

EP 27: STRESS AND THE IMPACT ON OUR HORMONES

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SPEAKERS

Leah Brueggemann



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Welcome to today's episode of the balancing hormones naturally podcast where we offer actions and steps you can take today to start supporting and balancing your hormones. This is your podcast host, Leah Brueggemann, I'm honored and excited to be your guide on your way to a better understanding of hormone health and how it affects your everyday life.



Leah Brueggemann 00:35

Hey, ladies, and we're back for another episode of balancing hormones naturally, sorry, I have a light up right now. Now, you can see this, and it literally just started to tip over. And I thought you were going to hear a massive crash. But you didn't it but you might still so you know, then I'm probably not going to edit this out. Anyways, I do minimal editing on here, if you guys can't tell him more. So just get the content out for you. And today, we're going to be talking about stress, and our HPA access, and so many things. And this, I'm going to try and make this short and concise episode for you. And not really lengthy. But I feel like the best analogy for this really needs diagrams. So I'm going to do my best to just use my words to paint a picture for you. But maybe I need to turn this into a YouTube video or something. Anyways, that's just my thoughts. I feel like I always need to do a life update, because I keep getting behind on my episodes over here. I don't know, if you just shoot me a message on Instagram be like, stop doing the life updates, Leah, we totally understand what's going on. Or you could be like, I love the life updates. I don't know, just you can tell me. But I have completed all of my tests for fdn. I just am waiting for the link. So they're grading everything and waiting to schedule my verbal final and I will be officially a certified Functional Diagnostic nutrition practitioner. Wow, you guys, I'm so excited to be able to share that certification with you. Because you know that I have been doing independent study and independent research for a very long time. And I will never stop doing that. Because I think that it is upon us as educators to continually be looking at new studies and your research and educating ourselves. And I do think that there's very much an education bias out there. And depending on where you learn things from. And I'm not saying that doesn't exist, because it absolutely does. But I do try and make sure to always look Apple sides and get a variety of different instructors and everything going on there. But I'm just really proud of the certification and graduating because I have been doing independent research and study for so long. And I've talked to so many different practitioners and doctors and worked with them. And my clients have taught me so much. And you know, it's just really cool to be able to finally have pieces of paper that also say I know things, even

though I know that so many clients work with me, not because I have pieces of paper, but because of the results that I actually get my clients and you know, in the end, it's the results that speak for themselves. And that's all I want any and I just want my clients to get results, you know, and that's why I started doing what I was doing. But I am also really proud of my certification. And I'm really excited to be able to offer live screenings. So that's what's going on in my life. Landon is one and a half, if you don't know that's my son, and said, is about to take his boards. So that's gonna be really exciting. And that's update on my life. If you're sick of hearing that is, you know, tell me and I'll stop updating all my life. Okay? Anyways, if you've made it this far, I love you screenshot and share this episode to your stories. It really really means the world to me, because then I get to share it with you. And I like doing that. So stress, let's talk about stress and its impact on our hormones. So first let's talk about stress. Okay, and let's think about what hormones it spikes. And let's kind of think about how this is created in our body. So



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stress that triggers our hypothalamus to talk to our pituitary, which then talks to our adrenals. And it releases cortisol. This is not to be confused with adrenaline because that is also produced by our adrenals. And I think a lot of times we get confused between adrenaline and cortisol. So adrenaline is something that's already created, and it's being stored in our body. And when we like, for example, slam on the brakes, because we're driving at someone swerves in front of us, it's the adrenaline that kicks in. Cortisol does come to but it comes about 10 minutes later, because our body actually has to create the cortisol, of course, to opposed to the adrenaline that's already stored in our body because like if you need to slam on your brakes, you know, we don't have 10 minutes to do that. So that's where the adrenaline comes in. Adrenaline is extremely catabolic. So breaking down in our body. And cortisol is also catabolic, but just not to the same extent that adrenaline is okay. So I just wanted to kind of share the difference between those two, okay, now, what does cortisol do in our body? What does our stress it's our fight or flight hormone? What does cortisol do? Now, cortisol always gets a bad rap. You know, people always like bad cortisol. And, yes, it is catabolic, but it does break down. But there are so many other benefits to cortisol ik, obviously, otherwise, why would our body could be creating this, you know, body's intelligent. And so it raises your blood sugar. It slows down digestion, and it is anti inflammatory. Ever heard of cortisone shots? And so you're thinking, Okay, why do I want it to raise my blood sugar, because you want it to take care of you. So if your blood sugar drops, and it gets too low, this can happen at nighttime, it can happen if there's too long in between eating or things like that, our cortisol kicks in to bring our blood sugar back up. And this is really important because you don't want to die. Okay? So cortisol raises our blood sugar. Also, like if you were running from a bear, you know, we don't necessarily need our digestion working really well, because we're trying to save ourselves from the bear. And cortisol slows down your digestion, because it is helping literally save you from whatever stressful situation you're going into. Okay, so we see it's anti inflammatory. We do like that, right? So now, let's talk about why chronic stress and long term elevated levels of cortisol are not helping your hormones. Let's talk about that. Because I know that's what you're thinking. So we talked about the benefits, why do we not like it? So let's think back to like, ancient times, right? We just didn't have such chronic stress back in the day, you know, we weren't looking at everyone's lives on social media, you know, we are part of a tribe, you're part of a village, you're part of a community, you know, they always say it takes a village to take care of your families and all of that. And, you know, you would be getting chased by a bear or you'd be going to war. And obviously, that's going to raise your cortisol levels, but then you go back to peace and quiet, right, go back, and your cortisol levels can come down. But today, we live in such chronic stress. You know, we're constantly on our phones, we're constantly scrolling, we're constantly seeing the drama of what's going on with our friends. There's so much drama in our family, there's so much drama, with politics, with just health issues going on, there's so much stress, and our body is trying to take care of us right now. It's trying to take care of our cortisol and save us right now. And your body goes, Okay, I just have to take care of her today. I said, take care of you today. And then tomorrow, you're going to rest. So our body's going to take care of us today to its own detriment long term, because you did not rest the next day. And your body restarts that cycle of like, No, no, I'm gonna take care of her today. Gotta keep pumping out this cortisol. And then tomorrow, we're gonna rest but we aren't resting. We're not slowing down. We're not managing our stress. And so we have this constant constant output of cortisol. Right, which is catabolic, which is breaking down, and you know what your body does to keep outputting that it slowly starts taking away from other things to help



