



**Mind-body medicine: how to recover our mental health by  
healing our gut and liver as well as past traumas  
with Dr. Ameet Aggarwal**

**[The MindHealth360 Show](#)**

**Episode Transcript**

Host: Kirkland Newman

Guest: Dr. Ameet Aggarwal

## The MindHealth360 Show - Dr. Ameet Aggarwal

Dr. Ameet Aggarwal:

And we'll talk about, in more detail, some of the therapies we can use to heal trauma and heal your gut, et cetera. All these therapies combined really gave me more of a full recovery than somebody who only does naturopathic medicine, only does supplements, only does drugs, or only does psychotherapy. The mind and the body need to heal together for optimal health.

Kirkland Newman:

Welcome to the MindHealth360 Show, I'm Kirkland Newman. And if you, your loved ones, or clients suffer from mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, insomnia, poor memory, poor attention, moods swings, exhaustion, et cetera, I interview the leading integrative mental health practitioners from around the world to help you understand the root causes of these symptoms, many of which may surprise you, and suggest solutions to help you heal. If you like this interview, please do subscribe and forward to others who might find it helpful. If you want further information, please go to [www.mindhealth360.com](http://www.mindhealth360.com) or find us on social media.

Kirkland Newman:

Dr. Ameet Aggarwal, thank you so much for being on the MindHealth 360 Show. And Ameet, I find you just so interesting because you really combine the 360-degree mentality in approaching mental health. So as you know, MindHealth360 is all about the 360-degree take on mental health and how we have to heal the biochemistry and the psycho-spiritual and the lifestyle behavioural in order to truly diagnose and treat, successfully, mental health issues and, to me, you really embody this in your practice.

Kirkland Newman:

So just to give a bit of an intro, you're a naturopathic doctor, psychotherapist, homeopath, EMDR, and family constellation therapist. You're the best-selling author of *Heal Your Body, Cure Your Mind*, which is available in six languages. And here's the book, it's fantastic. You were voted one of the top 43 therapists worldwide. You teach an integrated approach to healing your mind and body, and you teach globally. You live in Kenya, and you're based in Kenya. And you also have a number of mobile clinics, essentially, or foundation called the Foundation for Integrative Medicine in Africa, where you go around rural communities, helping people in these environments with their health. So I think one of the things I love about you and your approach is not only your charity and, clearly, your very heart-based way of healing and helping people. But also, I love that you have such an integrated approach to mental health. And so what I'd love to do is if you could just tell us a little bit about, first of all, your story, how you got to where you got to, and then the basic principles of your approach when it comes to healing mental health in particular.

Dr. Ameet Aggarwal:

Thanks, Kiki, wonderful to be on the show. So I suffered a lot from anxiety and depression and poor health, and it was only through naturopathic college and psychotherapy school that I realised that my mental health was a result of a poor diet, chronic inflammation, as well as childhood trauma and negative beliefs for my family system. Because I grew up in boarding school, felt abandoned by my parents, was bullied a lot, did a lot of drugs in high school and university which messed up my brain chemistry, went through multiple breakups as well, relationship problems. And all these were traumatising and affected my self-esteem and triggered all those negative emotions from being abandoned in school, abandoned by my parents, and feeling powerless to convince my parents to save

me or take me out of boarding school. So I carried a lot of this baggage without knowing it. It manifested, just not having confidence in myself. And through naturopathic college, first, I realised a lot of my brain chemicals were affected by a poor diet, too much gluten, too much wheat, dairy, inflammatory foods, and having a history of antibiotic use and other chemicals.

Dr. Ameet Aggarwal:

I managed to detox from a lot of drugs, including LSD, using homeopathy. Homeopathy was fantastic to help me remove the negative influences of drugs. Some drugs, of course, help you, they shift your mindset and can heal trauma and give you a new perspective. At the same time, maybe I'd done too much, and they were influencing my perception a bit. So homeopathy was wonderful in that. That was one more step towards healing in my mind.

Dr. Ameet Aggarwal:

And then in psychotherapy school, allowing myself to express anger, allowing myself to ask what I want from a very vulnerable place, and getting the support of really loving energy in those places where you feel are not lovable. To be seen in those places where you often hide or put a mask over in society, and to be seen with acceptance and slowly grow from those places that are frozen in time from previous traumas, all those steps, and we'll talk about, in more detail, some of the therapies we can use to heal trauma and heal your gut, et cetera, all these therapies combined really gave me more of a full recovery than somebody who only does naturopathic medicine, only does supplements, only does drugs, or only does psychotherapy. The mind and the body need to heal together for optimal health.

Kirkland Newman:

Completely, I completely agree, and that's music to my ears. And I mean, certainly, it sounds like you've been on quite an intense journey yourself and that you're one of these people who's actually experienced a lot of what your patients experience so that you're more able to help them. And I think that's key to being a really good healer, is to have experienced this. And there's a statistic saying that, I think, 80% of mental health patients would prefer or insist on being treated by people who've actually experienced mental health issues themselves because they feel that people who haven't been through that journey just don't understand what they're going through, so I think your journey is incredibly important. And then in terms of your approach to mental health, I know you use a very mind-body approach. If you see a patient because I know you're a practicing naturopath, where do you start? What is your process in trying to analyze? Is it more biochemical, is it more psychospiritual, is it more lifestyle behavioural? What's your process?

