someone's presence where you can't, you feel like you're walking on eggshells at all times. You feel like even sleeping next to someone like you can't really sleep well. Like usually if someone's sleep is disrupted when a relationship starts, that's a pretty good predictor that something's wrong. That's one of the best tools.

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Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

Yeah, because you want to be able to relax fully when you're saying.

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Dr. Molly Maloof

Exactly.

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Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

Course. So tell us a little bit about what happens when you are in a safe space biologically.

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Dr. Molly Maloof

Yeah. So when you feel safe, you release oxytocin, right. And oxytocin is protected to the heart. It's protective to mitochondria. It's an antioxidant. It's a, you know, it's it's basically nature's medicine for a reason. But what it does is it makes you feel like you can open yourself up to being vulnerable. And this is where poly bagel theory comes in, really value.

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Dr. Molly Maloof

It's really valuable to study this as a doctor, as most people don't know about poly bagel theory. But there's this has created this theory because what I've discovered is that when people encounter stress or encounter safety, they're nervous. Systems react differently in stress. We usually there's the fight and flight, the sympathetic, but there's also the freeze, which is the dorsal vagal system.

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Dr. Molly Maloof

Then there's also the fonn, which is a mixture of the ventral and dorsal, where it's a person who is feigning safety in order to in order to escape. You're like.

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Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

Kind of playing.

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Dr. Molly Maloof

Along. You're playing along. It's like Stockholm syndrome, right? And then there's the ventral vagal. And you can see this with dogs. This is a great example. When you look at a dog, my parents dogs, when they when they see me, they come home, they literally get on their back on the ground and they expose their belly and they're totally vulnerable.

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Dr. Molly Maloof

But if my dad was going hunting with those dogs for birds in the woods, they would be pointed, bent over and they would be hunched over and they'd be they would be like focused. That is a very different physiology when you're open, when you're allowing someone to see this part of your vulnerable side of yourself, that that is

more of a symptom of, of the ventral vagal system.

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Dr. Molly Maloof

That's the safety system. But when you're unsafe, your body goes into protection, it gets tense, it gets stiff. It's it's on guard. And you're trying to protect yourself. So body language is a really good tool for a visual. But on a cellular level, when you have chronic chronic threat versus immediate immediate threat is like epinephrine, norepinephrine, your heart starts to race.

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Dr. Molly Maloof

You're like over time, like, you know, and I was in a really poisonous relationship. I started getting chest pain. It was like chronic, overactive, sympathetic activation of the chest is going to lead to it's going to actually stress the heart. But then my cortisol started out very high, was feeling really tired and really, really wired. But then eventually over a few months, I got I flatlined my cortisol and I found it on DUTCH test.

00:18:18:08 - 00:18:25:12

Dr. Molly Maloof

I showed that my cortisol was low and my testosterone was low. So like these important hormones for protecting yourself, they were just I was spent.

00:18:25:14 - 00:18:51:11

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

Yeah. We talked about that with cortisol a lot because under good conditions cortisol is the most critical fire extinguisher. Yeah. And so with acute inflammation acute stress. Yeah. You can go in there and kind of take care of it. Totally. But there's only so much fire we have reserves for. And eventually the body compensates and we start to have less free cortisol because you metabolize it faster because you're making it more or because you're storing it away as cortisone.

00:18:51:15 - 00:18:57:08

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

You know, there's a lot of complexities there to the science that really can impact the way that we feel, which is based upon that free cortisol.

00:18:57:10 - 00:19:00:04

Dr. Molly Maloof

Yeah, yeah.

00:19:00:06 - 00:19:03:18

The DUTCH Podcast

We'll be right back with more.

00:19:03:20 - 00:19:32:01

The DUTCH Podcast

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00:19:40:03 - 00:19:43:16

The DUTCH Podcast

Welcome back to the DUTCH Podcast.

00:19:43:18 - 00:19:51:08

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

So tell me a little bit about what your mission is right now. You're doing a lot of speaking. Talking like why are you so passionate about bringing this forward?

