

The Healing Power of Nature

Now, to our third tenet and that is the healing power of nature. So one of the differences between what we do and what allopathic medicine does, is that we recognize and trust that the body is able to heal itself on many different levels when given the right conditions. And we've seen this in very small ways. If you get a cut on your finger, you might get the cut early in the morning while you're at work. And you think oh, well, I'll just put a band aid on that when I get home. It's not bad. And then two or three days later, you realize that you forgot to even put ointment on it or a band aid or anything like that, and it's healed. So, the body's immune system, the body's innate ability to heal itself, can be shown in in very small ways such as this.

Homeostasis

The body is always seeking to keep you alive, that is its job...that is homeostasis. And so many times the body has to make a decision and sometimes that decision is just the lesser of two evils. But regardless, the body is trying to create workarounds, so that the higher priority functions of the body, such as the heart and the brain have the highest precedence as they have the highest function needs. And therefore, for example, when we used the low stomach acid example in our last assignment, that stomach acid is not a high priority to the body. Because it knows that it has other workarounds, other capabilities. If you don't digest proteins or you don't eat enough protein, the body knows that it can pull the nutrients it needs from other places. Now that's not going to be to your benefit, that will be very catabolic, and the body will break down muscle in order to do it, but the body knows that it can be done. So, you being in this fight or flight mode, and having very chronically low stomach acid, this is not a priority to the body, it can work around it. As a matter of fact, this is one of the offsets of the fight or flight mode, the body knows that you don't need to digest anything when you're getting ready to run away or getting ready to fight a tiger. And so therefore it does reduce digestive capability, it does reduce the thyroid output and bile production, you don't need these things right then. But in a modern-day world, when we're staying under this constant 24-hour stress, the body continues to respond to that stress and continues to keep everything low. We do need these actions to happen in the body to be in a state of wellness because we're not running away from a tiger, we're trying to run to our healing environment. And without these capabilities, even though the body is reacting in a natural response to this stressor, it is an unnatural response on our part to be in this 24/7 stress mode. Our body is trying to adapt to this stress, so we don't die.

Let's talk about glucose dysregulation. A high glucose level is not a priority in the body. Here is another perspective example that we will delve into throughout the program, but I want to start with this very important point. When a client comes to us and they have elevated glucose levels, even in diabetic range, we know it is a clue on the path to the root cause investigation. Most coaches and practitioners that I have met with are aware of the concern AND, want to use supplementation to bring this glucose level down. How does the body feel about that? There are many hormones to keep blood sugar up but only one that can really bring it down...what does that tell you about how the body works? Its priority is to keep you alive and it has mechanisms in place to prevent your blood sugar from going too low yet we can't say the same about sugar going too high because even though high glucose is an imbalance, it is not threatening to the body as life or death situation, even though the body must still protect itself. It can stay high quite a long time without any major damage BUT, we might ask what adaptations has the

body made to protect itself from this high glucose? It knows it needs to set up some limits. Insulin resistance is one way. Increased urination to relieve serum glucose is another. We have viewed these as symptoms.... now view them as the body telling you what it needs. It does not help the body to slow urination or to work on insulin resistance...the body has already put these safeguards into place. Our job is now to find out what is behind the elevated glucose and address that reason and NOT utilize methods WE feel are beneficial that in effect, prevent the body from trying to protect itself. We could say that trying to fix the imbalance without knowing the "why" is not trusting the body to do its job.

The body responds according to its needs at any given moment and gives us clues to what and why it chooses an adaptation. Before we look at what the body is trying to accomplish and the clues that it provides, let's investigate whether or not we should trust the body to heal.

Trusting the Body...or Not?

It's one thing to show small examples of the body healing and agree that these actions take place, just like the example of the cut on the finger. It becomes confusing, though, when we don't see bigger issues heal on their own and dysfunction continues to progress in all areas of a person's health. This is the conundrum: we know a little thing like a paper cut can heal on its own but we don't quite believe a big dysfunction can heal on its own. This makes it very hard to trust the body to heal without an intervention from us or from some supplements. Why do we not trust the body to heal on its own? Very simply...all around us, we see people whose dysfunction continues to spiral out of control, even in situations where they may APPEAR to be working on their health. Shouldn't that lead you to question what exactly they might be doing? Might that not lead you to believe that the steps they are utilizing are not working because these steps are not actually giving the body the support it requires, but instead they are giving it the support they think (or YOU think) is the right choice?