Dr. Ameet Aggarwal:

Okay. Usually, it's a combination of everything, unless there's a severe trauma that's really just happened and they're having a hard time recovering from it. Usually, it's a combination, so I'll check in with my client's diet and remove typical inflammatory food, which is usually wheat, gluten, dairy, sugar, too much alcohol, too much coffee, even beef sometimes and soy sauce. These, I find quite inflammatory for the system. And then, as I cover in the book, there's a healing-your-gut protocol that I put them through, which includes probiotics, vitamin D, fish oils or evening primrose oil to heal the intestinal lining because your good bacteria in your gut actually produce a lot of your serotonin, most of your serotonin, and your gut has a nice lining kept healthy by good bacteria and good food. And when there's too much inflammatory damage from inflammatory foods or antibiotic use or birth control pills, chemicals,

pesticides, et cetera, you get leaky gut, meaning your intestine gets damaged. You get holes in the intestine, toxins leak in your body causing inflammation everywhere, which is the leading cause of asthma, eczema, arthritis, a lot of chronic conditions, including messing up your brain chemicals, leading to anxiety and depression. So I'll always start with healing the gut and detoxifying the liver. Most people ignore this. So people think their liver is fine, they've gone for all these Western tests. But in Chinese medicine and holistic medicine, the liver always needs support. The liver produces bile, which is a beautiful juice that helps improve your gut health, improve the lives of your good bacteria, helps your intestinal lining get strong and more resilient, I guess, or more of a barrier. This bile juice also removes excessive toxins from your body that are creating inflammation. So regarding mental health, your liver needs to be detoxified immediately as well, if we're not dealing with only trauma.

Dr. Ameet Aggarwal:

Your liver also controls your hormones. And with liver stagnation because of chronic inflammation, too much alcohol, too much medicine, pesticides, environmental toxins, with liver stagnation, we get hormonal imbalance. And our hormones affect our mood as well. For example, people with low progesterone actually have a harder time processing GABA in their brain. GABA is a neurotransmitter that helps reduce anxiety and helps with sleep. So if somebody has liver stagnation leading to low progesterone, GABA doesn't work well in their brain, and they have more anxiety and they have more insomnia. So instead of just dabbling in anti-anxiety medicines, or even just GABA or chamomile tea or something to calm you down, it's super important to also address your liver so your progesterone levels come into balance and, therefore, your GABA works better. That's really treating the root cause.

Kirkland Newman:

So I've heard you talk a lot about this and in your book, you mentioned it a lot. It seems to me that the two key tenets for you are the gut and the liver, and how those impact inflammation and hormones. And I would say the adrenal system is another one. But that, I would put under hormones. But how does the liver and liver stagnation actually impact our hormones? I know you've mentioned the bile and how that impacts our gut, but how does it impact our hormones?

Dr. Ameet Aggarwal:

Okay. So there's a lot of processes in the liver which help to metabolize hormones, which detoxify different toxins, which create processes such as methylation, which helps with hormone metabolism as well. This is usually in Phase II liver detox. So your liver has a lot of mechanisms, including sulfation, glucuronidation, methylation, and there's two others that are not coming to my mind. All these processes affect your hormone balance, estrogen, progesterone, testosterone, as well as immune cell activation, as well as inflammation, as well as vitamin storage. And remember, your liver stores a lot of vitamins as well, your B vitamins, and your B vitamins are important for neurotransmitter balance and hormonal balance. So it's really a combined factory process that's happening in your liver that's affecting your hormones as well as your neurotransmitters.

Kirkland Newman:

And what do you think are the key factors that negatively impact your liver?

Dr. Ameet Aggarwal:

One is stress. Stress goes direct to the liver. When you're shallow breathing, when you're stressed, forces only your upper muscles to work for your lungs, that's why people get tight shoulders. People who shallow breathe don't use their diaphragm, and your diaphragm is meant to massage your liver and improve lymphatic flow through your liver. So stressed people do not massage their liver enough, getting more liver stagnation. Excessive alcohol, excessive medicines, all the pesticides in our foods, in the air, in the water, all smash against your liver. Resentment, suppressed anger, all of these emotions also go to the liver, according to Chinese medicine. So many people are walking around with liver stagnation.

Kirkland Newman:

Yeah. Agreed. And I think we live in this toxic soup, there's so many chemicals and pollutants in our air and our water and our foods. And so what are the key things that you would recommend for people who want to detoxify their liver or optimise the production of chemicals from their liver and the function of their liver?

Dr. Ameet Aggarwal:

First is to remove inflammatory foods because half the problem with the liver is coming from the gut. So healing the gut and removing inflammatory foods. Then adding more bitter foods to your diet, bitter foods like arugula, bitter melon, dandelion root, milk thistle, all these things stimulate bile flow and heal your liver cells as well. In my online course, I cover a lot of homeopathic remedies that go deeper and flush out liver cells, so they work better than just using herbs alone. That's really important. Long, deep breathing, diaphragmatic breathing, and shouting, expressing anger. I get some clients in a safe way, to hit a mattress or a pillow without any rings or bangles, of course, avoiding any damage, but really expressing rage and stuff to get that bile flowing because suppressed emotions are, sometimes, the root cause of liver stagnation. And if you're only taking supplements, if you're only taking herbs and not really releasing the dangerous emotions, then you're just putting a bandage on your liver.

Kirkland Newman:

Understood. And what are the key herbs and supplements? I mean, I know emotion is super important in terms of the liver, but what are the key herbs and supplements that you would recommend for our liver health?