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Dr. Molly Maloof

I think the reality is, is that people need simple solutions and they need to know that there is a way to. I mean, I guess I wouldn't say it's fully simple, but I think we need to reconnect in such a deep way as a society. And I think our systemic disconnection as a culture is poisoning us.

00:20:09:14 - 00:20:34:07

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

I'm so glad you bring that up, because right now it seems like, well, one social media

as a substitute for in-person connection seems like a real barrier. It is. And the second is, I think, just our cultural state right now, no matter where you stand, it's like everything's always on fire. Everything is so divided. I think everybody feels alone, just socially in their environment when it comes to us and our connection to the world.

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Dr. Molly Maloof

Right. I think people are feeling alone in their fear of what's going to happen. I think people are afraid of, frankly, war or civil war, like everyone seems like they're choosing sides. I'm not sure if they can express their beliefs without getting judged. And it's like, it's not a good it's not a good place to be as a culture and a society.

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Dr. Molly Maloof

And I think, you know, when I started studying kind of health, fundamentally, I wanted to understand it because I wanted to alleviate human suffering. I wanted to understand it so that we could figure out solutions for it. And I think there is a way to live in a more peaceful, harmonious world. But I think we need to understand that it's possible first and that we're made for this.

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Dr. Molly Maloof

We're not we're not made to always be living in a state of threat. You know, none of those those elk for the for like 99% of their lives, they're pretty darn safe in their and their community. Right? They're mostly have to worry about the elements and hunters like and maybe a wolf here and there. But like, realistically, like they live a really beautiful existence together and herds.

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Dr. Molly Maloof

And I just look at animals and I'm just thinking to myself, they've seemed to have figured a lot of things out that we have somehow forgotten. And when I started studying mitochondria, it made me feel like, oh, maybe if people were to understand that this is the design of life itself, that it wouldn't be so difficult for them to, like, want to want to actually prioritize it.

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Dr. Molly Maloof

You know, I was talking about food as medicine over a decade ago, and it was still

very like controversial food is medicine. Who are you know, it's very much well, except. Right, I mean, everybody knows metabolism drives a lot of disease, but it's like it's surprising to me that, like, I guess it took so long for us to pick up food as medicine, right?

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Dr. Molly Maloof

And now it's like, okay, I'm always interested in what's next. And I think the pandemic really taught me so much about, oh, when I'm around people that I love and trust, I feel amazing. I feel so safe, I feel so loved, and I have an incredible family. I'm very, very lucky. And I feel like because I got so lucky with my family growing up, I have like two amazing parents, four sisters, four nieces, three siblings in law.

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Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

Four sisters, four sisters, five girls.

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Dr. Molly Maloof

Five girls in our family. And just we're all like, we all have each other's backs. And like what that gave me as an advantage is an unbelievable. And it's it pains me to see how we're not emphasizing the family and we're not emphasizing the community, and we're seeing religion fall apart. So people aren't having social places to come together on a weekly basis.

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Dr. Molly Maloof

And it's it's unfortunate because we need this to thrive. We need this to live our most flourishing lives. We need to find purpose. You don't do that in a vacuum. You do that in relationship, right? You do that by learning and getting mentorship and having people in your community who support you. I would never have gotten to where I am today if it wasn't for the number of mentors that I had, the number of people who told me I could do this, and the people who supported me along the way, and I just feel like it's it gives me an unfair advantage.

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Dr. Molly Maloof

And it and it shouldn't be that case. Like people, more people should get to have a loving community around them and loving family around them. And I think if we were

to, as I mean, I think the government's really starting to recognize that we need to have new priorities for health. And I mean, putting \$1 billion initiative to put fitness centers and airports is a first step, but I'm hoping that I can potentially have some influence on how we communicate the importance of connection and community as a culture and, you know, being someone who is public facing.

00:24:00:17 - 00:24:22:03

Dr. Molly Maloof

I can do that because I can reach people through media, I can reach people through speaking, I can reach people, their books and, women in particular. I want to reach them because they are we are so much better designed for, for bonding than no offense, man, we're literally oxytocin. We're just oxytocin dominant. Yeah. They are designed for defense protection and aggression for a reason.

