



Dr. Drew Sinatra: Hi, and welcome to a special presentation of the **Be HEALTHistic** podcast, presented by Healthy Directions. Today we're going to be focusing on the importance of the gut-brain connection and how this relationship is truly integral to our overall health and well-being.

The gut is often called the body's second brain, because our intestinal tract is lined by a complex nervous system called the enteric nervous system, or ENS. Scientific study on the ENS confirms Ayurvedic wisdom that healthy digestion is vital for health and well-being. Gut health is more than digestive function, and is impacted by more than just the foods we eat, the water we drink and the air we breathe. Our mental and physical health can be impacted when our gut health is imbalanced. The inverse is also true — our mental health is affected by our physical and emotional health, including our self-esteem and outlook on life. The health of the gut microbiome is a critical factor. By understanding the connection between the ENS and your brain, you begin to realize the importance of supporting the gut-brain connection when it comes to managing your health.

Today, I'm going to be discussing this topic with integrative neurologist and Ayurvedic practitioner, Dr. Kulreet Chaudhary, whose expertise is in alignment with this concept and who applies this principle in the real world when working with her patients. Welcome, Dr. Kulreet!

Dr. Kulreet Chaudhary: Thank you. You pretty much summed up everything I know. So are we done now?

Dr. Drew Sinatra: Well, we're going to be talking a lot about this gut-brain axis, and so I wanted to talk about some misconceptions right off the bat.

Now, first off, I think you and I, we've likely been talking about this, understanding it, practicing it for decades, right? But this whole concept has now come into the light, and it's now into the medical literature, and we're hearing about it more. But I know for me, learning about this bidirectional communication between the gut and the brain — I first learned about it in 2002, when I was in school and we were learning about how to treat autistic children. The first treatment we would do for autistic children was work on their gut. We'd figure out, are there food sensitivities they have? Are there food intolerances? Is there dysbiosis present within the microbiome? Is there inflammation happening there? Then once we worked on the gut, we certainly saw some mental changes that were happening.

Dr. Kulreet Chaudhary: Yeah. Huge. Yeah.



Dr. Drew Sinatra: But back then, we didn't really call it this gut-brain axis, right? It just about over the last, I don't know, I'd say decade or so. But everyone listening is probably aware of this connection already, because who hasn't gotten nervous before a presentation? Or they've had a big project at work, where all of a sudden, they're developing butterflies in the stomach. That is a classic example of that brain-gut connection that we have. One more example here, and I'll shift over to you, Kulreet, but there is a friend of mine in medical school who always before a soccer game would have to use the restroom. Every single time, he'd have a bowel movement right before the game. Really, his mental state of being so anxious and so worried led to that bowel movement.

Dr. Kulreet Chaudhary: Yeah. I was like that before my medical school exams. "Wait, wait. Hold on. Don't start the exam."

Dr. Drew Sinatra: Exactly...so another example right there of that gut-brain connection that we're talking about today.

So what about you? What was your first experience or understanding of this concept?

Dr. Kulreet Chaudhary: Well, just like you said, though, Drew, we all know it experientially as human beings. I think what's funny and wonky about medicine is we discard human experience, right? Like, until we study it, it doesn't exist. But if you ask anybody, "Do you notice that there's something that goes on in your gut when you are experiencing strong emotions?", most five-year-olds could tell you, "Yeah," and vice versa, right? If your gut is off, most people would say, "Yeah, I'm not thinking the same."

So it's this extraordinarily common human experience that until we studied, we would not believe that it is true. So for me, it was the same when I was practicing neurology and wasn't quite doing Ayurvedic medicine yet and developed these migraines. It was only because of the migraines that I went back into Ayurvedic medicine as a patient, and everything I was prescribed was a gut program.

So when I first experienced the power of that as a patient, that, "Oh my gosh, there's this connection," honestly, I was pissed off! I was like, "Wait a minute. What? I've spent how many decades learning how to do this to find out that there's this critical part that I didn't know about." So my first response was, "Wait, why didn't anybody teach me this?" But then my next response, the next beat was really excitement, enthusiasm — because as a neurologist, you were talking about working with autistic kids...the whole thing with neurology was like we're brilliant at diagnosis, and then we can't do anything about it.