People don't get better because they take some supplements but instead, they do the investigative work to learn what their bodies need to build health and sometimes it is through trial and error or by accident, but it doesn't have to be that mysterious. It is that lack of knowing that creates fear in the practitioner or coach. If you don't know what the body is telling you it needs then you are guessing and that feels pretty scary.

Functional Medicine also teaches us that health is vitality, it is not just an absence of dysfunction. So we're not looking to live a mediocre life, we're seeking vitality, and an energetic dynamic that the body was designed to have. Protocols and supplements may lead you to believe that they should instigate this healing process yet when we still don't see the vitality we expect should return, that, too, may lead us to think the body can't heal on its own. Dysfunctions grow out of not taking care of the basic needs of the body.

From the time we are born, our bodies make homeostatic choices based on our diet, lifestyle and environmental choices. If we do not have these basic steps to health in place, the body CANNOT heal. It cannot heal without sleep that includes proper sleep cycles. It cannot heal without hydration and salt. It cannot heal without nutrients and minerals at a sustainable level. Just because someone takes a supplement to sleep better, does that mean they are going through their sleep cycles appropriately? Just because someone eats real, whole foods, does that mean they have sufficient nutrients in their

body? Just because someone drinks 8 glasses of water per day, does that mean they are hydrated? No, it doesn't. Dehydration patterns may show up on a blood chemistry for the person who appears to drink plenty of water, telling us a different story, a story we must listen to in order to teach them how to heal. We must learn the clues of what the body is telling us it needs in order to provide actual support, not just the support WE think is necessary OR, ignore the support that we think already exists. When working with clients, we might be saying to ourselves that they are already covering some of these basic areas without defining if that coverage is providing support or is a true statement.

This is why clients need instruction to find their healing environment. Do you see why it would be confusing to a client who drinks plenty of water to think they are already doing the right thing, taking the right health steps and believing that they are fully hydrated? They don't have a simple blood test to tell them if this is true. They also may not understand how critical it is to have this piece in place since they already believe it is. Is this why it is confusing to you as a practitioner or coach as well?

Instead of just looking for the right supplement based on a symptom, you are learning how to ask "why" first and you are building muscles in changing perspective using and learning small bites of information at a time. We say the body can heal itself, but we need the perspective of why we think it "can't" heal itself in order to understand how it can and to be able to believe that. I often say that I couldn't appreciate the great days without honoring the bad days. Without believing fully that the body can heal, we won't trust the body to give us clues and then we'll continue to intervene in a way that reduces that body's ability to heal or that ignores its needs.

This is also why protocols as we know them will never fully work to address the individual.

Learning to Trust What the Body is Telling Us

Since we know about the healing power of nature, and we know the healing capability of the body, the question then becomes, can we really trust the body to heal? Functional medicine recognizes that each person is an individual, and they have individual dysfunctions and individual needs to restore function. So it allows us to learn, from the aspect of science, how the body is able to heal itself, and in turn, we're able to support those very same healing mechanisms instead of trying to get rid of the disease or dysfunction by way of supplementation. Do you hear what I said there? So instead of using supplements in place of medication to get rid of disease, we need to learn to understand the very healing mechanisms that the body is using to do its own healing. That's it.

Biologically and physiologically, our function is pretty consistent across the board as humans. Now these are the sciences as we know them and, and they're taught as concrete, provable knowledge. So we can rely on what we learn about physiology and anatomy and biochemistry. As we have seen ourselves, the body has the ability to heal itself and we know this because we can get a cold, feel horrible with the symptoms and then regain our health. We know that people have been on their deathbed, and they've come out of that situation to regain their health. We've seen diabetics that have been able to completely reverse their condition and get off their medications. So we have to recognize that using supplementation instead of medications to get rid of symptoms is really still using the conventional model of medicine, or in other words, a supplement for a symptom.

Now, I want to talk about the supplementation for just a moment because there are many functional medicine practitioners and coaches that go into working with a new client, seeing the dysfunction, but at the same time, they're also concentrating on what supplements they're going to use to "heal" the client. They're looking to create the ultimate protocol. And I would question, what is this protocol actually doing? You must be able to answer that question. If you have a client that you're trying to support using supplements, you must also be able to answer the question of what does the supplement do for them? Is it supporting the body to heal or is it focused on removing symptoms?