00:24:22:05 - 00:24:49:14

Dr. Molly Maloof

We actually need them to protect us. Now, women actually are very capable of defense protection and aggression. I'm fully, fully aware of this. We actually both of us have oxytocin based depressant systems in our bodies. We actually need each other. We need to nurture our capacity to protect and defend those we love. And we also need to nurture the parts of ourselves as women that are good at getting people to come together and good at nurturing children and good at creating community.

00:24:49:16 - 00:24:59:23

Dr. Molly Maloof

And I think women are really rising in a beautiful way right now in society. And I think it's important that we take leadership over this, this domain, because we're just really suited for it.

00:25:00:01 - 00:25:08:00

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

Yeah. And I get what you're saying. And I can understand. I can hear you're like you're like hedging it because you don't want to sound anti-feminist. Right? I'm definitely not. I'm picking up because.

00:25:08:00 - 00:25:09:07

Dr. Molly Maloof

I'm a working doctor.

00:25:09:07 - 00:25:29:17

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

Exactly. And but I also completely recognize what you're saying, which is I think as women have moved into the workplace and have had to adapt their lifestyles and things like that, we've lost the gift that one of the unique gifts. And so I that's what I'm hearing you say. Really? Yeah. How can you be in balance and pursue the life of your dreams and also bring that unique gift of community?

00:25:29:19 - 00:25:30:00

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

I mean.

00:25:30:00 - 00:25:49:14

Dr. Molly Maloof

I'm trying to figure this out. Do it. I'm trying to figure this out for myself. It's not easy. It's hard juggling work and relationships and family. And I still get. The thing is, it's like you're going to have conflict, and conflict is normal. It's expected. It's part of being human. I would hope that someday I will become enlightened enough to become a living saint, but that may not be in my destiny.

00:25:49:16 - 00:26:15:00

Dr. Molly Maloof

And in the meantime, what I want people to realize, and what is so important, is that we learn to manage conflict properly and we learn to repair. It's it's impossible to be perfect. It's impossible to expect perfection from yourself. But one of the things that I think my family does really well is we're really good at repair. We're really good at, you know, forgiveness, and we're really good at loving each other despite our flaws and helping each other, even if we have hangups.

00:26:15:02 - 00:26:35:18

Dr. Molly Maloof

And it's like, I think that's something I learned actually living in Mexico during college. I was really impressed by the culture when I lived in Mazatlan because I was like, wow. Even if family members really hate each other, they still show up for family parties and they're like really bound together and they're really bonded. And I realized that, like, family is they didn't have the same kind of infrastructure that we had in America.

00:26:35:18 - 00:26:52:15

Dr. Molly Maloof

When I was when it was like 20 years ago and there wasn't nearly as much infrastructure, but there was definitely this deep sense of reverence for family unit. And I think we have to bring that back. And we as women have that capacity because we're really good at nurturing. That's what we do. And we're also, frankly, really good at working.

00:26:52:15 - 00:27:15:11

Dr. Molly Maloof

And I think, it's very possible. I mean, in the Spartan days, women were landowners, women were business owners. Women were, frankly, badasses. And, that's not it's not like women haven't had stature in society in the past. It's actually that we're finding a new balance between nurturing and work. And being able to do both is hard, but it takes intention.

00:27:15:13 - 00:27:18:19

Dr. Molly Maloof

And I think it takes, just playing to our strengths.

00:27:19:00 - 00:27:25:08

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

Yeah. So when you work with let's take like the average woman, I'm assuming that women who come to see you are like, high performing.

00:27:25:08 - 00:27:26:22

Dr. Molly Maloof

Oh, for sure. They're incredible.

00:27:26:22 - 00:27:46:05

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

They're badasses. Yeah. So in a realistic sense, like, because I'm sure a lot of our Podcast listeners right now are also women. They're also these badasses. They're the doctors who are also trying to keep their own life in balance. What are some realistic ways? Because particularly when it comes to friendships? Yeah, I feel like it's really difficult once you're out of college.

