



Essential Alchemy

The Ancient Art of Healing Naturally

Season 1, Episode 5: The Doctor of the Future is the Patient with Sachin Patel, DC

Jodi: Hi, I'm Jodi Cohen and I'm so excited to be joined by my dear friend, Sachin Patel, who is a father, a functional medicine success coach, speaker, and author, and a healthcare revolutionary. His mission is to bring health in to as many homes as possible.

Sachin founded the Living Proof Institute to be the center of a clinical excellence where patients partner with their practitioner to create a win-win relationship. And I'm super excited to talk about how the parasympathetic state can accelerate the excellence of the win-win relationship. So I'd love it if you'd give your definition of the parasympathetic state and how that can help create this win-win collaboration.

Sachin: Absolutely. Well, first of all, Jodi, thank you for all the work that you do and for this, what I expect to be, amazing interview, the world needs to hear this now, more than ever. And I believe that it's such divine timing that we're having this interview to be able to share this information with the world.

And to go to your original question, the parasympathetic nervous system and the parasympathetic state is a physiological state, but I also believe it's an emotional state, it's an environmental state. It's really anything that we do that puts us in a state of what I would call relaxation, or a state of being in a position to receive, in a state where our body is healing, and repairing, and regenerating, a state where we feel joy and happiness. So there's emotions involved with this state. There's physiology involved with this state. There is spirituality, I believe, involved with this state. So it's really a lot of different things, but it's the state in which our body is happy, joyful, repairing, regenerating, prime for reproduction, prime for rebuilding, and repairing, all the things that our clients are looking for.

Everyone out there who's looking for health and wellness, what they're actually looking for is to be in this state so their body can be in a state of healing, repair, regeneration. And you can never heal, whatever condition you have, unless your body is, and your strategy is focused on getting you, or your family member, people that you love, or your patients, in my case, in to a state that they can heal and repair.

Jodi: That is so well put. Thank you. And I completely agree. And most people don't realize this. They have the white-coat fear where they go to the doctor's office and suddenly they're in high alert. So I love that your talk is really focused on helping the patient partner with the practitioner. Can you talk a little bit more about why the patient is the doctor of the future and how this relates to personal empowerment and taking responsibility for our health?

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Sachin: Yeah, absolutely. So before the Internet, the good ole Internet, and before Google and all these tools that we have at our disposal now, it used to be that only a select group of people knew the information the doctors know. Same thing with plumbing, people didn't know how to fix things themselves, but they can go on YouTube and find a video, or they can find an article. The Internet really decentralized and democratized information.

And so practitioners, in the past, we value the information, the knowledge, and the experience that they have, but part of that is available to us 24/7, 365. And, in fact, the patient can know more about their condition or their diagnosis, once they have it, than anyone could imagine. So I actually encourage practitioners to leverage that and allow the patient to do the research. To vet the research that they're doing. Let them come to you. And they can spend eight hours researching something. And you can spend five minutes making sure that it is what they need.

And you can enhance that relationship, instead of not acknowledging that research that a patient is doing. So that's how I feel we can really create a partnership. But I, also, believe that the patient is responsible for being their own best doctor.

Jodi: Yes!

Sachin: And the reason for that is because, let's think of it this way. Right now, our current system is set up, even if you're seeing a natural healthcare practitioner, you have to be in a state of health that's failing before you even do something about it. And then, you might be 50 and even if you're looking for a natural approach, you're now only learning how to eat, you're now only learning how to breathe, you're now only learning how to think. What if you knew these things from the very beginning because your parents knew these things, because their parents knew these things, and they were passed down from generation to generation?

And you were healthy your entire life or you knew how to create resilience in health your entire life because it was modeled to you when you were very young, not taught to you when you were 50 because you missed that entire opportunity to be on the right path, the path that helps us be more creative, the path that helps us love more, the path that helps us heal more. And everything that we want out of life is on that path. So what if we just started there, instead of going down the wrong path for a long period time?

