



Announcer: Hi, and welcome to a special presentation of the **Be HEALTHistic** podcast, presented by Healthy Directions. Today, we're going to focus on women's health, specifically the health of working moms — and the needs of the women who are juggling it all and sacrificing themselves in the process. Why do so many working moms worry that they're failing? They're doing the best they can to keep all the balls in the air, but are losing pieces of themselves in the process. Today, we discuss the impact it's having on their physical and mental health, and their relationships. We will also highlight the importance of adding yourself to your list of priorities for the self-care needed to stay healthy, balanced and vital. Self-care is not a selfish act, but necessary for a woman's health and well-being.

Two of our amazing women's health experts, integrative neurologist and Ayurvedic practitioner, Dr. Kulreet Chaudhary, and naturopathic physician, Dr. Briana Sinatra — both working moms themselves — will explore this conversation and provide some helpful advice and tips with our audience. So without further ado, welcome Dr. Kulreet and Dr. Briana.

Dr. Kulreet Chaudhary: Hey, Dr. Briana, I am so excited to be able to do this. I feel like women do not have enough opportunities to actually sit and be in what I call a “women's circle.” And we're not just physicians, we are women...we're moms, we're wives, we're playing all these roles. So I'm so excited to finally be able to have this conversation with you.

Dr. Briana Sinatra: Yes, thank you so much, Dr. Kulreet. It is so great to be here with you, too. And I agree, it's so important to talk about how you find balance during this crazy time of life when, as women especially, it is all too common to be taking care of everyone but yourself. And we know what it's like to feel like you're juggling all the balls at once, from raising children, to working outside the home, still wanting to advance your career, but also still having all the demands at the home — from cleaning, and laundry, and wanting to put a nutritious meal on the table for your family.

And it is a lot, and a pace that is hard to keep up...and we really shouldn't keep it up, because it takes such a toll on our physical body and our mental body. And all too often, and I'm sure you experience the same, I feel like I talk to women who may not feel great in their body during this time. They're stressed out, they're feeling anxious, they may not be eating well, they may be gaining weight, and maybe they're feeling disconnected from their partner. And so it takes extra work during this time to make yourself a priority. And it's important to learn how to practice that self-love without any shame or judgment around it.

Dr. Kulreet Chaudhary: You're preaching to the choir, sister! And we're not really preaching from a pulpit, we're really in the trenches with women and we're sharing, just, our



experience. And so, why don't we just start with that? Let's start with our own personal narratives...and you're really in the thick of it right now, because you've got three little ones, you've got a career, you have a marriage. And so, tell me more about...what is it like right now to be Dr. Briana?

Dr. Briana Sinatra: Yeah, so I mean, I am in the thick of it, and I honestly feel like I've been in the thick of it for a long time. Because our three kids span over an almost nine-year period. And so I feel like I had the perspective of having kids on the younger side, or at least on the younger side within my friend group, as I was definitely within the first wave of having kids. I was 29 years old, and we had our second at 32, and then now we had our third when I was 38, and literally considered to be having a geriatric pregnancy. Which is awful! They should remove that from all conversation. But I feel like I've learned over the years, and sometimes the hard way, to prioritize myself and my self-care. And maybe that came with age, and maybe I was a little wiser, and maybe with age my body just couldn't keep up the pace.

And so I was forced to make my self-care a priority. And I think I know my limits better than I did before and can advocate for myself and really listen to my body. And I'm always learning. I'm learning to let things go. Some days I can be really great at balancing and prioritizing myself and other days I'm not. And I find myself playing a little bit of a catch-up and making up for it. So I feel like it's still always a juggling act, and it's just finding that balance and being compassionate with yourself through it all.

So Dr. Kulreet, how about you? How are things going for you now? You're the mother of a teenage son, which certainly comes with its challenges. But I imagine you've gained a lot of experience over from the days when he was a little guy, and you're a more experienced juggler. And so, I'd love to know what do you know now that you wish you had known about self-care and compassion at that time in your life?

Dr. Kulreet Chaudhary: Oh my God. I mean, it's always that desire to create the time machine. For example, one of the things I realized about being a good juggler is just to refuse the juggling. I just don't juggle as much. There were so much pressure that I put on me having to make sure everybody was okay. And I realized that those were all the pins in the air that were totally unnecessary. They didn't have to be okay, not being okay is part of the journey. Letting my child fail is a really, really important part of him becoming who he is. That was huge, was just going, hold on...how many of these pins are necessary? Which pins are absolutely vital? And I did a funny thing though, Dr. Briana, in that I actually utilized my knowledge of Ayurveda to support my imbalance. So let me explain what that means! So instead of creating healthier habits, I created a really powerful Ayurvedic



protocol that supported my unhealthy habits. And when I say unhealthy, I just mean, the same...just putting so many things on my shoulders that were unnecessary.