00:27:46:05 - 00:28:01:21

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

It is to find a tribe. And if you move to a new area, yeah, you know, to find those connections. And I do think that family relationships are critically important and

romantic relationships are very impactful. I also think women need other women and they need people. So how are you helping people or. Well, let me watching them give.

00:28:01:21 - 00:28:17:22

Dr. Molly Maloof

You some advice from a person who has moved during the pandemic. I went from the Bay area to, Illinois to no, no Bay area to Maui, to Brentwood, to Illinois, to Wisconsin, to Florida, to Texas, to Wyoming, back to California, you.

00:28:17:22 - 00:28:18:16

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

Know, a thing or two.

00:28:18:18 - 00:28:38:09

Dr. Molly Maloof

So I've learned a little bit about building community. And interestingly, Austin was the easiest place for me to build a community because there were so many amazing women in Austin. I just found, I mean, literally, I started to I think I found myself pretty lonely at one point during the pandemic, and I remember being like telling my best friend at the time, I said, I'm just like really lonely.

00:28:38:09 - 00:29:00:20

Dr. Molly Maloof

And she goes, Molly like, go make friends. You're good at this. And I go, you're right, I'm going to make a tribe. And so I started a WhatsApp group and I every time I made a new friend, I said, can I add you to my, my group? And it grew to 80 women. And when I moved away and moved to Jackson, Wyoming, in the middle of an elk refuge, longer story, I actually handed the group over to my friend because I'm like, you need to you need to nurture this.

00:29:00:20 - 00:29:20:07

Dr. Molly Maloof

Like, this is a something we made. But anytime I go back to Austin, I immediately have friends to go visit and see. But what I found is that you need one social friend in your new city. In order to build you, you have to have like almost a seed. And that seed is that that one person who's very social, and it might take you six months to find that person.

00:29:20:07 - 00:29:21:21

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton
Is that you? Because you seem really extroverted?

00:29:21:21 - 00:29:38:09

Dr. Molly Maloof
Well, it was me until I was living in Wyoming and I had no friends. And then I met my friend Anoushka and Georgie, and then I had, like, two girlfriends. And then they introduced me to, like, five other people. Before I knew it, I was part of a small community, but there's only 10,000 people in my town and where I was living.

00:29:38:11 - 00:29:57:16

Dr. Molly Maloof
So, when I moved back to the Bay area, I immediately was like a little bit hesitant because I was like, I haven't seen a lot of these people in five years, but I just you just have to reconnect. Ideally, if you know people in your community, you just have to reconnect with this one person, and that one person helps build your social confidence.

00:29:57:18 - 00:30:08:23

Dr. Molly Maloof
And you have to realize that when you're socially isolated, there's this thing called maladaptive social cognition, where you start to become hypersensitive to any negative social cues, which actually makes you more likely to isolate.

00:30:08:23 - 00:30:10:07

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton
That makes total sense.

00:30:10:07 - 00:30:17:11

Dr. Molly Maloof
It's it's documented in the medical literature. And so when you teach a patient that it's normal to feel sensitive and more sensitive.

00:30:17:11 - 00:30:18:08

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton
Or awkward and.

00:30:18:08 - 00:30:38:12

Dr. Molly Maloof

Awkward. And then the thing I realized in the pandemic was everyone was awkward. Everyone became very awkward. I was like, well, I'm even if I am awkward, like, so what? Like, I'm social and I'm going to make friends. And somebody even told me I felt so that I was socially awkward and I was like, you know what? That's because I was at the time because everybody, everything was really weird during the pandemic.

00:30:38:12 - 00:31:01:11

Dr. Molly Maloof

And so I would say that like recognizing it's okay to feel the way you feel, but you actually have to recognize there's a thing called social norms. And one of my mentors taught me about this, too. And it's that every time you encounter a new social situation, you get a shot of vasopressin and that vasopressin is designed to make you a little bit more vigilant and alert for danger, because you really should be right.