Jodi: And to get kickstarted on the path of resilience, you mentioned a couple of things. You mentioned food. You mentioned lifestyle. But what's really interesting to me is the state of the nervous system. Like, I see the ability to drop in to the parasympathetic state as really helping people step in to that state of resilience.

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Jodi: And I was wondering if you can talk about the benefits that you perceive of the parasympathetic state for enhancing digestion, immune function, detoxification? Just an easy way to shift in to resilience while they're trying to juggle maybe the harder things like if they're addicted to gluten, changing your diet, that kind of things.

Sachin: Sure, absolutely. So what I believe, and I think that you're probably on the same page with me here, is that where you send flow is where you send function. And where you send function is where you send the ability to heal, and repair, regenerate, but also to carry out the processes that you're depending on that organ doing.

So an example would be, at rest, when you're in a restful parasympathetic state, 50% of your blood flow goes to your liver and kidneys. When you're in a stressed state, only 5% of your blood goes to your liver and kidneys. So if I wanted to increase somebody's detoxification capacity, would I just give them supplements to do that or would I get more blood moving in the direction of those organs so they can carry out their function? Well, if you did both, you would get way better results. But if you just gave them the latest, greatest, best product or protocol, but they're still stressed out all the time, the results are going to be a fraction of what they have the potential to be. So the parasympathetic state is really what helps us accelerate the healing process.

And the same is true for digestion. So when we're under stress, there's an 80% decrease in blood flow to the digestive system because digestion is not going to save you from a lion that's chasing you. So this is a highly intelligent response, but the problem is, is that the signals are misappropriated.

And that signal actually comes from a part of our brain called the limbic brain. And our beliefs, our values, and experiences are what determine whether the limbic or reptilian brain is going to respond, as a stress response or if it's going to respond, and say, "Hey, this isn't a stress response, you know, all systems go. Let's keep healing, repairing, regenerating. We don't need to freak out."

Now, a lot of people don't realize this, but between the age of zero and eight is when they're limbic programming took place. Between the age of zero and five, your brain's hemispheres aren't even connected. So between the age of zero and five, you might see something and you might even do it, or say it, or think it, but not even be able to make a logical sense of it because your brain isn't even communicating with itself the way it would in an adult. This is why children will do things or say things [crosstalk 7:59]--

Jodi: Yeah, they're fearless.

Sachin: Well, yeah, exactly. And so between ages zero and eight is when our beliefs and values form. And so it's very critical how our lifestyle, and how our values, and our beliefs, and things like that are ingrained at that age. Now this is the reason most adults become their parents as much as they try not to, is because they were programmed by their parents. They're programming that unconscious, subconscious programming, the inner child programming is what they're used to.

This is why people crave certain foods. Foods that were their favorite foods when they were younger. Foods that their parents would feed them when they were stressed out. Or when they were trying to calm them down, they would give them certain foods. So these are the foods that the limbic brain, the inner child says, "These are the foods that make me comfortable. This is what I want."

Jodi: Comfort food.

Sachin: Comfort food, exactly. And it can work well for people. It can comfort you. It can soothe you. It can ease you. But at what cost? So if your comfort food is chocolate cake, and it's loaded with sugar, and trans fats, and all the nasty stuff, then that might not be a good thing. But if your comfort food is an apple, that could actually work for you.

Jodi: Right, right. But what you're saying, basically, is that we are indoctrinated or programmed when our limbic brain was still developing. And so that is our default. That's how we self-soothe our comfort, but there are other options for people with resilience. Like, I know you help track heart-rate variability, which is a measure of resilience. Do you want to talk about that a little bit?

Sachin: Yes, certainly. So HRV is also known as Heart Rate Variability. I wear a couple of monitors. One of them, I just recently got, it's called the WHOOP band and the other one I wear is an Oura ring. So I'm comparing these two right now wearing them simultaneously to compare how they function, and work. And I'll be doing a review on it a little bit later. But HRV is one of the things that we can track, essentially, in real time. And it gives us a good indication of how our day-to-day activities impact our ability to be resilient.

So let me give a working definition of resilience so that people can visualize what I'm saying. So imagine there's a bucket. And Jodi you've got a bucket. And it's five liters. And I've got a bucket. And it's four liters. Now, stress, inflammation, life coming at you, all of these things, good things, bad things, they all fill this bucket up.