So for me, it opened this entire new world, but at that time, like you were saying...now everybody's talking. Back then, it was voodoo. So when I first started just basically talking about how diet and working on your gut could improve diseases like multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's disease...the doctors, my colleagues, had a professional intervention. They were like, "Whoa, you're way, way off track." Of course, then as it usually goes, science proves common sense. And now we have this language...and I'm really grateful that now we have this language where we can finally explain the mechanics of it, and the beautiful mechanics of it, but it in no way takes away from just the common sense human experience that our patients and that we're having. So for me, it's been exciting to have the science, but it's drawn me even more deeply into understanding common sense human experience, right?

Dr. Drew Sinatra: Yeah, exactly.

Dr. Kulreet Chaudhary: And making sure that we're legitimizing that when we're talking to our patients.

Dr. Drew Sinatra: Yeah, and the same thing is happening, too, with the concept of leaky gut syndrome, which was poo-pooed for a long time. A lot of doctors would criticize us, saying, "Well, that's not really true." We had to always go back to the term, "Well, there's increased intestinal permeability," right?

Dr. Kulreet Chaudhary: Yeah.

Dr. Drew Sinatra: So a concept they could understand a little bit better. But now, yes, this whole concept of leaky gut is coming about, and most people on the street have actually heard of leaky gut now and how it can impact their health. I think that these terms that we are using, this gut-brain axis, leaky gut, they're all helpful, because now we can communicate better about these conditions and learn about how they do affect our digestion and how our brain is affected. So I'm really happy that we're having this discussion and that this information is being really brought out to the public.

Dr. Kulreet Chaudhary: Along with leaky gut, I don't know if you use this commonly, but it's leaky gut and leaky *brain*. Once you have a leaky gut, you've got a leaky brain. You've got an inflammatory process, you have infiltration of the blood-brain barrier, and infiltration of the sanctity of the environment of the brain once you have a leaky gut.

I got the same eye-rolls from my colleagues 20 years ago, when I was like, "Hey, whoa, this is really a legitimate concern." They're like, "Oh, come on." Now, of course, they're testing out the use of antibiotics for treating conditions like



Parkinson's disease, and it's like, "Wait, no, you don't want to kill everything off. You want an optimal environment." So yeah, I feel pretty vindicated now.

Dr. Drew Sinatra: Yeah, exactly. Right.

Dr. Kulreet Chaudhary: I don't have to burn anybody's house down. I feel good.

Dr. Drew Sinatra: Well, I wanted to give the listeners a little taste of what else I've learned just by researching this over the years. You may have seen the study that came out in 2016 where they gave medical students a fermented milk for eight weeks, and then they gave the control group a milk that didn't have any probiotics in it. They were using a lactobacillus strain in these groups.

And what they found over an eight-week period was there was less digestive complaints in the experimental group that was drinking the fermented milk. That makes sense, right? Probiotics we know are good for gut health. But there was also a decrease in anxiety in those that are taking the probiotic. Lastly, there was actually a decrease in the cortisol response, right? So what we learned, there was this effect on the HPA axis, this hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis that was occurring just from the use of these probiotics. So when I read that study, I was like, "Wow. This is amazing," because we've all given probiotics for a long time for gut health, but now we know that probiotics are really good for mental health, as well.

Dr. Kulreet Chaudhary: Absolutely.

Dr. Drew Sinatra: And now, this new term — we're talking about all these terms today, right? We're talking about gut-brain axis, leaky gut. Now this term called psychobiotics has been developed. Okay? So there's these probiotics that are designed to support brain health, because they're affecting the gut in a certain way.

So I wanted to dig in really quickly with you about what's happening here when you do take a probiotic? We talked about this enteric nervous system. We've talked about the vagus nerve, briefly mentioned that. From your perspective, how is all this happening? How is there this communication happening with the brain?

Dr. Kulreet Chaudhary: Well, I have two perspectives, and I love seeing these studies. It helps me to create a dialogue, a modern dialogue. But I also really like incorporating the ancient dialogue that's been saying this forever. There's so many of these things that they recommended in Ayurveda, and when you read the list of the benefits, you were like, "Oh my gosh. How does one thing do so many different things?" It's because of the way that it impacts the gut. So when I very first was studying



Ayurvedic medicine as a neurologist, and I was like, "I know this works. It works for me, I've seen it in my patients," but I still didn't have the language to explain it in terms of the modern language of Ayurveda for the scientific population, and to my patients.