00:31:01:11 - 00:31:02:12

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

You don't know because you don't.

00:31:02:12 - 00:31:21:05

Dr. Molly Maloof

Know if they're safe or not. Right? Right. So that's a natural reaction to a new environment. But just like I was explaining recently to, you know, the conference, analogy, if you go to a conference and you, you, you know, there's going to be there, you know, but most of all, you don't you're going to first initially feel a little bit like, I don't know where I'm going.

00:31:21:05 - 00:31:36:11

Dr. Molly Maloof

I don't know who people are. But then the moment you find someone that you know and you get a hug, it's like you get that oxytocin, you get that reminder. Or the more you connect with the new person that makes you feel safe. Yeah, that you find common ground with you get that completion of that stress and that recovery.

00:31:36:17 - 00:31:51:21

Dr. Molly Maloof

And that is an example of social promises. So the more that you give yourself these little bits of social stress, it makes you stronger. It makes you have greater capacity to withstand greater stress, so that eventually it's no longer stressful to be in an environment that's unfamiliar. You know.

00:31:51:21 - 00:32:11:02

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

It's really interesting because it's like you have to exercise this social muscle. I don't know that people think of it that way, but it really makes a lot of sense because there is. But, you know, once you have a successful, you know, new friend made you do, you're like, okay, the easier next time to do that. And I love the conference example that you get totally because it's really very real.

00:32:11:02 - 00:32:19:02

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

Once you have kind of a partner in crime, it's a little easier to take on the world together. Yeah. You know, but just like anything else that practice is really critical.

00:32:19:02 - 00:32:34:21

Dr. Molly Maloof

And I would also tell people to practice talking to strangers. I know it sounds really weird, but like when you're in line somewhere, chat up someone, even if she's sitting on an in an airplane, like make a nice comment to someone, even if it's awkward, even if they give you a weird look, what's the worst.

00:32:34:21 - 00:32:35:08

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

That's going to happen?

00:32:35:08 - 00:32:58:02

Dr. Molly Maloof

You're training the social muscle. There you go to not to let it roll off your back instead of internalizing it as like, something's wrong with me, right? And, you know, I think, you know, you're asking me like, why am I on this mission? I think it's because there's so many people needlessly suffering from disconnection, and the pandemic created such disconnection, isolation that we've seen diseases of despair skyrocket.

00:32:58:04 - 00:33:21:03

Dr. Molly Maloof

We're seeing so much suicide, so much anxiety in young women. We're seeing so much depression in women and adults. We're seeing, you know, we're seeing this problem. And if you look at addiction, it's literally a person like when we when we engage in positive social interaction, we get a lot of dopamine. We don't have that

social interaction. We need dopamine from somewhere.

00:33:21:08 - 00:33:41:15

Dr. Molly Maloof

So people are getting it from their phones. They're getting it from porn. They're getting it from food, they're getting it from drugs. And it's it's it's not the kind of reward that we really get satisfied with. So when people get into these addictive cycles where they're feeling worse and worse and more and more disconnected, and they wonder why they're so sick, and it's like, well, you have to look at the way you're living, right?

00:33:41:17 - 00:34:00:10

Dr. Molly Maloof

It doesn't actually take that much effort to actually go out of your way to find one friend, but it does take a lot of effort to heal from anxiety, to heal from depression, to heal from addiction. And not getting into those places to begin with is something I hope for young people, you know, these days. And I don't know if that's the case.

00:34:00:10 - 00:34:17:20

Dr. Molly Maloof

I think they've said that, you know, Gen Z is one of the most anxious generations. And I think there's a there's a real epidemic of lack of purpose, and there's a real fear that, AI is going to take all these jobs. But I think the human jobs, the human interaction roles in the world are always going to be there.

00:34:17:22 - 00:34:26:05

Dr. Molly Maloof

And those are the roles where people can actually find real connection and real purpose. And it's and physicians, I think, are a great example of that.