Dr. Ameet Aggarwal:

Some of the herbs I use are milk thistle, dandelion, turmeric, artichoke. There's many others in the book, but those are the key ones. Some of the supplements you're using are antioxidants because remember, your liver is detoxifying toxins. Toxins create free radical or oxidative damage, so you need antioxidants to combat that, your vitamin A, vitamin C, E. Sometimes, I'll give alpha-lipoic acid. There's other amino acids that I use as well. For example, taurine, in some cases, can be used as well. So it's really a combined approach. And I energetically test this with people, whether it's online or in-person sessions, you can get a sense of what a person needs. But generally, these are the supplements I use. Antioxidants, herbs that heal the liver cells as well as stimulate bile flow and, of course, healing the gut and reducing inflammation.

Kirkland Newman:

Understood. And also, you mentioned homeopathy. There's a lot of controversy around homeopathy. A lot of people who, even in the functional medicine space, are very skeptical about the benefits of

homeopathy, and they say how this is just a placebo effect. But I know that you've experienced using homeopathy firsthand, so tell us about your experience with homeopathy and why you're such a fan of it.

Dr. Ameet Aggarwal:

First of all, homeopathy individualises a person, it takes into account their dreams, their character, their food preferences, their signs and symptoms. So one person with mental health issues who has, maybe, more insomnia, anxiety, fear of death would need a specific remedy compared to somebody else who might have fear of poverty and fear of the dark, instead of fear of death and some other symptoms. So we look at the individual character of people before choosing a remedy. And because of that individualisation, the remedy goes much deeper. Why I love homeopathy as well, it doesn't suppress symptoms, it actually untangles or disentangles energetic blocks from a person. I've used homeopathy in many people to release trauma from the past. And that sounds unbelievable, but homeopathy can really heal trauma from the past.

Kirkland Newman:

Wow.

Dr. Ameet Aggarwal:

Yeah. I treat a lot of people who were attacked by terrorists in Nairobi, Kenya. I don't know what year that was, but there was a famous terrorist attack in Kenya, and people were seeing all sorts of explosions and dead bodies, et cetera. And we were doing psychotherapy, but homeopathy took their cure much further, much faster.

Kirkland Newman:

And you really noticed that firsthand, doing the psychotherapy combined with homeopathy really shifted the needle?

Dr. Ameet Aggarwal:

Absolutely, 100%, and I see that all the time.

Kirkland Newman:

Interesting.

Kirkland Newman:

Yeah, because homeopathy encompasses the whole person. I, as a psychotherapist, have a limited bird's eye view based on what the patient's telling me, what the patient is able to recall and express, and we're working on those things that they're able to bring to the table. Homeopathy goes behind the scenes and disentangles everything else in the subconscious as well.

Kirkland Newman:

Yeah, which is amazing. So basically, we've spoken a little bit about the gut and the liver. And you have a few very interesting chapters in your book also on the relationship between the different hormones,

neurotransmitters, and food substances and supplements, which I thought was incredibly helpful because you talk a lot about the importance of protein for blood sugar regulation, which is key to mental health, and also protein in the sense that the amino acid from the protein are the building blocks for our neurotransmitters. And you take us through the very keen neurotransmitters for mental health and which amino acid supports them and which cofactors from our foods and which supplements supports the production of these neurotransmitters. Would you like to tell us about the top five neurotransmitters for mental health for you and how to support them? Or is that the right way to go about it?

Dr. Ameet Aggarwal:

I think the right way to go about it is, first, healing the root cause. I'll go through the neurotransmitters, what they do, and what affects them. The details on the exact nutrients, I'd have to recall them slowly. But generally, you have serotonin, dopamine, GABA, melatonin. And serotonin, dopamine help with reducing depression and anxiety as well. And then you have melatonin, which helps with sleep. GABA helps with sleep as well and reduces anxiety. Now, what happens is these neurotransmitters get thrown off if you have, of course, a poor diet, also with excessive inflammation. So excessive inflammation, as well as chronic stress and unresolved trauma, both of those drive your adrenal glands into fight or flight mode. Because your adrenal glands have to produce adrenaline for unresolved trauma as well as stress, your adrenal glands have to produce excessive cortisol for excessive inflammation, and so your adrenal glands, over time, get burnt out. When they get burnt out, you get a cortisol imbalance. With the cortisol imbalance, serotonin, dopamine, melatonin, GABA all start dropping, leading to anxiety and depression. So not only do we need to include or improve nutrient efficiencies, we also need to fix inflammation, reduce toxicity, support the adrenal glands again, rebuild them. And I use herbs like ashwagandha, rhodiola, different adaptogens, what we call.

Dr. Ameet Aggarwal:

And very important, what I mentioned, is releasing emotional trauma because unresolved trauma or what we call adverse childhood experiences, whether it's divorce, your parents' divorce, abuse in the family, your own abuse, either sexual or violent or verbal, emotional, moving too much, separated from your family, et cetera, all these things are known as adverse childhood experiences and they lodge into your nervous system, creating a perpetual fight or flight response. Even though you don't feel that they're affecting you in adulthood, what happens is if they're not resolved, they're stored in your nervous system. And every time you're stressed, these old traumas get retriggered, so your response to stress in adult life is magnified based on the amount of adverse childhood experiences you've been through in your past, keeping your adrenal glands in a constant state of alertness, fear, fight or flight, and defense. So you're more prone to adrenal burnout if you don't resolve these traumas.

Kirkland Newman:

So what you're saying is that having childhood trauma and adverse childhood circumstances or events actually predisposes us to be less resilient to current stressors, modern stressors, essentially, in our life now. We'll be less able to deal with them because the terrain upon which they come is already weakened by these traumas from childhood.