Really, what it comes down to, and this, Drew, I still think we're still really in the premature stages of explaining, because I think there's just an entire dialogue around how the gut impacts consciousness that we have not yet gotten into, because we still don't understand the science of consciousness. So we'll have that conversation in another 20 years. But let's take it away from even how the gut impacts consciousness and the reverse, how consciousness impacts the gut. When I say consciousness, I just mean when you have an expansion of even who you're becoming, and a deeper connection to who you are outside of even being physical, that changes your microbiome. And there have to be shifts in your microbiome that also help to prepare you for those stages. I mean, wow. How amazing is that?

But when we talk about just the basics, what lives inside of your gut is determining the way that you think and you feel. As much as we'd like to think, "No, I feel this way because I'm running around all the time, or because my job is stressful, or because I'm commuting an hour a day or two hours a day," we'd like to believe that. Your perception of all of those details in your life have more to do with what's happening in your gut than what's happening on the projection screen that you call your life.

A big portion of it's coming from the bacteria and the different organisms and the types of neurotransmitters that they are making. Those neurotransmitters are really how one brain cell communicates to another brain cell. Once you understand this as a science, it becomes so predictable, and the beauty of having something that's predictable is you have control in it. You not only have control in terms of what types of diet you eat...when I say control, I mean once you shift those guys, they shift. When you shift to a healthier gut microbiome, that microbiome then dictates you eating healthier foods.

Also, the reverse is true. Last night, my son had a birthday party, and we went to go pick him up at his friend's birthday. And the family was so gracious, so they invited us in to have some of their pizza and chocolate cake at 8:00 PM. So now, for me, I'm like, "Oh, yes, I'd love to," because I'm not going to be ungracious and say no. But I know the impact that is going to have on the way that I'm thinking and feeling the next morning. So having the predictability is going, "Okay. I'm going to do this," because they're a very gracious family, and I don't want to say no. And I don't want to be like the mom that's like, "Oh, no, I brought all my own food in a little Ziploc bag."



But I went home and immediately took the Ayurvedic herbs that I knew were going to allow me to wake up the next morning and still feel like myself. I can still feel like, "Yeah, that was pizza, and that was chocolate cake in there," but my mood was still really good. My energy was still normal. So that's the beauty of it, is when you understand this connection, you have control, you have say. You're not at the mercy of it, and you're certainly not at the mercy of the food industry. But you actually have say in the way that you think and feel. You have control over it. To me, that's the whole beauty.

Dr. Drew Sinatra: No, absolutely. It's so funny you mentioned that, because there's so many times where, yes, we're in that same situation, birthday party, and yeah, you're not going to bring all your chopped-up carrots and celery with you to the party, right? You just need to give in and experience what everyone else is experiencing, too. But the good news is there's things to do to mitigate that in the morning, right? Take care of yourself, or things to do at nighttime to make sure that you're feeling good the next morning. So I really appreciate that.

Dr. Kulreet Chaudhary: Exactly.

Dr. Drew Sinatra: Well, you spoke of neurotransmitters, right? So from my understanding, and I could be incorrect here, but isn't it around, what is it, 80% of the serotonin produced in your body comes from your gut?

Dr. Kulreet Chaudhary: Higher than that, even. Yeah. It's like the more we're looking, the more we're finding in the gut.

Dr. Drew Sinatra: Right, right.

Dr. Kulreet Chaudhary: Yeah, serotonin and dopamine. Just all of the key ones. All the ones you need to feel good.

Dr. Drew Sinatra: GABA, acetylcholine, all that.

Dr. Kulreet Chaudhary: Yeah, and the thing is that we're always aiming...sorry, Drew. I was just going to say, we're always aiming up here, and when you're only looking up here to fix mood issues and brain problems, you're missing half the game. Quite honestly, it's the low-lying fruit. It's the stuff that's the easiest to do when you're missing out on the gut. I'm sorry, you were saying...

Dr. Drew Sinatra: Oh, I was just saying people are probably very well aware of when you're depressed, you're prescribed an SSRI, an SNRI, whatever sort of antidepressant medication there is that may influence serotonin or norepinephrine. Knowing that those neurotransmitters are coming from, produced in your gut really



changes the way that you think about this whole process of treating depression. So whenever someone is coming in for depression, you and I are obviously working on their gut. We're not just handing them a prescription for Prozac, unless that's absolutely necessary, but we're really working on this holistic-type framework. We're bringing in gut health, because you can't leave that out, right? It's like doing the work that you and I do now, there's no way that you can avoid that anymore, neglect that.