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take care of it, you know, we only have so much energy output per day and your body has to prioritize where it's going. Right? So if you're under this chronic stress, what are some things that start to go? One of the first is your digestion, your your body is going to take away energy for certain things and just output it to different areas. Doesn't mean like you're not getting anything from your digestion, but maybe you start feeling more bloated. Maybe you're more constipated. Or maybe you go back and forth between constipation and diarrhea and you get slapped an IBS label or something. Or maybe you stop ovulating. Or maybe all of a sudden you have a really heavy periods, maybe you also have really painful periods, you know, all this inflammation that's going on this chronic stress, you know, is elevating those prostaglandins. Okay. So your body starts taking energy away from other things because it only has so much to output. And we have a few different phases of HPA dysfunction. So hypothalamic pituitary adrenal dysfunction, we like to call them acute compensatory and they exhaustive phase. So acute is when you have these high levels of cortisol, because your body's outputting. And you're in this very high stress situation. And then compensatory is a lot of times where you may have what look like normal levels of cortisol in your bloodstream in your, in your body. But you are still under the same amount of stress as before. But this is all that your body can do right now. And this is a lot of times where people start to feel a lot of symptoms, they may be wired, but tired. You may be self treating yourself with like, for headaches for constipation, for digestive issues for anxiety. But every time you may go get your labs drawn, your cortisol levels look normal, and you're like what, and that's because you're still under extremes amount, extreme amount of stress. But literally, this is the best that your body is outputting with cortisol right now. Okay. And then the next one exhaustive is when you just have really chronically low levels of cortisol, and you're just exhausted, you know, you're tired all the time, you have all this brain fog, your digestion is poop. And, you know, you can come back from this, it's not that you're just stuck here, till the end of time. But this is going to take you putting some really clear boundaries, on your sleep, or your nutrition, and managing your stress. I say this all the time. And I will continue to say this, you cannot just be like I'm going to get through this week. And then I'm going to rest I just have to get through this stressful situation. And then next week, you have another stressful situation. And you keep saying that to your body. You keep breaking these promises of like the next week, I'm going to rest tomorrow, I'm going to rest I just have to get through this. No, you have to learn how to manage this, okay, because we already talked about how this is happening with our digestion and fatigue and the brain fog. But another thing that happens is let's talk about your steroidal hormones, your your, your sex hormones, or progesterone or estrogen, your body prioritizes, making cortisol over your sex hormones. This is why when people are under chronic stress, maybe oscillation disappears for them. Or maybe they have chronically low levels of progesterone. Because their body is prioritizing this cortisol over their sex hormones. because your body is prioritizing taking care of you and keeping you alive over your reproductive hormones. And I know we talk about it all the time. Even if you're not trying to get pregnant at this very moment. Your sex hormones impacts how much of your life coming from painful periods coming from weight gain coming from anxiety coming from bloating coming from cravings, hair loss, all of these things, okay? And this is why stress is so important, okay? It's affecting our digestion, it can be affecting headaches, it can be affecting your sex hormones. And we just brushed it off. You know, when people ask how we're doing, we're like, I'm good. I'm busy, busy. It's like we glorify the hustle. We glorify the busy if you aren't doggone tired, if you are busy, 24 seven. If you aren't so stressed, you're doing something wrong. Why is that glorified? Why is it the busier and stressed and more frustrated? You are out? You're doing something right?