Dr. Ameet Aggarwal:

Absolutely. Weakened and also primed for hyper arousing.

Kirkland Newman:

Yeah, because it triggers something.

Dr. Ameet Aggarwal:

It triggers the pain, the abandonment, the low self-esteem, the sense of being undervalued, the sense of being threatened by that big bully or that horrible teacher, all those things come up even though we don't picture that those events are giving us the strong emotions we're feeling as adults.

Kirkland Newman:

Understood, it's really this action of the traumatic experiences with the current stress levels. And then in conjunction, would you see the biochemical aspects? So for instance, we know that stress, long-term chronic stress causes inflammation, long-term chronic inflammation. And inflammation, in turn, is a stressor for our biochemistry, so it's like this vicious cycle. So in terms of interventions, you would always start... I know you have to do both... but would you say that the biochemistry is downstream from the psychospiritual events? Because you have mentioned toxins and food allergens, et cetera, that can also be stressors for our nervous system, so it could start with the biochemistry or it could start with the psycho-spiritual trauma. But do you have to figure out, when you treat patients, which comes first, or does it not really matter?

Dr. Ameet Aggarwal:

It's good to be aware of what's affecting the patient's mood. And I use both at the same time, so I will support them in the first visit with eating the right foods, the proper supplements for their constitution, and at this time in the visit, I will do a bit of emotional release techniques. Once I know that we're doing everything to stabilise the biochemistry, we can go straight into emotional healing sessions as well in the next session, combined with homeopathy, of course, to give them that added advantage of healing much faster and resolving other traumas that we're not addressing in the psychotherapy sessions, and just going deeper and giving them tools to work with during the week while they're not seeing me in a visit.

Kirkland Newman:

Understood. And in your experience, what shifts the needle the most in terms of helping people with this unresolved trauma?

Dr. Ameet Aggarwal:

I combine EMDR, Gestalt, psychotherapy, family constellations, and homeopathy every time, so it's hard to say what moves the needle most. If somebody's in a very highly stressed state and cannot really process general psychotherapy and they just need a simple process, I use EMDR, which is eye movement desensitisation and reprocessing, and that's where I get them to feel the anxiety and the memory of it and the sensations and the negative beliefs. When they're connected to all of those pieces of information related to the trauma, I'll get them either to tap left and right on their collar bones or follow my fingers left, right, left, right. That's known as bilateral stimulation. That bilateral stimulation helps the frontal cortex of the brain process, in a healthier way, all the negative emotions and traumatic memories that are stored in what we call the primitive or limbic brain that is triggering the strong overwhelm or exhausting emotions.



Kirkland Newman:

Yeah. Understood.

Dr. Ameet Aggarwal:

Sometimes though, it's not trauma that's affecting a person, but it's a family entanglement, and that's where I use family constellation therapy. For example, one of my client, she was born from a mum who had a miscarriage before her. My client thought she was the first born in the family or the first child in the family. And when we acknowledged the miscarried child coming before her, and when my client felt her true position in the family system being the second child, she felt a huge sense of relief. Finally, she got her true position in her life, and all that sense of overwhelm over responsibility, all that diminished because she knew her path now. That's one small example. We carry grief, trauma that belongs to our parents, our ancestors, and family constellations is a wonderful therapy to really disentangle and free ourselves from these ancestral traumas and imbalances in our family system. So I find that more effective than trauma release or Gestalt because it's targeting the root cause as well.

Kirkland Newman:

Yeah, which makes total sense. And in terms of treating these traumas in conjunction with the biochemical side of things, which I think is very powerful, one of the things that you talk about a lot in your book is the different nutrients and how they impact our mental health. So you mentioned, in terms of vitamins, the B vitamins, the A vitamins, the D vitamins, and in terms of minerals, copper, zinc, magnesium, all these are really essential to our mental health. And people who've had trauma and who have been stressed for a time, presumably, don't often absorb these nutrients as well as they should because their gut is not functioning as well. So how do you combine the psychotherapeutic approach with making sure that your patients get the right nutrients, and which are the key nutrients that you would recommend for lay people thinking, "Okay, I want to optimise my mental health," what are top five that you would say?

Dr. Ameet Aggarwal:

Right. So it always depends on their individual state. A lot of people who've been through chronic stress are quite burnt out with adrenal fatigue, so we need more of the adaptogens. So I'll do adrenal-nourishing herbs, vitamins C and zinc, and the B vitamins are very nourishing to the adrenal glands as well. Some people have insomnia, they have a hard time sleeping because their cortisol levels are too high. That's where I might use something like phosphatidylserine to manage cortisol levels while I'm treating the root cause of healing the gut, reducing inflammation, and stabilising the adrenal glands so they're not overproducing cortisol.

Kirkland Newman:

Understood.

Dr. Ameet Aggarwal:

Yeah. And how you do that with the adrenal glands is, one, you give certain herbs; rhodiola helps regulate cortisol production. Trauma release is super important because once you're taking your adrenal glands out of the fight or flight, they won't produce as much cortisol. Homeopathy, again, releases trauma and balances your body at a very deep level, so you're likely to improve cortisol levels that way as

well. And people who I find that their liver is a huge cause of their anxiety and foginess and feeling fatigued in the morning, then I'll do more antioxidants and liver-healing herbs. So it's super important to understand the whole picture of a client rather than focus only on, "Oh, this person has anxiety." Do they have PMS symptoms, do they have gas and bloating, do they have skin issues, do they have falling hair? All these other signs give me an idea how everything is combined in their body that's causing the anxiety, what are the root causes, what organs need support for them to feel completely resilient.