00:34:26:07 - 00:34:49:05

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

Well, and I think we've really moved towards, like distance, everything at a distance. You're talking to a call you book online versus picking up the phone. You your friendships are online. It's so much has changed and swung. But I do feel like the pendulum is hitting that tipping point. Yeah. Where we're really starting to see the, you know, the impact culturally but also personally.

00:34:49:05 - 00:34:58:11

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

And I'm seeing that things are starting to shift back. Yeah. Thanks to conversations like the ones that you're bringing up towards integrating relationship into business.

00:34:58:11 - 00:34:59:11

Dr. Molly Maloof

Again, you know.

00:34:59:12 - 00:35:04:04

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

Over the at a distance types of interactions, like people want to talk to someone versus a chat bot.

00:35:04:08 - 00:35:06:12

Dr. Molly Maloof

Yeah. Do people want people to go back to work? That's right.

00:35:06:15 - 00:35:20:17

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

So I mean, I love that these things are coming up and that the pendulum is starting to swing. And the irony of it is so many people are sitting around feeling socially isolated and lonely that if they could just make that connection between themselves, yeah, there'd be a good start.

00:35:20:19 - 00:35:37:18

Dr. Molly Maloof

I mean, it's hard to challenge yourself to get out of your comfort zone, but, I mean, even even I mean, I just recently moved, and I wasn't feeling great about, just I had had a mold exposure, and I moved to a new place, and I was like, why do I feel so crappy right now? And it's because I hadn't.

00:35:37:20 - 00:35:57:21

Dr. Molly Maloof

I've been working from home for like two weeks straight, not really getting outside enough, not really having a routine because I was just getting kind of resettled in a new place. And then my boyfriend was like, you do realize you need more? Do you need more time outside? Right? And I was like, and then we went, we went elk hunting in Wyoming, and I was horseback riding in the wilderness with this guide.

00:35:57:21 - 00:36:17:01

Dr. Molly Maloof

And I remember thinking, this is reinvigorated my entire year. Like it's alive. Literally just what? I just need to be outside and around animals and I need to, like, not be cooped up in my home in front of a screen, you know? And so it's just reminding ourselves of what we already know, which is that we need fresh air, we need sunlight.

00:36:17:01 - 00:36:18:09

Dr. Molly Maloof

We need like plants. We were like.

00:36:18:09 - 00:36:19:13

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

Plants. Yeah.

00:36:19:15 - 00:36:27:04

Dr. Molly Maloof

We're like actual solar panels. Just like plants have leaves. Like we need sun. Yeah. You know, we can harness energy through the sun just like plants can.

00:36:27:04 - 00:36:42:11

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

The other thing that I think about that you're making me think about with your story is that it's a lot like going to the gym. Yeah, a lot of times people don't want to go, but I've never heard someone go and come home and be like, God, I wish I didn't do that. What a waste of time. But it takes this like, inertia breaking effort.

00:36:42:11 - 00:36:59:01

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

Yeah, and I think it's that way with relationships too. I've heard someone say everyone wants to be invited to the party, but no one wants to host, right? You have to put in that effort to kind of take that first step to initiate, to get outside, to do something that you love. Totally. One of the things I think about is I usually ask patients, what did you love to do with a kid?

00:36:59:06 - 00:36:59:16

Dr. Molly Maloof

Yes.

00:36:59:16 - 00:37:01:06

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

Did you dance? Did you do drugs? I always.

00:37:01:06 - 00:37:01:14

Dr. Molly Maloof

Ask them.

00:37:01:14 - 00:37:20:05

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

This. Yeah, and I have young kids now, and it's so fun because sometimes I pull out art supplies and mean, like, lose hours. I know coloring, right? And it's the things that you did as a child that you can reengage with that bring joy and kind of like bring that spark of life back. Absolutely. Yeah. Well, I want to pull it back to like, the science of friendship, because I think this is so critically important for women.

00:37:20:06 - 00:37:21:03

Dr. Molly Maloof

Yeah.

00:37:21:05 - 00:37:29:14

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

We know that women that have stronger social networks have a stronger HPA axis resilience. Can you talk a little bit about why that is?