Example: Supporting Glucose Dysregulation

So what does that mean, to support glucose dysregulation? In most cases, we are only looking at what needs to happen instead of why it is happening. For example, when glucose is high we believe that it is right to bring the glucose down. Another example is cholesterol, that when it's high we want to bring it down. There is a reason these levels in the body go too high or too low. When we support glucose dysfunction, what we're doing is a job that the body itself could do but is choosing not to. Instead of asking "why" this is happening, we start giving supplements to mimic what the body is already capable of doing. The pancreas could do this so why is it choosing not to? Insulin resistance protects the body from injury but again, why is the sugar so high? If insulin resistance is already present in the body, why are we using supplements to imitate the role of insulin and try and force more sugar into the cell? This is not an insulin problem. This is not even a glucose problem. This is a root cause problem that no one is seeking out.

Remember the stress response example I used earlier and the physiological and expected response of the body that includes low stomach acid, low thyroid hormones and bile production? In this glucose example, what if there is a mitochondrial issue and glucose is being kept high on purpose by the body? Have you thought about that before because it is a possibility and maybe using these supplements are going directly against what the body is trying to do. Most glucose dysregulation supplements are actually mimicking the pancreas in insulin secretion. Well, how is that helping? I want you to really think about this. Because we still may not know the cause of this client's glucose dysregulation, especially if we can see it is not food related. We do not know why the body can't or won't control this, or possibly that this might be a way that the body is protecting itself. So if that's the case, and we give berberine and chromium and vanadium, and we're using all these supplements to bring sugar down, my question is why? What is that doing to support the body, to help the body with what it is actually trying to do to stay alive? So when you stop supporting the body with these, what will happen? I mean, that's a question that has to be asked. Will the sugar stay down now just because you artificially brought the glucose down for a month? Does that mean it's fixed? And you know, the only answer to that is going to come directly from the client, and the client's responses and how the client feels.

Example: The Leaky Gut

What about leaky gut? Specifically, when functional medicine practitioners use a protocol to heal leaky gut. How long does it take? Do you know? Do you know how much of a supplement to use, or how long to stay on this protocol? There is NO blanket protocol for this and the determining factor is always the

client. We know some of the connections between leaky gut and the symptoms of having a leaky gut. So that's one way that we can see how long the client should be on any type of supplement. When some of these symptoms start changing, we might, you know, at that point, start leaning towards the fact that maybe their leaky gut is healing up. But if the client has not changed their diet, they're still eating a standard American diet, and they're not gluten free or dairy free. They haven't done an elimination diet, and now you're working with them with supplements, I would say that their problem is just going to come right back. So we can't fix anything with the supplements, especially if other factors are continuing to irritate the gut.

What Does a Symptom Tell Us?

The big question is, specifically, what can we learn from the symptom and why do you want to get rid of the symptom? Now, this is a fair question. Why do you want to get rid of the symptom? So the symptom may be causing distress but at the very least it's a clue, something that is noticeable enough to the client that they're mentioning it to you, but why get rid of it? So the phrase symptoms are clues, we toss that around a lot. But what I feel is a lot of practitioners only see that symptoms are bad. Okay, so now they're not clues. Now symptoms are bad. So instead of racing to remove the symptom, we have to ask, why is it there, it's telling us something extremely vital. So I want you to be curious, I want you to explore the obvious. Now, maybe not all clues or symptoms need removal. And I'm saying that they are not relying on us to be the ones to give supplementation to remove the symptom. The body knows exactly what it's doing. It is this fabulous, brilliant machine. And it knows exactly what's going on in all parts of it. You have to stop, you have to look at the body and figure out why is it choosing to do what it is. So I want to illustrate this. And I want to use low cortisol to really illustrate this picture. So low cortisol production is a clue or symptom. Now being low, it also creates a lot of different symptoms on its own. Yet, instead of rushing in with adaptogens to raise the cortisol level, might we ask if the body is keeping cortisol low, so that the immune system can fight off an infection? Now think about that. So if that's the case, the body knows exactly what it needs to do, and it's trying to do it. Now why do you want to rush in and try and artificially raise the cortisol up when the body clearly has a plan, and it's a good plan. The symptoms are causing issues for the client yet trying to remove them will cause many more if we don't understand what they are telling us.