Kirkland Newman:

I think that's the challenge. I mean, it's the art of what you do, but it's also the challenge of what you do because we're all so complex, and I think the problem with modern medicine is that we think there's a pill, there's a pill for this or a pill for that. But it's such a systems medicine, so you have to look at all the different systems, and then make sure that you identify where the weakness in each system is and then fix that. And I think it takes a real art and... I mean, I run this website to try and help people do this for themselves. But in some ways, I think it's very difficult to do this for yourself, and I think it is important to work with a practitioner who can guide you.

Dr. Ameet Aggarwal:

Absolutely. I have an online course and some free videos people can watch as well to understand the basics, of course, of healing the gut, the liver, the adrenal glands. And there's some wonderful emotional healing exercises in there and in-depth information on homeopathy. But at the same time, it's good to use that information in conjunction with a qualified naturopath/psychotherapist, somebody who can combine both mind and body medicine.

Kirkland Newman:

Yeah. And that's quite rare. I mean, I think a lot of functional medicine doctors are not well-versed in the psychotherapeutic approaches or in the trauma release, and I think that's a challenge, being able to cover both bases. And yes, it's very important, I think, in terms of sustainable healing, I will put all the information in the show notes, but can you just tell us where we can find your online course?

Dr. Ameet Aggarwal:

It's on [drameet.com](http://drameet.com). That's D-R-A-M, M for mother, E-E-T, T for tango,.com. You can start with some free videos that walk you through the basics. There's a nice emotional healing exercise in there to resolve emotional blocks. And then the online course, of course, has a lot of juicy information, so you can really jump ahead with your healing.

Kirkland Newman:

Yeah. And people can also see you in person, I mean that they can do remote consults with people?

Dr. Ameet Aggarwal:

Yep. So I'm always doing online sessions from different parts of the world. So just the instructions are there on the website. You'll just send me a message with your timing, then will arrange your time. And you're always welcome to come to Kenya, of course, for a retreat. Sometimes, I'm teaching in different countries, so you'll probably get notification. Or just give me a heads up and I'll let you know when I'm coming to your country. So all is possible for sure.

Kirkland Newman:

Excellent. And another thing that I've heard you mention a lot is about how our thoughts impact our bodies as well, and I like that because trauma is stored at a very cellular level, and it doesn't necessarily impact our thoughts. We might not be aware of our trauma, but our thoughts is something slightly different, but they also have an impact on our physiology. Can you talk us through that a bit?

Dr. Ameet Aggarwal:

Yeah, with pleasure, Kiki. This is one of my favorite topics because our thoughts and beliefs make us decide certain things about ourselves, about our lives. So whether it's the foods we eat or the people we hang out with, or the time we go to sleep, the amount of self-care we give ourselves, and also the narrative that we're continuously occupied with in our minds, all those things will contribute to adrenal stress or adrenal relief. They'll help you choose the right lifestyle, go on the right type of holiday versus just going and getting drunk in a bar, hungover, and then regretting it for two weeks after. Negative thoughts can create this perpetual stress response, which drives your adrenal glands. So you get a cortisol imbalance, and the cortisol imbalance actually reduces the active form of thyroid hormone in your body, T3. When that's reduced, all the cells in your intestinal lining, they don't work as well because T3 is important for these cells to stick together. So with negative thoughts and chronic stress, the lining in your intestines gets weaker, so you get more toxins flowing into your bloodstream, so more leaky gut and, therefore, more inflammation. And that's why when people are stressed and not in a good mood, one, their mood, anxiety, and depression gets worse, of course, number two, their physical symptoms get worse. Eczema, arthritis, asthma, some of these will get triggered when somebody's more stressed because of the cortisol play on their system coming from negative thinking and the adrenal response.

Kirkland Newman:

So in some ways, what I hear from you is that, really, the most important thing in terms of our mental health is any stress. So the stored stress from trauma in childhood, the stress that we generate from our thoughts, and the stress that we're exposed to from poor lifestyle habits or toxicity in our environment, would you say that's fair that, essentially, healing boils down in some ways to managing the manifestations of that stress and trying to dampen down that stress response, whether it's physiological or psychological.

Dr. Ameet Aggarwal:

Absolutely. You've hit the nail on the head. It is reducing the tendency towards stress. But it's not only just by long, deep breathing, calm yourself down, et cetera, it also involves removing the factors that make you more stressed automatically, which comes back to healing adverse childhood experiences and, of course, healing the gut and the liver to minimise toxic inflammation in your body.

Kirkland Newman:

And another fascinating thing I read in your book was about lactic acid. And I wasn't aware of this, but apparently, when you eat a lot of sugar and highly refined carbohydrates, they create lactic acid, which then impacts your liver. Can you talk us through this process because I found that fascinating?

Dr. Ameet Aggarwal:

Yeah, for sure. So lactic acid is a byproduct of metabolism. When you're burning sugars and other fuels in your body made by your muscles and different organs, your liver converts lactic acid back to glucose. But with liver stagnation, this conversion doesn't happen as well, so you get a buildup of lactic acid in your blood. And studies have shown that elevated levels of lactic acid in your body actually make you more prone to anxiety.

Kirkland Newman:

Fascinating. Yeah. So if you have a tendency to anxiety, you should keep off the sugar, essentially, as much as possible.