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Why are we Why are we chasing that? Okay. So I think that part of this is an emotional like, thing that we may have learned that you just always have to be busy, and always have to be stressed in order to be successful. I don't think that's true. I think for everything, there's a season, but let's talk about ways that we can manage our stress and lower our stress levels so that we can support our body overall our thyroid, our sex hormones, our digestion, okay. And, I mean, you're going to hear me talk about stress all the time you guys but I, in every single episode, I'm going to

connect it for you in another way about how it's affecting your life. But today is all about ways to manage this. Okay? So I'm going to list off some of my favorite ways. And then from that, you can run with it and figure out what works for you. Okay? Okay. So now bear with me, you're going to probably roll your eyes at a couple of these. And that's okay, I just want you to bear with me. Okay. So my first and foremost, favorite is EFT tapping, which stands for Emotional Freedom Technique. And what it is, is you're working with different pulse points in your body. And you are basically reorganizing like your thoughts, for lack of a better term, I would YouTube it, they're probably going to give you much better examples. But I would start off following a tutorial and then you can make your own, but you're gonna just you're just tapping these different pulse points, and you're working through something. So let's say you are really anxious because you keep progressing stuff, or there's so much going on. So use, they're going to tap these pulse points and be like, I am so anxious. There's so much going on, I just don't even know what to do. And just keep like feeling that in your body and tapping. And then you're going to keep the tapping going, and you're going to rephrase it to like, what's one thing that I can do that's going to help this overall and you just work through it that way. I also love it because you can do it for like three minutes to start your day. You can do it when you are stressed and something emotional stressful happens during your day to help just lower the stress levels. Okay, love EFT tapping. Another one that I love is self hypnosis. And I know I know I lost you a couple seconds there. But I'm not talking about like woowoo crazy. hypnosis, I'm not talking about that. I'm talking about just working with your subconscious and reframing your thoughts. Okay. And one of my other favorite ways to do this is to record yourself on your phone. And say whatever your your you want to say whether that's affirmations, whatever it is. And so things I love is like I'm healing every day, I am so thankful that I can choose a nourishing food to serve my body, every bite that I'm taking as balancing and nourishing my hormones. I am I'm lowering my stress levels, I am calm, I am peaceful, like whatever you would like, recorded on your phone, and then play it with some peaceful music, oh my gosh, and just sit there or lay there or do some stretches and just listen to that. And I love doing it before you go to bed or before you're starting your day, whatever it is, but it's just you're reprogramming this, your thoughts, your self, your subconscious, because if you play the victim and you just go up, nope, I pcoso I'm just I'm never gonna lose weight. It's just, it's just the way it is. I have hashimotos like, this is just my life. And everything you always bring back to playing the victim. And this is probably a debate for another day. But the more we play the victim and the more we believe those slots, we're never going to be able to get out of it, right? We become what we believe what we tell ourselves every single day. So if instead we're telling ourselves every day, I'm healing, every day, I'm getting closer to feeling amazing. Every day, my body is feeling better, I have more energy, you're going to be believing that, okay? And your subconscious is going to be finding ways for you to actually make that come true for you. Which is huge, just huge, right? So that's why I love self hypnosis. I also just love stretching you guys stretching and listening to calming music. I can't remember the scientific data on this. But the what is that when you? Oh my goodness, my yoga people are going to be able to tell me but the fold over is that what it's called, when you like touch your knees, or you touch your toes and then you like go to your flat back and then you like fold over?



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Oh my gosh, I'm totally blanking. But that literally helps put your body in a parasympathetic state or rest and digest state. So that's one of my favorites. I love breath work. Oh, you guys YouTube that just do some deep breaths helps improve your digestion, your stress levels. What else do I love? I love journaling. I love meditating, journaling, you can voice note, talk through what's going on if you're a big talker, or you can journal. You know sometimes it just takes five minutes you know talking about what's going on, why you're frustrated or even visual lising you know where you want to see yourself in five years just helping reprogram these thoughts? You know, do you do you see a common trend here of how it's putting yourself in a calm, peaceful state and really reprogramming these thoughts. This is a pattern, I hope that you are sensing here. And I love all of these. And prayer is so important as well. I don't want to, I don't want to discount that. You know, and I also think it's really important. I know people are like, oh, God knows what I'm thinking, I don't need to tell him. But you know, if you just sit there and dwell on what's going on, and pray about it, you can, it also can bring you so much peace. So these are all of my tips that I love. If you have any others, I would love for you to share. And lastly, but not least, you need to think about where the stress is coming from and how you can remove it from your life is that toxic people in your life is this an extremely toxic work environment, and

maybe it's not something you can do tomorrow, you can just call in sick again, just like exit from whatever is going on. But maybe it's something that you're working towards and we're managing our stress in the meantime, you're not just waiting until it gets over every day, five minutes, 10 minutes a day, you're doing something to help bring your body back into this parasympathetic state. And you guys, seven eight hours of sleep every single night. Okay? Get that wonderful sleep hygiene down. You know prepping your body for bed, letting it know you're going to bed and actually letting your adrenals do what they're supposed to at nighttime in your liver and your kidneys help flush out at nighttime. Give your body time to do what it's supposed to do. Instead of being Go go go go go. Anyway, that's my thoughts on stress. So let me know if you have any questions if you have any thoughts and I would love if you took a second to go rate and review the podcast because it helps us meet reach more people. And I absolutely love your feedback and I love chatting with you.



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