Dr. Kulreet Chaudhary: Well, and not only that, it's so disempowering when you think that somehow your body and your brain is broken and something's missing inside of us, this beautiful creation that has never been replicated. There's no other organism that I know of on the planet that is as complex, as intricate, as intelligent as just the human body. I'm not even talking about the human mind. I'm just saying the way that this body works is phenomenal. So when you bring in this idea that somehow we are not enough, we're not good enough to even take care of ourselves, it's so disempowering. Even when I have patients that are on an antidepressant, I'm like, "Hey, it's okay. You're going to stay on them. Then we're going to slowly build up those neurotransmitters in your own gut, and then we're going to slowly taper you off." It's such this enormous a-ha moment for them of, "Oh my gosh, my body is whole. It knows how to do this. It's just that I haven't been given the manual on how to utilize it properly." And that's beautiful.

Dr. Drew Sinatra: That is. When people take control of their health, they know that they are in control, that's what feels really good — because feeling out of control is scary. You just don't have that.

So I wanted to mention, too, that this whole thing around fecal microbial transplants, these FMTs that people may have heard about. This really blew my mind when I heard about this. But they did, I think it was a review of 19 studies or so, where they looked at how FMT, fecal microbial transplant...and for those listening that don't know what this is, you essentially take stool from a healthy donor, and you transplant that via colonoscopy or enema. And now there's even these capsules that you can swallow — that will alter the microbiome and allow the donor microbiome to be essentially transplanted into the person that needs the help. So they found that those that received the FMT, their anxiety and depression improved across all spectrums.

Dr. Kulreet Chaudhary: Oh, yeah. Not only anxiety, depression, but there's so many habits that shifted that we don't think about. There's basic human habits. So that's what I mean, this has such a huge impact on the gut. Do you know what I do, Drew?



So we go to India every summer, we spend quite a bit of time there. So this is how I get my mini fecal transplant. I just eat the food, because the hygiene isn't great, which is fantastic, because it actually does introduce species that we're losing, because a lot of these so-called healthy individuals, what we're finding is our gut microbiome's going extinct. So some of the most important strains, they're dying out, just like the animals on our planet. I always say if you want to know what's going on in your body, look at the planet, because we're doing the same thing inside that we're doing outside. And so we're missing these strains. So a lot of these strains only exist now in small villages, which is where we go in India.

So we're just constantly eating everything, and I always tell my son, "Try to lick whatever you can, because that's how you're going to get your biodiversity back." I understand that I'm getting populations because of poor hygiene, but it has made my immune system so much stronger. There is this little bit of a challenge period where you are getting sick, because I didn't have the biodiversity. But then afterwards, it makes your immune system so much stronger.

It also says just how important community is that part of our strength as an individual is living in a village. We have to have community. We can't be too clean. We've got to be close enough, eating together, all of this, where we are sharing some of our gut microbiome. So that's how I approach it. I go to India, and I try to live as dirty as possible. But then our food when we eat it there is so clean. So we're eating clean, but living as dirty as possible.

Dr. Drew Sinatra: Well, it's so opposite of what we do today. People, they might microwave their food. They sit in front of the TV, watching the news, and they're just shoveling food in their face. There's no community aspect. The food they're eating is completely bland, there's likely no rainbow assortment of vegetables or fruits on there, right? You're not getting any different antioxidants. When you eat different types of fibers through fruits and vegetables, you're getting that diversity that's going to happen in the gut. So we've set ourselves up these days to just not have healthy gut health. So I always think that we need to go back to tribal culture, in a sense.

Dr. Kulreet Chaudhary: Oh, you're preaching to the choir.

Dr. Drew Sinatra: Yeah, the hunters and gatherers — where they're out on the land, they're out in the sun all day, they're walking barefoot, they're in the community, they're searching for their food, they're hunting for their food. That sounds like a paradise to me.



Dr. Kulreet Chaudhary: You need the exposure. Yeah, no, I'm with you. This is one of the reasons why we stay so connected to India, also because of the medical research and stuff that I do there in the ancient systems. But this is one of the reasons, is it's so hard to recreate that, and we consciously try to recreate that.