00:37:29:16 - 00:37:57:22

Dr. Molly Maloof

Well, I think that, you know, we know that disconnection and isolation, you know, causes problems with the hypothalamic pituitary adrenal axis because it puts you in a state of chronic threat and higher cortisol or eventually burnout with lower cortisol. But it's very helpful to have human connection because it creates a more balanced nervous system. It creates a greater sense of safety, and that chronic safety is going to actually repair more effectively.

00:37:58:01 - 00:38:15:13

Dr. Molly Maloof

We're gonna have a lot of stress, right. But oxytocin is truly a reparative molecule. So the more that you interact, the more that you feel safe, the more you feel connected, the more information that you share about how you're coping. And you learn tools

and you learn things from your friends about, oh, this is how you dealt with your child.

00:38:15:15 - 00:38:41:03

Dr. Molly Maloof

We're meant to actually share information. We're like, it's actually a fundamental part of the design of mitochondria. Like they don't just fuse together to share energy, they fuse together to share. Oh, this is what's happening over here, right. And without information sharing we're actually kind of alone in our problems. And that has downstream consequences because we just go into these loops of rumination and fear and suffering.

00:38:41:05 - 00:38:52:05

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

So tell me you mentioned that for yourself when you were under this chronic stress, you saw these changes in your cortisol and you saw changes in testosterone. Yeah. Are there other hormonal patterns that you commonly pick up when people are under stress?

00:38:52:07 - 00:39:15:20

Dr. Molly Maloof

I mean, I have seen more estrogen dominance in women prone to that. But also women who are going through perimenopause, like lack of progesterone dropping sooner than they would anticipate. Largely because their bodies are just prioritizing stress hormone production. And then, you know, the women who don't eat when they're stressed, they can end up with hypothalamic amenorrhea.

00:39:15:22 - 00:39:38:01

Dr. Molly Maloof

I've had clients that really are really struggling with repairing their low cortisol levels, but they're just not eating enough. And they don't want to admit they don't really want to eat more, because there's this sort of emphasis on leanness in our culture. Right. But unfortunately, like, they're really running low on all hormones because they just don't have enough body fat.

00:39:38:02 - 00:39:52:11

Dr. Molly Maloof

And so I try to explain to them, like mechanistically like if you want to repair, you actually have to send the signals that your body is safe to eat enough food. Otherwise

you end up with relative energy deficiency. And that further dysregulated things.

00:39:52:13 - 00:40:06:12

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

And I want to ask you like one more question on oxytocin. Sure. Because I know there's oxytocin nasal sprays and like other ways to dose. What are your thoughts about that? I mean, is that something that we should be considering therapeutically, or do you ever use it or do you think we need the pure, unadulterated.

00:40:06:17 - 00:40:28:22

Dr. Molly Maloof

I actually so there was a study, in Jama I literally published last week, and I and I might be misrepresenting it, but I'm fairly certain that the randomized controlled trial was an intervention of intimacy and oxytocin versus a placebo, which is just behave as you normally behave. And it was 70 couples and they were testing wound healing rates.

00:40:28:22 - 00:40:46:18

Dr. Molly Maloof

And these two groups and the group that had oxytocin and intimacy had much greater wound healing. And the issue I have with a lot of the oxytocin sprays that are out there is that it is not a stable molecule at room temperature. And so I don't really buy it that like just everyone carrying around their oxytocin heals nasal spray.

00:40:46:18 - 00:41:06:22

Dr. Molly Maloof

If it's room temperature, it's not stable. It's a peptide. Peptides break down at room temp. So I have yet to find a stabilized oxytocin spray. But that doesn't. That's that's not to say that I don't think it works. There might be some. So here's the thing. The placebo response is large is thought to be potentially driven by oxytocin.

00:41:06:22 - 00:41:31:13

Dr. Molly Maloof

Okay. It's actually the, the anticipation of healing from interacting through a healing experience is that in anticipation of a healing outcome, of interacting in a care environment? So I think whether or not their oxytocin spray is actually working or it's a placebo is probably dependent on whether it's been properly stabilized and refrigerated. But I do think that there is that it does potentially work.