Jodi: Right, or take it down. It's an ebb and flow, right?

Sachin: Yeah. So there's your stress, there's good stress, and there's negative stress. But regardless of how the stress is, it's really about how we process the information, right.

Jodi: Exactly.

Sachin: So that comes from our limbic brain. Well, let's just assume we have the exact same response, same emotional response to the situation, same amount of chemicals is being dumped into our bloodstream. And my bucket is four liters, yours is five. Mine's going to fill up so much faster. Now, at the bottom of the bucket are tiny, little holes. Now, these holes are enzymes that break down the stress hormones in our body, and essentially, empty out the bucket. Now, if my holes are really, really big, and I've got a lot of them at the bottom of the bucket, I can empty out my bucket really quickly.

Now, imagine, your bucket's bigger, but you don't have as many holes as I do, or your holes are smaller, and there's a genetic trait that determines the size of those holes, that determines the size of the bucket, but then we can also influence whether those holes get bigger or smaller by our nutrient status. So something like magnesium and vitamin C actually opens up the bottom of that bucket, allowing the water to flow through so then the size of your bucket may not be as relevant if you have the right amount of nutrition. This is why magnesium is so helpful at calming people down because it helps take the water out of the bucket.

Jodi: Exactly, and activating the parasympathetic state. This is what I firmly believe, you cannot control what is going on in the world. You cannot control, right now as we're recording this, we're in the middle of the Coronavirus upheaval, and there's a lot coming out that's outside of our control, the only thing you can control is your response. And you can control that response with resilience and helping to move fluid through the bucket. That was a great analogy. Thank you.

Sachin: Well, thank you. So I don't know if I answered the question about HRV so I'll get to that.

Jodi: Okay.

Sachin: So HRV is how big is that bucket? Okay. And so as we increase resilience, as we spend more time resting, recovering, repairing, regenerating, that bucket actually gets a little bit bigger. And so now you might be able to handle six liters of stress. I might be able to handle five liters of stress because I'm increasing my resilience.

Sachin: We can increase HRV by doing a few things. First and foremost, the easiest thing to do is sleep more. And this is often overlooked. We don't do this as much. In fact, what I'm learning right now is that melatonin is one of the greatest proponents to fighting viruses. So our melatonin status makes a huge difference.

And, of course, if somebody has poor sleep, they usually have poor melatonin levels, which means they have poor circadian rhythms, which means they're probably not spending enough time outdoors, which means they're probably indoors on their computer or exposed to EMFs. Like, there's a whole cascade of things that this tells us. So it's never just one thing. Like to lower your melatonin to artificially low levels or to even raise it to normal levels is actual work. You have to conscientiously do the work and ask yourself, "Okay, how is this impacting my melatonin levels because that's going to impact the state of my nervous system and how deeply I heal."

Jodi: Exactly, they're very partnered.

Sachin: Right, exactly. And so what HRV does is it allows us to increase the size of that bucket. It's measuring, basically, the variability between each individual heartbeat. The variability decreases when we're under stress. The variability increases when we're in a resting and relaxing state.

So typically, these devices will collect my HRV while I'm sleeping at night and it's going to be measuring how resilient I am. It's going to be calculating my sleep cycles. It's going to be calculating how long it took me to fall asleep, how many breaths I'm taking. And all this information allows me, in real time, on a day-to-day basis to make decisions on how hard I should push myself. Should I go for a walk today? Should I do yoga? Should I exercise? Should I go full throttle when I exercise?

I can make better decisions for myself using this very simple to collect metric that is non-invasive, and very accurately tells me, and allows me to make guided decisions regarding my health, instead of seeing the doctor every six months, or once a year, or once every ten years.

Jodi: Exactly, it's empowering your patient.

Sachin: Right. And people now have an idea of how things impact them. They can pay attention to, "Oh, you know, I went to bed early last night, or I've been fasting, or I ate a late meal, or I went out and partied, or I drank too much." Like all these things can now come in to perspective. And we can keep better track of the direction our health is going, and the decisions we're making, and how they're impacting that.