What's the benefit of elevating cortisol at that point? There is no benefit. Now, again, that's a conventional medicine approach. If it's broke, fix it. In reality, what we see is the body is functioning with homeostasis in mind and it's using its own adaptive responses to dysfunction to maintain balance and to prevent death. So what can you do for someone who has an elevated immune system and low cortisol production? Well, you can stop getting caught up in raising and lowering numbers on a test result, because that's how you knew that the cortisol was low, from looking at the levels. You looked at a Dutch or other salivary test, you saw the cortisol was low, you looked at a stool test and you saw the immune function was really, really high, you looked at a blood test and you saw that the immune patterns in the white blood cells, were very strong, saying that there may be an infection in the body.

So if that's the case, stop trying to alter these numbers on a test and start looking for the infection, for the inflammation or for whatever is the driver, and then know that when that's found, the body itself will start producing cortisol again. So stop trying to fix everything, understand why the biochemistry of

the body has shifted this way. This is much less about action and much more about listening to the client, asking questions and understanding what all the clues along the way mean for this person.

What the Person Needs for Healing

This is hard work. It may require hours of research into understanding who this person is, and how their body is functioning but that is what we do. Now, many times, I hear or read practitioners say something about odd test results, meaning that there are markers that are suspiciously high or low, or they just don't make sense. Like, why would that one marker be high when the rest are not? The markers are what they are and we rely on patterns. You know, if this is a good blood draw, and there are no glitches at the lab, then this is the true picture of this person's biochemistry. Even more than that, if this is not a healing process, this may be a reflection of the work that the body is doing to circumvent dysfunction. For instance, high LDL on a blood chem. If LDL is elevated above everything else along with total cholesterol, my goal is not to balance LDL but to find the inflammation or infection that is driving it high. Insulin resistance, though, is NOT the body trying to heal but instead, this is the work around it takes to protect its delicate tissues from the destructiveness of high glucose and insulin. This is the body trying to prevent harm.

Every lab marker has a reason. You're not just seeing some lab numbers, you're actually seeing the work being done by the body. I mean, I find that so incredible and fascinating. When we see low WBCs, high neutrophils and low lymphocytes, we know that this is the pattern that the body is expressing based on the work that it's doing to handle a chronic bacterial infection. It's not telling us where the infection is, and while we are not positive of the infection, we do know that's a consistent and strong pattern possibility that we can use to understand what may be happening with our client and link to other patterns that may support our view.

All functions in the body must be maintained and they have their priority order. But regardless, function must be maintained. So as we just discussed, if this is not a reflection of the work that the body is doing, it is a reflection of the work around that the body is trying to do. So I'm asking you, as practitioners, as coaches, to stop rushing in. I want you to step back and really analyze the situation. Relief care should not be your first choice and it's not because I want people to suffer, I do want them to feel better. But I also understand that if I don't know what is actual relief care, what's going to work for them, I'm just going to make things worse, I'm going to add something to the body that it might not be ready to have or the supplement that I'm going to recommend is not going to be the solution. And then what is the solution? Do I have to guess at five different supplements before I get it right? So I want you to slow down and not get caught up in making this relief care your priority. If you have had your consultation with your client, then you have already explained to them what you do and how you work...you've already set the parameters of this and it is to find root cause, something no one else has had to time or inclination to do with them. If you share education on potential relief care with the client and they try it and feel better, that's great but you're not working to find relief care to the point that it takes away your focus on finding that root cause. This is how we honor the concept of the healing power of nature. Not being in that position of HAVING to find relief care will also take a lot of pressure off of you as a practitioner.

Practitioner vs. Client - Who Is Doing the Healing?

Now, we've talked briefly about this, but I want to really hit this again...as practitioners or coaches, we don't actually heal the client. Understanding this point firmly is really critical to the perspective you are learning.

We are educating the client.

They are taking our suggestions, and they're changing their food, maybe adding a supplement or changing their environment, changing their movement.