00:41:31:15 - 00:41:45:13

Dr. Molly Maloof

And I think it can help couples. But I also think that you can get it for free if you just massage each other or make out or, you know, rub each other's backs or, you know, engage in pleasurable sex.

00:41:45:15 - 00:41:46:11

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

Or get a puppy.

00:41:46:13 - 00:41:49:14

Dr. Molly Maloof

Or get a puppy. Dogs are a really great tool for oxytocin.

00:41:49:14 - 00:41:50:11

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

Animals are amazing.

00:41:50:17 - 00:41:57:00

Dr. Molly Maloof

There some study out there that basically suggested that you can get an eight year advantage in longevity with having a dog.

00:41:57:04 - 00:41:57:16

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

That's amazing.

00:41:57:16 - 00:41:59:18

Dr. Molly Maloof

Which is insane because to me that's a lot.

00:41:59:21 - 00:42:03:13

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

They are really, truly healing. Well, cats, dogs, whatever.

00:42:03:13 - 00:42:06:08

Dr. Molly Maloof

I think it's funny that dog has gone backwards.

00:42:06:10 - 00:42:08:12

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton
I mean, it's funny, it's not really that ironic.

00:42:08:18 - 00:42:12:03

Dr. Molly Maloof
Same letters because they're just unconditional love. It's true, you know.

00:42:12:04 - 00:42:33:01

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton
It's a good model for us. Yeah. Well, as we wrap, you know, we have a high clinician audience. And I think that the message that you share and the approach that you take as a physician yourself is really unique. If you had to help physicians, sure, get ahead in this area or start to address this as a root cause of health.

00:42:33:01 - 00:42:39:10

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton
Yeah. Determinant of health. Yeah. What would you suggest that they do to really start to work on this in their own practices?

00:42:39:12 - 00:42:58:05

Dr. Molly Maloof
First thing I would say is get yourself tested. If you are not using a DUTCH on yourself on a regular basis, you shouldn't be prescribing it to your patients. And I and I mean that because I think a lot of doctors don't address their own issues first and because they're so busy. But like you got to put on your face mask first, first.

00:42:58:05 - 00:43:00:08

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton
And if your access is bonkers.

00:43:00:08 - 00:43:17:06

Dr. Molly Maloof
You got to put a face mask first. Because if you if you once you go through the process of fixing yourself, it's a lot easier to communicate to patients. And maybe you're just like lucky and you never have any dysregulation. But that's not been my case. I have been high cortisol, I have been low cortisol, and I've had to fix both.

00:43:17:08 - 00:43:40:00

Dr. Molly Maloof

And I think it's really important that patients know that, that you understand their experience. And, I also think that it's really important to, frankly, keep studying this stuff because you learn new things all the time. And like, I just discovered you guys had an incredible education library and free courses about perimenopause and menopause. And I was like, you guys have all these courses I didn't even know about.

00:43:40:00 - 00:44:00:06

Dr. Molly Maloof

Like we often as doctors get so busy with our own practice that we forget to like, actually keep up to date with the new resources. And so I would definitely encourage people to take advantage of all the free resources that you guys offer. And also the fact that, like whenever I have a clinical question, you guys answer within a day, like, oh, nice, it's so nice that you guys have such good customer service.

00:44:00:06 - 00:44:16:10

Dr. Molly Maloof

And I think you're not alone in trying to learn this stuff. Like it's complicated, it's hormones. It's it's not simple. And it takes time. Yeah. So don't feel like you have to figure it out all at once. But the more that you use these tools, the better and the easier it gets to be able to actually do something about them.

00:44:16:10 - 00:44:16:20

Dr. Molly Maloof

Great.

00:44:16:23 - 00:44:22:04

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

Thank you so much. It's been awesome to have you, doctor. You've been great to meet you. And thanks for joining us here. For sure.

00:44:22:04 - 00:44:37:01

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