Dr. Ameet Aggarwal:

Yeah, and excessive alcohol as well.

Kirkland Newman:

And excess alcohol, which is ironic because a lot of people drink because they're low in GABA. And so they're drawn to GABA and yet, ironically, drinking is going to essentially increase their anxiety levels. And so they drink to calm themselves and, yet, they make it worse. So back to these supplements because you mentioned a lot about omega-3 fish oils, as well as anti-inflammatories, the B vitamins, and the importance of those for methylation and for the brain and for our moods, D, you've talked about. Are there any others that you would say are absolutely key and that we might not be thinking of?

Dr. Ameet Aggarwal:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Kirkland Newman:

Chromium, you mentioned chromium.

Dr. Ameet Aggarwal:

Chromium helps with blood sugar regulation. Sulforaphane, so the cruciferous vegetables help with liver detox. But in terms of supplements, the other supplement I use sometimes, depending, is glutamine. Glutamine helps prepare the gut lining very well. I avoid using in people with bipolar and schizophrenia because it can create more glutamine to the brain, irritate the nerve endings, and create worsening of symptoms. Some people see avoiding glutamine in cancer because it can feed the cancer cells as well, but there's mixed studies on that.

Dr. Ameet Aggarwal:

Then sometimes, I will use, in desperate cases, the amino acids or something like 5-HTP for somebody who has insomnia or depression, if it's taking too long to heal the root cause. Or I might give them GABA as a supplement to manage their anxiety while we're stabilising the adrenal system and releasing trauma. And sometimes, I'll use, like I said, phosphatidylserine. Phenylalanine, I use sometimes when somebody's in a lot of emotional pain, going through a breakup or just not feeling really well. That's another neurotransmitter I use just to improve endorphin levels in a person. But I don't use those so much because I'm always really focusing on treating the root cause, so somebody really needs less supplements over time, and they just stick with the basics.

Kirkland Newman:

I think that's a wonderful approach. And I really love that about naturopathy, is that it's very much geared towards healing the underlying organs and the factors so that you can create your own neurotransmitters, essentially. And in terms of doing that, the other things you talk about a lot in your book are, obviously, sleep, exercise routine. Can you tell us a little bit about the relative importance of those in your healing protocols?

Dr. Ameet Aggarwal:

Yeah. So our adrenal glands work on a circadian rhythm. Basically, our body has a clock, internal clock. And when you don't sleep at the same time or at regular times or sleep early enough, you mess up that clock, so you stress your adrenal glands out. And also, your liver detoxifies at a certain time. According to Chinese medicine, between, I think, 1:00 AM to 3:00 AM is your liver-gallbladder time. And if you are not resting well at that time, you interfere with your processes in the liver, your liver detox processes, so you might wake up just feeling foggy or unhealthy.

Dr. Ameet Aggarwal:

So going to sleep at the time, eating at the same time, ideally having your meals at the same time, gives your body that predictability so that its circadian rhythm matches what you're putting into it because your circadian rhythm is expecting a routine. Unfortunately, people are staying up late, or there's a lot of lights in the streets coming into your bedroom window at night, so your body doesn't feel like it's nighttime very often. So what I do is I put really dark, black outline on my curtains all the time. I make sure that I get a much deeper sleep, and exercising at regular intervals and taking a break from chronic work. So apparently, our adrenal glands can function well for about 20 minutes at a time, then they should stop for a bit and rest. But what happens is we don't stop, we're constantly on the go. So we break the rhythm of our adrenal glands, and then it's harder for them to recover. Even while we're nourishing them with adrenal herbs, the energy of the adrenal glands is in a frenzy, so it's using up all those herbs that you're trying to put into it. So you're just running on fumes and managing things, but you really need to reset yourself. That's where homeopathy and psychotherapy come into play because you release the programming that you've created in your nervous system. Things like acupuncture and Bowen therapy also help reset the nervous system to some degree.

Kirkland Newman:

It's fascinating because it makes me think. I didn't know that, about the 20-minute adrenal rule. It makes me think of the Pomodoro technique. When you're working, there's this thing called the Pomodoro technique, which is you're most productive when you work in 25-minute increments. So you have to set a timer for 25 minutes, and then that's when you really get your work done. And then you take a break, even if it's just a five minute break. But it's interesting that the adrenal timing is 20 minutes, so that might make sense, even to get better work done.

Dr. Ameet Aggarwal:

I bet it's related to that, I bet the Pomodoro is related to the adrenal cycle.

Kirkland Newman:

Because essentially, as you say in your book, when your adrenals are burnt out and stretched, it's much harder to motivate to do the work, and you procrastinate more and you're less effective and less productive.

Dr. Ameet Aggarwal:

Mm-hmm (affirmative), because your dopamine levels are low when you have adrenal burnout, and dopamine is that neurotransmitter needed for motivation for that sense of oomph. And so a lot of people will just not feel like doing anything or they'll procrastinate a lot, because of adrenal exhaustion leading to low dopamine levels.

Kirkland Newman:

I wonder if there's a link then between ADHD? The signature of ADHD is low dopamine and adrenal issues. I wonder, if you have adrenal issues, can it lead to ADHD-type symptoms?

Dr. Ameet Aggarwal:

Yep. So I treat a lot of ADHD using a combination, of course, of emotional release, reducing inflammation, and supporting the adrenal glands.

Kirkland Newman:

And you find?

Dr. Ameet Aggarwal:

Yeah, people have more resilience.