But oh my gosh, Drew, after the pandemic, trying to get my teenage son to get dirty? He would keep washing his hands and I'm like, "No." I'm like, "Get your hands out in the dirt. Go out. Touch people." I said, "No matter what comes our way, the way that the human species has always survived is immunity. You've got to get exposure." That doesn't mean being irresponsible, but I think it's being very irresponsible to be a germaphobe, because we are made of germs. It's very irresponsible to not get your hands in the soil, or to constantly be sanitizing, because if you have an environment that is completely sanitized, what you have is a dead environment. That means you have a dead microbiome, and that's incompatible with health.

Dr. Drew Sinatra: Yeah, we're so sterile these days in so many ways. Kids, they used to go out and just play outside and get dirty in the mud, but we're not allowing that anymore. I remember I was living in California, and my kids were playing in a stream and they're getting all muddy, and I had all these parents looking at me funny.

Dr. Kulreet Chaudhary: I know. They freak out.

Dr. Drew Sinatra: "What are you doing when you're letting your children do that?" I said, "Well, I need to build their microbiome."

Dr. Kulreet Chaudhary: Yes, exactly. My brother-in-law's an immunologist, and he's the only MD I know who makes his kids eat their food when it drops on the ground. Which of course I do, which my son's like, "Mom, I am not eating that." I'm like, "It's your choice. You can eat that or you can go outside and eat dirt. But you are going to get dirt in your body somehow." Of course, now we're finding out all the miracle cures of the soil-based probiotics, and it's like, "Well, yeah, because dirt is really important. It's really important to our health."

And the great thing is it's not just important, as you said, to the gut health. It's important for mood. It's important for mental clarity. It's important for preventing memory problems and brain degeneration in our future. We are a part of nature, and the healthiest that we will ever feel is when nature's literally flowing through us.

Dr. Drew Sinatra: Yeah, exactly. So what are some other ways then our listeners can practice this philosophy of...at least we've talked about just getting dirty in a safe way, right?



But how else can we strengthen this gut-brain connection? What else can we do?

Dr. Kulreet Chaudhary: Well, there's a core program that I give to every single patient, and I figured out that core program after...I think it was over a decade of realizing just the modern narrative of this, "we eat dirty, and we live sterile." Well, there's a problem there, but also just this connection between the gut and brain and what food addictions have done, and then just the connection between leaky brain and leaky gut. So my beginning foundation for nearly every single patient is always starting them on the Ayurvedic herb triphala, which is just three berries that helps to heal the mucosa and creates essentially an environment for your bacteria to thrive.

Then because of how strong food addictions are, people really underestimate this, because they're like, "Oh, it's just food." No, the addiction's as strong as cocaine. We've done studies on the brain, and the impact on the brain is as strong as cocaine. So there's two herbs that I bring in, ashwagandha, which most people know about, because it helps to reduce the stress response. But also Brahmi, which helps to normalize the brain's response to some of the dopamine spikes and really helps to normalize the way in which neurotransmitters behave in the brain.

Then the final thing I add almost across the board is the Prime Tea, which is just cumin seeds, coriander seeds and fennel seeds. And even though I call that the Prime Tea, it's been around for thousands of ages, thousands of years. These are all just classic Ayurvedic herbs, but they've never necessarily been used quite like this, because we never had this problem before. Our food was never addictive before, our food was never the poison. So I just took some of the core things in Ayurveda and applied them to our modern narrative to help people first get their gut and their brain back in a communication, into a healthy communication. Without that, Drew, if I don't have that, I've got nothing. I can't start with even changing their diet, getting them meditating. I can't get any further until I do that first step. And then everything else starts to happen more spontaneously.

Dr. Drew Sinatra: Well, you mentioned ... Was it triphala? Is that you pronounce it? Triphala.

Dr. Kulreet Chaudhary: Yeah.

Dr. Drew Sinatra: That for supporting the mucus layer. That is often neglected in treating leaky gut, where everyone thinks about just the microbiome piece. Yes.

Dr. Kulreet Chaudhary: Now, you've got to give them a home.