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Jodi: Right, exactly, absolutely. And one thing I wanted to land on with variability, one thing people don't always understand, it's not that it makes your heart beat faster or beat slower, it just helps you recover more quickly like the people that sprint up the hill, and then they return to normal more quickly. And the more quickly you can recover, the bigger your bucket, and the more you can handle stress because you can take it on, and then you can recover, and then you can go to the next thing.

Sachin: Exactly.

Jodi: So I'm curious, what's your favorite source of inspiration for your clients, both your other coaches, and your end users? How do you like to help them get in to resilience and recovery? What do you recommend?

Sachin: Well, we believe in joy first. So whatever you do, you have to actually enjoy it or love doing it, otherwise, you're probably not going to do it, and you're not going to look forward to it. So a lot of people, we know how we feel, how great we feel when we exercise, but some people, they dread exercise. So, of course, you're going to feel good because you're releasing endorphins and chemicals. But if you feel bad all day or you're dreading it all day, then it's actually moving your nervous system in the wrong direction.

So the first thing we want people to do is find things that bring them joy, things that they love doing, look forward to doing, feel good looking forward to them, feel good while they're doing them, and then feel good that they've done them. If you can find out what that is, then that goes a long way.

So, for me, I love being in nature. And so my secret tool, I don't want to call it a weapon, my secret tool, to enhance creativity, to get me parasympathetic, to get me to this cosmic and metaphoric state where my creativity is unlocked, I love going in to nature.

Now, if you think about Mother Nature, Mother Nature is built on what we call fractal mathematics. We are built based on fractal geometry. And so when you're out there and you're looking at plants, and leaves, and shapes, and all of these fractal shapes that you're observing, you may not refer to them as fractal shapes, but that's what you're looking at, you're actually communicating more intimately with your versus staring at a flat computer screen.

So if you were staring at trees on a computer screen, that information is extremely flat, whereas, if you're out in the forest, you're in three dimension, so to speak. And your brain is built in three dimensions and fractal mathematics so it's one of the most powerful ways to get you into a parasympathetic state because of the signal that it's sending to your unconscious mind.

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Sachin: The sounds of birds are actually very calming to our nervous system. The sounds of running water are very calming to our nervous system. And they bring on this unconscious/subconscious level of gratitude. So, for me, that's what it is, it's being in nature, being amongst the trees, watching the animals, just chilling out. And it gets my heartrate into a very, it gets it pretty low. It allows me mentally to focus.

And we can actually unlock the creative side of our brain, the right side of our brain by actually paying attention to the specific shapes that we see. So if you pick up a leaf, and you start zooming in macroscopically and staring at it, you're actually unlocking creativity. This is why some of the greatest thinkers of our time and past times have always been stewards of nature. They spend a lot of time in nature. And that's where they get a lot of their inspiration from.

For some people, it might be yoga. So I do yoga three to five times a week. And that's not necessarily a parasympathetic activity because when I'm doing it, my heartrate is racing, and I'm actually going through a physical movement. But how it makes me feel afterwards and how I feel looking forward to it is what gets me parasympathetic.

So it's really finding activities that you enjoy doing that relax you, that bring out the best in you, unlock your creativity, those are things that I encourage people to do. And it's going to be different for everybody. And you might have to experiment with a few things. I would say innately we know what that is, but we're coming up with some excuse not to pursue it.

Jodi: Right, right. Well, sometimes, also, we actually feel, and we tend to keep busy so we don't need to feel. I love your definition of nature. I'd also add that smells, the secret language of trees, they communicate by smell. We communicate with that smell. And there's some research that moving forward, the movement that you have when your eyes go back and forth, that also helps you drop into the parasympathetic state.

One thing that you mentioned was gratitude, which I would love for you to expand upon, and talk about how that helps you get into a parasympathetic state, and maybe some suggestions that you have for people for just simple gratitude practices.