And it wasn't until I hit my early forties where all of my great Ayurvedic habits finally were not enough to keep me where I needed to be, because my hormones were going down. My body was like, "Okay, now we're changing. You've done a great job at trying to keep afloat with all of this knowledge, and now we are changing and you will not be able to stay the same imbalanced person." And so my early forties were a real come-to-Jesus experience. And I really had to look at the way I was approaching Ayurveda, and just health in general, that it's not about how can I maintain the habits that are actually harming me with my routine, like, how do I prevent having to change? And I had to switch it. I'm going, "Hold on." And that was really when I looked at all of the balls in the air and went, which ones are necessary? Which ones are truly, truly necessary? And the hard part for me, which this surprised me, because of course I was preaching this, but I never had to do it to such an extreme until my early forties.

I struggled with the concept of extreme self-love and extreme self-care. And I'm only putting the word "extreme" just because women do so little of it. So when we do a normal amount, a healthy amount, it suddenly feels extreme because I was like, "Am I going to be narcissistic? Am I going to make the world all about me? How do I really, really take care and honor myself and still be a good physician, still be a good mom, still be a good wife, a good daughter, all of these goods?" And what I realized is that self-love and self-care is not what makes us self-involved. Actually, the better we feel, the more expansive we become, we see the whole world differently. We actually have stronger connections, it's the antidote for narcissism. It's the exhaustion, the shame that we feel around our needs and our emotions and who we are — it's all of that that creates this bubble around us that prevents us from feeling empathy from other people.

And so self-love, self-care was the antidote to what I think so many women go through, where they start feeling just shut down and that they have to put this protective barrier between them and the world. And so I really wish I could have told myself that when I was younger. And the key thing was like, let the people around you mess up. Let them make mistakes, let them fail. Because that's how I got to be who I am. Why am I preventing them from having the same opportunity of growth by being the super mom, the super wife, the super daughter, the super everything? They don't need that. They need to just simply sit in their own experience and I need to be available when they turn to me, but not to prevent disasters from happening. But just to be with them and going, "All right, I'm with you. No matter what happens. I'm with you."



So let's take it one step further. What is the most important piece of advice that you wish you could have given yourself?

Dr. Briana Sinatra: I feel like I am talking to so many people at this stage in their life, so I feel like it's literally the conversation that I have every day. And I know you were talking about early forties, hormones are changing and you just can't keep up the pace. And I think all the things that we do before that, being these super women where we just push through, takes such a tremendous toll on our adrenal health. And as our hormones start to decline, it's really our adrenals that our body then looks to because that's what's continuing to produce our sex hormones as our ovarian productions decrease. So we need to take care of our adrenal health so much.

And it's like that analogy where they say on an airplane, if that oxygen mask drops, you need to take that oxygen mask and put it on yourself first before helping your dependents around you. Because if you pass out from lack of oxygen, you're not able to help those around you. And so that prioritizing yourself, as you were saying, is essential. And I also feel like we say self-care, we say prioritizing yourself, and that we should do this — but I also hate the word “should.” Because then it feels like one more thing that we should be doing that we're often falling short on. And so I think so often with my patients, it's having the conversation of, “Okay, what is one self-love thing that you can do?”

And that changes from everyone, right? Because different people have different needs. What feels like self-love for them, what they can do based on their schedule, how they need to support their schedule and ask for help from the people around them in order to create that. I always say, what is attainable and then sustainable? So it's not just something you do once in a blue moon, but it can really become part of your regular routine that you then feel the benefits from and then you crave. And then you go back to it, you ask for the help to support you through it. So I think having a team and people who advocate for you and help you stay consistent to prioritizing yourself and taking care of yourself is huge, as well too.

Dr. Kulreet Chaudhary: I love that. I absolutely love that.

Dr. Briana Sinatra: Yeah. How about you?

Dr. Kulreet Chaudhary: I don't know...this is the advice I would've given but I don't know how I would've offered this because I think it's a shift that has to happen for women. I think there has to be more women wisdom circles.



Dr. Briana Sinatra: For sure.

Dr. Kulreet Chaudhary: But the advice I would've given is, manage your hormones always. Meaning, looking at every stage of your life, starting at puberty, look at what did you need at that moment. When I was growing up, hormones, of course at puberty, it's like, that's dictating your life. But I didn't realize, because I wasn't taught, that there's care involved. And then in your twenties there's care involved. And then in your thirties there's care involved. Hormones to me were something that you manage once you're in trouble. So it's like the analogy you used of that plane that's crashing, when you're on the plane that is crashing, then start thinking about an escape plan versus don't get on the plane in the first place! Why would you want to be on a crashing plane? And this information was in Ayurveda, it's one of the things that I now give to all my younger patients, and I start off with, "I wish I would've done this, this is why I'm telling you to do this."