Dr. Drew Sinatra: ...that's very, very important. In my mind, they are the conductors of a symphony, where they're helping figure out where this communication's going. They're acting as a middleman, in that sense. But this mucus layer is so neglected. In Western medicine, we have demulcent herbs to support that, whether it's slippery elm or marshmallow root or licorice root. But that is an element that absolutely needs to be addressed with any sort of gut healing protocol. So I'm happy you mentioned that.

Dr. Kulreet Chaudhary: You know one thing that helps is sometimes when I'm talking to my female patients and I'm like, "Just think of your skin." That's something that they can relate to, right?

Dr. Drew Sinatra: Yes.

Dr. Kulreet Chaudhary: If your skin had these giant wounds on it, or if it was missing the protective layer, just think of how difficult it would be to function just with that, having open scabs, open wounds, right? I'm like, "But that's what your gut's going through. It's got these open wounds. It's got these areas of inflammation or these areas of biofilm. Imagine your skin's just covered in scars, and you've got to address that lining."

So once we address that lining with triphala and the tea, and then we address the brain with ashwagandha and Brahmi, then I can start to have meaningful conversations, because now it's like all the gut pathogens aren't in charge. Now I'm dealing with a person who has control over their conscious choices, more so than before. And now we can start working together, we can start moving down that path.

Dr. Drew Sinatra: Yeah, exactly. Well, ashwagandha, like you mentioned, so good for supporting the HPA axis. What I wanted to mention here is that there was this review study in 2011 where they looked at how stress affects gut function, and they found that motility gets affected, which typically slows down motility. You don't secrete as many gastric enzymes when you're stressed out. Barrier function, we talked about the mucus layer, that gets broken down. People with IBS are prone to having more visceral hypersensitivity, so that can occur. And then blood flow decreases, as well, when you're under a lot of stress. So I wanted to really address this stress component, because who isn't under tremendous stress these days? If you watch the news for more than a minute, you're like, "The world is crumbling," right?

Dr. Kulreet Chaudhary: The world's falling apart.



Dr. Drew Sinatra: Yeah, and everyone has their own responsibilities in their life, their children, paying off the mortgage, working, everything. So I feel like it's very important for our listeners to know that ways to reduce stress in your life are also going to be really important for supporting that gut function and supporting brain function, as well.

Dr. Kulreet Chaudhary: Oh yeah, and people, when they go, "Oh, I was doing so well, and then I binged on this," or when you're binge-eating on a daily basis, most people don't realize it's a stress response. I always say, "There's nothing wrong with binge-eating in the sense that your body is appropriately responding to being completely overwhelmed. Listen to that response." It's just that it's a maladaptive response. The response itself is just simply a response. It's not good, it's not bad...it's just saying, "I'm so overwhelmed at this point that I need something that will just give me some kind of a dopamine spike so I can feel somewhere close to normal. That's all I'm looking for, is somewhere close to normal." It's a stress response.

And that's why ashwagandha, and the Brahmi also helps with this, that's why they're such a key part of the program I create, because if you can just reduce that, you're not bingeing. It's like your brain and your body doesn't have to reach for that. So it's just, again, like how we started this. It's a lot of common sense stuff that we don't get taught. I didn't get taught this in medical school, and that we don't get taught as patients, and so we don't know how to get off of this plane that is crashing.

Dr. Drew Sinatra: Yeah, because like you said, it's a true addiction. If anyone's ever dealt with a tobacco addiction or an alcohol addiction, you know that it is real, and it is very hard to get off that substance. The same thing happens for the foods we're eating. But yeah, there's no control. There's no regulation of it out there...

Dr. Kulreet Chaudhary: I know.

Dr. Drew Sinatra: And my kids, I try to steer them away from the cereal aisle, because they'll just point to the whatever cartoon character that's there...

Dr. Kulreet Chaudhary: You can't. It's everywhere. Can you imagine...if there were signs and commercials for, "Hey, have some heroin," or the Super Bowl commercials were about, "And here's your cocaine!" We would be outraged, we would be like, "Who let this out?"

But when it comes to food, first of all, we don't get outraged, but also then we shame. We shame ourselves, we shame other people when they can't control. It's like, "How can you shame somebody? How can you shame yourself when it's



just as addictive, and it's very readily available and it's being advertised everywhere?"

Dr. Drew Sinatra: Yeah. Starting with her children, unfortunately, right?

Dr. Kulreet Chaudhary: Yep.