The changes that they are making are allowing their body to heal but we didn't heal them. I want you to really, really think about this and get your heads around this. I hear a lot of practitioners say Oh, I know, I know. But they really don't know. They really still believe that all the healing power came from them. Working with a client is like a finely tuned machine and that is why it is so very important that you choose clients that are ready to do the work.

You have the education and know how to make connections on a general level. The right client becomes empowered to do the work of learning and healing their body. You cannot have one without the other. The partnership between you and the client is synergistic. The client can't learn to improve their health without you but their health won't improve, despite all your suggestions and education, if they don't learn about the needs of their body. Without being an investigator and helping them discover those needs, you cannot make correct connections and suggestions if YOU don't understand those same needs, therefore you can't do your work without them.

Stop trying to fix the body. Until you understand that it is the body doing all this work and that it's the body in control, you're going to have a really hard time understanding how to support it. You're going to be guessing about your own next steps, instead of looking at the body and getting clues and understanding what next steps are going to be right for that unique individual. There is a lot of practice ahead for you here in the Mentorship to make this happen.

Protocols Anyone?

Now, I've mentioned protocols and I personally don't like the word protocol. The reason I don't like it is just because I've seen how it's been used all these years. A protocol, as I have seen it used in FM, is a set of very specific instructions for supplements to heal a certain area in the body. So if we want to improve thyroid function, we might pick five supplements. If we want to heal the gut, we might pick seven supplements or we might get into a forum and have protocol exchanges and see what other people are doing to heal the gut with all these supplements, and supplements and supplements. And this is where I had to cut ties with my beliefs around using a protocol.

A protocol is typically given for a set amount of time or in some cases, not, it could just go on for months and months and there is an expected outcome. Take these five supplements for two months and your gut will be healed. Well, I wish we're that easy. And the only thing this says to me is that this person does not understand that they're working with another individual's body that's providing them clues to figure out what to do. Everything is going to be based on the response of the client. And that's why we start with very limited supplements and those are related to supporting function in the whole body.

Now a lot of times in my practitioner consults, we go over the case of a client and I might recommend five or six supplements in a broad range that would be used over the course of the first couple months. But I'm not taking care of that client and I am trusting that this practitioner knows how to work with a client. They understand that they can use one or all of the supplements and they're going to be using them the way I'm describing to you. The very, most important realization about protocols and clients is to give them a supplement for a week or two and see how they respond. We are gently trying to support this body. The body is pretty tough but instead of us coming in like a bull in a china shop and trying to throw all these supplements at this body and the body is yelling back saying "what are you doing?" we've got to step back and say, Okay, here's a small amount of support. This support such as HCl, should not do anything to the body that it doesn't already understand. There's already HCl in the stomach, there's just not enough of it. So if we raise it up a little bit, we're not adding some foreign supplement to the body, we're just increasing the acid a little bit if that's the problem. And that will support the body gently in all these other areas where good stomach acid is necessary. Now, this is just an example. I'm not saying that every client needs to start off with HCl. You must understand the whole picture to know what is that first basic, gentle support that should be given to this particular client. So who should be guiding the supplements? Well, you might know what supplements to suggest that could offer support, but the person that should guide what they take is your client. They need to guide what supplements they're taking and how much they are taking. Small amounts can be huge to the client so always low and slow, one supplement at a time. If they start three supplements on one day and have an issue, how will they ever know which one it is? Yes, they may want to move more quickly but helping them stay low and slow will prevent most issues that supplements can create. Many times, to replicate how dynamically the body works, we want to mimic that and support needs to be dispensed in very small timeframes or pulsed, like a few days a week, every week or one or two weeks at a time and then stop and then give it back to the body to allow the body time to heal on its own.

The suggestions that you're making as practitioners should be based on your experience. And as a side note, as licensed or unlicensed practitioners in Functional Medicine and working with clients, not patients, we do not prescribe anything, so we don't have to have that word in our language and we don't prescribe supplements because in effect, that's living the medical model right there. You're basically saying I want to be a doctor, and I'm going to prescribe supplements. So put the ego down, just leave it at the door. You are suggesting things that may support function in this body and you need to provide education and research to that client so that they understand what you're suggesting, what you, in your own experience, have seen work in the past, why you think it may work for them and how it will support them in the short term and the long term. You are a teacher; this is how you treat supplements and you don't treat clients.