It was information I had, but it was information that I thought you do when you're in trouble. And it was only in my forties that I sat and I was like, "Wait, why did I let myself get to this?" And yes, they would've taken some time and commitment, but honestly, they would've reduced my overall sense of overwhelm over those years. And whenever there's less overwhelm, you have more time, you have more energy. And so that's really the big thing. And just to really honor womanhood. It's only now, at this time, that I'm really embracing just the beauty, the magnificence, the gift of womanhood. And until now, I really felt like it was something that I was managing. I have to manage being a woman, and not enjoy. This is the first time in my life that I can honestly say I'm enjoying it and I think it's really...my forties have forced me to become so vulnerable and so honest with myself about what's keeping me from enjoying being a woman. And as I've targeted those different things, it's just opened an entire new world for me.

So now that we know the advice that we wish we would've given ourselves, what advice do you give to your patients that you wish you had gotten from one of your doctors?

Dr. Briana Sinatra: Yeah, I mean, I think that prioritizing self-care and making it attainable and sustainable. And I think one way of self-care during this time, when we maybe feel like our body is hijacked by our children, our body is changing, we may not really be in love with how our body is in this stage. I think adding in some sort of self-care where you are tending to your body. And whether...I talk a lot about people, about how they can take care of their body with the things that they put on their body, the things they put in their body, but also just the act of taking care of your skin. And you and I had a conversation earlier, too, just about an abhyanga massage in Ayurveda, and I feel like I talked about wanting to do that. I



had friends that were in Ayurveda and I wanted to do it...but now I find, okay, in the shower is when I can do it.

And so I often talk with my clients...okay, what is a self-care thing that you can do in the shower to get in touch with your body, to understand your body and how your body's changing so you know your body the best? So when that you are not feeling right in your body, or you are feeling a change in your body, you are the first one to know it and you can then advocate for yourself to get that support. And I loved what you had said. You had talked about how...I don't know if it was the act of the oil or the oil itself. Can you share with me?

Dr. Kulreet Chaudhary: Yeah. The Sanskrit name for oil, it translates into love. So it's literally an act of every time you do abhyanga.

Dr. Briana Sinatra: Yes, and you said that. And I just melted, because I feel like we're giving so much love externally but that act of really touching ourselves and caring for ourselves and giving ourselves that TLC and love is an act of love. And then we really know our bodies through this time in our life, and for years to come. I feel like that is such a gift we can give ourselves that can have amazing benefits in the future.

And how about you? How has this shaped how you then impart wisdom and share with your clients what you wish you had done that they can start doing?

Dr. Kulreet Chaudhary: One of the really powerful things that I share with my patients is the use of seeds for hormonal regulation. And since estrogen dominance is now hitting women in their twenties, how to seed cycle, what proportions, and how to change them into your thirties and your forties and then as you get into your fifties. And I think so many women when they're having hormonal complaints, they don't want to do any kind of hormone therapy because of concerns of all of the risks, but they don't realize that nature's got hormones and they're much gentler and they talk with your body. And if you understand which ones to do and what proportions, there's really no downside. So I finally...again, why did I wait so long? But I finally turned to those in my early forties and it's been absolutely amazing. I haven't had to use any other forms of hormone replacement.

Yeah, and if I have to, I'm open to that. But so far, just with the use of those, it's been so smooth. And it has really just slowed down the impact of aging that so many women feel as...especially as they approach their late forties and fifties. And so I include that for almost all of my female patients, because I don't really see any women that don't have hormonal imbalances. If you've got health issues, you have hormonal imbalances, that's one of the ways in which you got there. And it's so simple, they don't have to worry about me prescribing it, they just can go to their supermarket. And the best part is educating them on the signs of too



much estrogen, too much progesterone, too much testosterone — or too little of any of those. And they feel so connected when they understand which hormone that they need to support, or which ones they need to back off on, and then they get to go to the grocery store and treat themselves. So that's very empowering to give that knowledge to women.

Dr. Briana Sinatra: Absolutely, I love that. And I love, too, with the seed cycling, I heard it described too like you are feeding your seeds with seeds externally that have just so many amazing phytochemicals and nutrient benefits.

Dr. Kulreet Chaudhary: Exactly.

Dr. Briana Sinatra: And that is...I love that.

Dr. Kulreet Chaudhary: So, as we're finally drawing to a close, what's the one thing that you want to leave people with? What's the one impression that if you could give to all of our listeners that they walk away from this interview with?