Dr. Drew Sinatra: So as we wrap up here, can you list off three things that you can begin doing, so for our listeners to begin doing or stop doing, that will have a beneficial effect on this gut-brain axis that we talked about today?

Dr. Kulreet Chaudhary: I actually think, Drew, the most important thing is stop blaming yourself. Number one, really, take the shame out of it, because that's so heavy. It's not your fault, but it is your responsibility, meaning we're living at a time where food has been engineered to do this, so it's not our fault. But it's still our responsibility to get out of that.

The second really big advice I would give is take small steps. I think sometimes people underestimate how powerful one small step is. That's why I'll start with something like the Prime Tea. Just with that tea, there's such a huge, huge shift that the success of just that first step gets you ready, essentially primes you for the next step.

And I think one of the most important things, the third thing, is just you've got to fight biochemistry with biochemistry. You would never wake up and go, "Gosh, I'm diabetic, but today I think I'm going to think my way out of diabetes" or "I've had heart disease for 20 years, but today I'm going to motivate myself to not have it." This is biochemistry. So, you approach biochemistry with biochemistry, but here's the great news...we are living pharmacies. So we're essentially using our own biochemistry, but it's not willpower. It is still our internal biochemistry, but it's not by thinking about it or willing ourselves into a better gut-brain axis. There's just steps you take. And you do it without any self-judgment, and you understand what the problem is. And that way, it becomes a success.

Dr. Drew Sinatra: Yeah, absolutely. I love what you said about just the baby step piece as well, right? Because I think people get overwhelmed when they know they're ill, they know they need to work on their gut health, and we just need to give them very simple, actionable steps so they can just get started on that.

I'll go through three really quick here. These are more Western-based things that I do with patients, but it's eliminate foods that you're reacting to, baseline things. So someone might be reacting to gluten or dairy or eggs or citrus. Of



course, the gold standard with any of these types of food allergy understandings is to really do a food allergy elimination diet, right? So you just give up that food for a solid month, and then you reintroduce it back in and see how your body responds. Maybe you get digestive issues, maybe you get brain fog, maybe you get fatigue from it. And a lot of people, they're eating these foods that their body is reacting to, and likely it's because of the microbiome. It's because of the mucus layer that's not healthy, that's why they're reacting to these foods in the first place. But often giving up these foods can really help clear up the mind and clear up pain in the body and all sorts of different things. So I always recommend that.

Then we talked about probiotics today. I always recommend eating fermented foods, whether that's kimchi or sauerkraut or drinking beet kvass. I'm not really a big kombucha fan, but certainly there are microorganisms in kombucha, as well.

And the psychobiotics that people can take as probiotics. If you're really having anxiety and depression, that could be a place to start, where you support your gut health via probiotics, which affects the brain.

Then lastly, I wanted to mention in terms of supporting this gut-brain axis would be just meditation and breathing practices to just allow our bodies to become more into this parasympathetic, calming state, which we need for proper digestion and then brain health, as well.

Dr. Kulreet Chaudhary: We should do another episode together on meditation. I'd love to hear your experience and thoughts, and would love to share mine, as well.

Dr. Drew Sinatra: Well, yours is probably a lot deeper than mine.

Dr. Kulreet Chaudhary: You're underestimating. From what I've heard, you're meditating every time you're going out into nature. I think people sometimes limit meditation to eyes closed and we can be equally as meditative with eyes open.

Dr. Drew Sinatra: Yes. Well, I once did a ten-day vipassana, and that was very, very intense. Yes, people don't need to do that, right? You can just go out into nature and be present, and that's a form of meditation.

Dr. Kulreet Chaudhary: Yes. Now, let's talk about that. I want to hear about your ten-day vipassana experience.

Dr. Drew Sinatra: We'll do that sometime. It was one of the most challenging things I've done in my life, I'll say that.



Dr. Kulreet Chaudhary: People are usually surprised how hard it is to be silent. Let's talk about it — I want to hear more, Drew!

Dr. Drew Sinatra: Sure. We'll schedule that in, we'll do it.

Dr. Kulreet Chaudhary: All right.

Dr. Drew Sinatra: Well, thank you so much for joining me today on this podcast. I think we gave our listeners a lot of information around what this gut-brain axis is and really how to support it. So those out there that are having mood issues, whether it be anxiety to depression, there's so much that you can do to really foster this connection between the gut and the brain.

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