Kirkland Newman:

Interesting. That's fascinating. I've always been curious about the link between dopamine and the adrenals because essentially, for instance, my son who's a big gamer, I mean, he games hours and hours a day, and that releases so much dopamine, and then that creates a tolerance. And then obviously, you hope that it doesn't get so bad that his dopamine receptors actually get burnt out and then it taxes his adrenals. But what comes first? Is it the constant presence of dopamine and release of dopamine that taxes the adrenals, or is it the adrenal weakness that drives people to the behaviours that make them want to seek dopamine hits? What comes first?

Dr. Ameet Aggarwal:

Gosh, it's the chicken and the egg question. It's honestly hard to say, it depends what's happened in the person's life that led them to that because some people with low dopamine levels, they're so burnt out, they won't even crave that stimulus, they're just done. They won't crave it, but they'll notice that they do feel better if they get a dopamine hit. Other people who are stimulated by certain patterns, whether it's gaming, whether it's cocaine, whether it's bungee jumping, they will need that stimulus in order to reach those higher levels of experience of excitement, so it depends on the scenario. If you're used to doing something that gives you that dopamine rush all the time, then you probably need the same stimulus to get the same sensation of satisfaction. And because you've burnt yourself out a bit, your body's not producing those chemicals enough, so you need that extra hit.

Kirkland Newman:

And what is the link between cortisol and dopamine? So when your adrenals are burnt out and you have constant firing of cortisol, how does that impact dopamine?

Dr. Ameet Aggarwal:

What I've seen in clinical practices, basically an imbalance of cortisol suppresses dopamine levels. It just drops, along with serotonin and GABA and melatonin. It just goes all out of balance, basically.

Kirkland Newman:

And is that with chronic cortisol...

Dr. Ameet Aggarwal:

Chronic cortisol imbalance.

Kirkland Newman:

Yeah.

Dr. Ameet Aggarwal:

Now, that I've seen with an excessive cortisol. Even with low cortisol, I've seen dopamine go off, but I don't know if it's the direct effect of cortisol itself or the person's just so depleted that they're not even making dopamine as well.

Kirkland Newman:

Understood. And then a final thing, and I don't want to keep you too long, Dr. Ameet, you've been amazing, but you mentioned the Bach flower remedies. And again, I mean, there are a lot of skeptical people out there who think, "Oh, this is woo-woo medicine," but there's a whole chapter in your book on the Bach flower remedies and how each one can help with a different ailment. And tell us a little bit about that again. Has it worked for you?

Dr. Ameet Aggarwal:

In multiple occasions, yeah. So Bach flower remedies are basically... Dr. Edward Bach actually cured himself from cancer or prolonged his life from cancer by using Bach flower remedies. But he noticed that certain flowers, when you basically grab their essence by having them soaked in water, in sunlight for a while, certain flowers have this energetic effect on a person's emotions. And he found out 33 flowers specific to specific kinds of emotions. Be it too much guilt, too much envy, too much anger, impatience, lack of confidence, fear of unknown things or fear of specific things, being hard on yourself, being an overachiever, each kind of emotion had a specific flower to heal it.

Dr. Ameet Aggarwal:

And so I use Bach flower remedies with some of my clients, not all but some of them, while trying to find a better homeopathic remedy for them. Or while working on treating the underlying cause, I'll also give Bach flower remedies to just ease the emotions that a person's going through, as well as to heal trauma. So something like Rescue Remedy works wonderfully on a person who's been through a lot of stress, it

helps the body de-stress. It has something called Star of Bethlehem in there as well as a couple of other remedies. I can't remember their names, these specific ones in the Rescue Remedy, but Star of Bethlehem is often used to release trauma from the past.

Kirkland Newman:

Interesting. And you found it very effective?

Dr. Ameet Aggarwal:

Absolutely. I find homeopathy and treating the root cause, everything I do together, more effective than just using Bach flowers. I think Bach flowers might take a bit more long-term approach, so I don't find it as effective as a good constitutional homeopathic remedy. But at the same time, I won't hesitate in using them because I've seen good effects with them as well.

Kirkland Newman:

And I guess that brings me to my final question. I mean, as a practitioner, how do you ascertain which of your remedies is the most effective, or does it matter? I mean, but as a practitioner who's constantly trying to improve the way you treat patients, are you constantly trying to think, "Okay, this is the most effective approach, or this is? How do you know what is actually working for a patient because you're trying so many things at the same time?

Dr. Ameet Aggarwal:

So good question, Kiki. So what I'll do is I'll always heal the roots of the person first, so I'm not over supplementing them. I'll start with the basic protocol of healing the gut, the liver, and the adrenal glands with the basic supplements. Once those are all stable, then I'll see what are the leftover symptoms. "Anxiety's still there. Okay. Now, let's see what homeopathic remedy we might need." And maybe I'll give somebody a homeopathic remedy for three weeks, get them to try it. And then after three weeks, if there's not enough change, then I'll change the remedy around. So I'm trying to do one or two remedies maximum at a time, giving enough space between remedies too, so that myself, as well as the client, can distinguish which remedy does what.

Dr. Ameet Aggarwal:

As we heal the trauma, as the adrenal glands heal, then I'll tend to take away certain supplements and certain remedies. So over time, we're coming to less and less remedies the person needs because taking supplements your whole life is overwhelming. I mean, most of us do take it. And I also take supplements every day, despite being healthy. But it's just the levels of stress nowadays that we're under, the constant onslaught of toxins, our liver needs constant detoxification. The work stress burns out our adrenal glands, we need our B vitamins. The inflammatory damage, we need our omegas, we need our vitamin A's, vitamin C's, antioxidants to just keep healthy.