Dr. Briana Sinatra: I mean, I think that's hard. And I think I honestly have two, if that's okay.

Dr. Kulreet Chaudhary: All right. Hey, Dr. Briana, it's our show...I think we can do whatever we want to. So yeah, give me your two things!

Dr. Briana Sinatra: Well, I mean, I think a big theme is asking for support. That we don't have to do it all, we don't need to be the jugglers of everything. And it may not happen exactly how we want, but there are people around us...but sometimes they don't just come in to do it intuitively. I think as women, we do things intuitively, and I think other people in our life want to help, but they don't always know how. So even just feeling, just having that authority to be like, "Okay, this would be really helpful right now and this is how you could help me." And asking for that is huge.

But I would say one of the biggest things I noticed for myself from our first child and third child is, for me, prioritizing sleep. Because I felt like I was just always one of those people who could just go, and stay up late, and it was fine. And that's when we co-slept, and I was nursing...it was, like, the all night booby buffet train.

Dr. Kulreet Chaudhary: I love that!

Dr. Briana Sinatra: But third time around, I was like, "I can't." And I think then I would get up, and I would try and achieve all the things that I felt like I didn't achieve during the day,



at night. And I think I just realized, and I think to your point, too, of how important it is to take care of yourself earlier on. And our body heals and rejuvenates and regenerates at night. And so, making sure that you prioritize your sleep I think can be huge. And I have to say that I've definitely noticed the improvements in my own health by doing that. Because throwing off your circadian rhythm and your adrenal health and that whole balance, that was a big, big yes to myself, by choosing to go to bed early.

What would you say? Is there one takeaway to send people away with?

Dr. Kulreet Chaudhary: Yeah. To our folks, for our women folk out there.

Dr. Briana Sinatra: Yeah. Yeah.

Dr. Kulreet Chaudhary: I would say it's so important to have a relationship with yourself, but sometimes it doesn't even make sense what that is. And so for me, what I saw was over life thus far is I discovered different parts of myself. And so, the first relationship that I had with myself where I really was cultivating the time, effort and energy to create was with my spiritual self. And I was just so fortunate that my mom brought me into meditation at a really, really young age, I was nine years old. And so I didn't know I was cultivating a spiritual relationship with myself because it was so young. But that was huge. It was really, really huge, it became the basis of my entire life. And then when I went into Ayurveda, it was like I started cultivating a relationship with my body, another aspect of myself. And that became the priority for much of that decade because it was so fascinating and I was learning more about me and I was teaching all this to my patients.

And then I felt like there was a period where I went deeper into my intellectual self, because I was rethinking about the concepts that I had about medicine, the concepts that I had about hormonal health, about being a woman. It was such a deep, rich, conceptual time in my life where I was putting all of the pieces from the past with the present.

And then for this past decade, it was cultivating a relationship with my emotional self...and that is still ongoing, I'm still in that process. I mean, I don't know what the next self I'm going to meet, but I will say that it wasn't until I really consciously — and that's a key word, consciously — started creating a relationship with my emotional self that I felt the big potentials of my life started to finally unlock, that the funnest parts of my life started to unlock, that it was just this untouched aspect. I think, especially for moms, we're so busy mothering that we don't realize that our emotions need our own mothering, our own intention. And it's been amazing.



It's been one of the richest experiences to know these four aspects of myself. And like I said, I'm still going on this journey to discover what aspect of myself am I going to learn about next. But as much as the other relationships in our life are important and women are...we're at the heart of the home. And that's wonderful, I love being that person. But I also really need a strong relationship with myself, which means I need to know myself. So that has been key for me, and it's something that I hope the people that are listening to us now, we plant the seed for of how rich this relationship could be. It's not just about the to-do list for, like, what do I have to do for my body and this...but like, hey, this is a meaningful relationship. And honestly, it's the only relationship that you are guaranteed to have for the rest of your life, so it's worth taking care of.

Well, I loved this.

Dr. Briana Sinatra: Me too.

Dr. Kulreet Chaudhary: I loved having a chance to sit with you. And I love when I get an opportunity to talk with younger women, as much as when I talk to older women, and I hope that this is the first of many, many conversations and that we're able to create that wisdom circle of women, that it doesn't sound like either one of us had, that maybe you and I can be that for other women. I would love that experience.

Dr. Briana Sinatra: Yes, I would, too. Thank you so much.

Dr. Kulreet Chaudhary: All right. It's a date. It's a date, Briana. It's a date with destiny.

Dr. Briana Sinatra: I love it. Thank you so much.

Dr. Kulreet Chaudhary: Thank you...bye.

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