Kirkland Newman:

Yeah, I totally agree. I mean, in our current environment, which is incredibly stressful, both in terms of toxins and also overstimulation and stressors, we do need to support the terrain and increase our resilience by supporting it with these supplements. One thing we haven't spoken about that much is



food and nutrition. I mean, you have mentioned gluten dairy, sugar, getting rid of those, but are there any nutritional tips that you would just give our listeners before we close?

Dr. Ameet Aggarwal:

So I would say snack on more proteins than carbs. So nuts and seeds, if you're not allergic to them, that creates a more stable release of nutrients in your body. Because if you had too many carbs and sugars, then you get this sugar spike and an insulin spike and a sugar drop, and that stresses out your adrenal glands, leading to more adrenal burnout. Lots of greens, making sure you have enough greens so you have enough fiber in your body to pull out all the toxins that are released in your bile. That fiber comes out with the toxins in your poop. The greens also provide lots of good enzymes for digestion and nutrition. Minimising carbs and having more greens and protein. So yes, have enough protein for sure, but making sure you have more greens.

Kirkland Newman:

And you talk a lot about bitter greens as well, which I find fascinating.

Dr. Ameet Aggarwal:

See bitter greens are wonderful for your liver. And the liver is my favorite organ because it's the seat of your health, in Chinese medicine [crosstalk 00:53:01] in general.

Kirkland Newman:

In general. And what are bitter greens? Can you give us some examples?

Dr. Ameet Aggarwal:

Yeah. Well, I mentioned them before. There was arugula, rocket, there's something called bitter melon. Gosh, there's so many. I even use kale sometimes and...

Kirkland Newman:

Dandelion?

Dr. Ameet Aggarwal:

Dandelion. Dandelion root is good for the liver, dandelion leaf is more for the kidneys. Then milk thistle... milk thistle is very good for the liver. Most people buy that in tincture form or tablet form. I sometimes drink neem tea, which is very bitter, we get this in Kenya. But I don't do it for long term because it's quite harsh on the system. But neem tea in Kiswahili, in our language, is called mwarubaini. Mwarubaini basically means it treats 40 diseases, so it's like the herb for everything. And just anything else that can stimulate bile flow. Can't think of anything bitter now, but I also have, like I mentioned, the cruciferous vegetables. The Brussels sprouts, the broccoli, the cabbage, those also help with healing your liver with Phase II liver detox, especially with sulfation. And yeah, I can't think of anything else at the moment.

Kirkland Newman:

## The MindHealth360 Show - Dr. Ameet Aggarwal

Well, that's already brilliant, Dr. Ameet. You've been amazing, I mean, that's been so much information. And I have to say any patient of yours is very lucky to have you. As I say, there are very few people who can combine all the energy medicine and the biochemistry and the psychotherapy. And it's quite a rare combination of talent, so your patients are very lucky.

Dr. Ameet Aggarwal:

Thank you. I'm hoping more people will learn how to combine these different therapies just to become better practitioners or better able to care for themselves.

Kirkland Newman:

Agreed. And I guess in some ways, your whole thing of what makes the difference, I guess, it's such an individual process, as you keep saying. I mean, each patient is so different, and then you basically try and tweak what works for them. And then you don't necessarily know what is exactly working, but you can tweak their remedies so that you get each patient better on an individual level.

Dr. Ameet Aggarwal:

Yeah. Just to get a clear picture of what they're suffering with after healing the foundations of health, generally, I find works really well for most people.

Kirkland Newman:

Yeah. Well, that's brilliant, Dr. Ameet Aggarwal. Thank you so much for your time, we really appreciate it. And we'll put all your information in the show notes, but I'm sure that people will be really interested in reading your book and doing your course and maybe even working with you in person. And certainly, you've given us a lot to help ourselves with in this interview, so thank you.

Dr. Ameet Aggarwal:

Thank you as well, Kiki. And anyone listening, just remember to really love yourself and be patient with yourself. Mental illness is not a problem, it's not a fault, it's more a sign of what needs to be healed, so take your time and really be patient with yourself.

Kirkland Newman:

I love that. I mean, I think that's beautiful. It's not a fault, but it's an indication of something that needs to be healed. There's a beautiful expression that says, "Follow your tears," and I think it's a Navajo expression, "Follow your tears because they'll take you to the right place."

Dr. Ameet Aggarwal:

Absolutely.

Kirkland Newman:

So thank you so much, Dr. Ameet.

Dr. Ameet Aggarwal:

Lots of love, everyone. Thank You.

## The MindHealth360 Show - Dr. Ameet Aggarwal

Kirkland Newman:

Thank you so much for listening to the MindHealth360 Show. I hope that we've helped you realise that mental health symptoms have root causes that can and need to be addressed in order to sustainably heal and have given you some ideas about steps you, your loved ones, or clients may take to start their healing journey. Please share this interview with anyone you think may find it helpful, and don't forget to subscribe to keep up to date with our latest interviews on integrative mental health. If you want further information, please go to [www.mindhealth360.com](http://www.mindhealth360.com) or find us on social media. This information is for educational purposes only and is not intended to diagnose or treat any disease or to replace medical advice. Please always consult your healthcare practitioner before discontinuing any medication or implementing any changes in your diet, lifestyle, or supplement program.