Sachin: Yeah, certainly. So gratitude, there's lots of research, actually, surprisingly, on gratitude and the way it rewires the brain. And it gets easier, the more you do it. So at first, it's almost like a silly exercise, but then once you ingrain these new habits and you start changing the way you think from the very moment you wake up, and before you go to bed, the brain starts looking at the world totally differently.

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Sachin: You mentioned that we're in the midst of this coronavirus thing. And we can be super grateful because now we have more time with our family, more time to do a whole bunch of different things that we've been putting off. Now we've got to show the universe or God or whatever we believe in, that I actually wanted what I asked for.

People wanted more time. They wanted time away from work. They wanted time to themselves, time with their family. They wanted time to read that book or to write that book. All these things that people have been asking for are now being handed to them on a silver platter. So we're going to see who actually wants it, and who doesn't, and who's grateful for it, versus who's fearful from it.

If we can be in a gratitude state, we can actually unlock creativity. The parts of our brain that are responsible for creativity versus stress are very different. So the part of our brain that's responsible for the stress response, the reptilian brain, it allows us to make very good short-term decisions. The part of our brain that's responsible for long-term decisions is the prefrontal cortex.

So when we're under stress, we don't even send the right amount of blood to the part of our brain that makes long-term decisions. So if we're always wired for stress and in a stressful state, we're going to make great short-term decisions. We're going to pat ourselves on the back, "Wow! I made a great decision." And, but, the long-term consequences of that decision may not be great.

Jodi: Right, win the battle, lose the war.

Sachin: Right, exactly. So, yeah, so these are the things that we want to help people reframe the way they think, reframe the way they look at things. When you see something, everything is neutral, it's just the emotion that you attach to it.

Jodi: I love that.

Sachin: Now sometimes, we have to question the emotion that we've attached to something, as well. So, for example, you know I work with a lot of practitioners. And one thing that comes up is success. How do you feel when you meet someone who is really successful? And you have a response to that person, the questions that come up for you, the thoughts that you have, is a reflection, not of you as a human being, but you as somebody who's been programmed to think a certain way.

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Sachin: And so if somebody has a negative perception of wealthy people, then guess what? Unconsciously, they're actually blocking themselves from becoming wealthy because they never want to be that person. So we have to evaluate, almost have like an out-of-body experience, and evaluate the thoughts that we're having and question those, as well, because many of those questions that come up, or thoughts that come up for us are going to be from our unconscious belief patterns, and could be self-sabotaging us in so many different ways.

Jodi: Yeah, I always joke that people who look for problems often find them, but I also do the flip side. We walk my dog every day. And we'll look for like, "Let's look and see if we can find hearts." And suddenly, the clouds look like hearts, the leaves look like hearts. I think that if you're looking for something, it shows up. And if you're feeling grateful, that's really a feeling of overwhelming and calm. You feel calm when you feel grateful. And so then it attracts more to you.

Sachin: Yeah, absolutely.

Jodi: I wanted to also ask you what you think the best measure of health status is? Just curious.

Sachin: Well, I think if we're going to measure it numerically, it would be our HRV. If we were going to measure it emotionally, it would be our happiness because at the end of the day, our level of happiness determines the state of our physiology. And I know it sounds so simple, but being happy right now is one of the hardest things for people to do. Like truly deeply, and joyous, and happy with, not a fake smile on their face, but a real smile on their face, that's one of the hardest things for people to be able to accomplish.

And it reminds me of the different facets of our life that make up our health because if you hate your job, like you're not going to be healthy. If you don't like your partner, it's going to be hard for you to be fully healthy. Or if you haven't come to terms with certain things or certain people in your life, then it's going to be hard for you to be healthy because the thoughts that you have of these people, circumstances, or situations, actually affect your physiology.

So if I bring up the name of someone or a situation that somebody's been through, or a circumstance, or whatever the case may be, I can actually hijack that person's physiology, and take them from being a joyous, happy person to making them the opposite of that.

Jodi: That's right because anticipatory stress triggers the same stress response in the body. You're exactly right.

Sachin: So simple ways to include gratitude, I set a gratitude alarm. My friend, Chip Franks, actually taught me that. And so you can--

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Jodi: How often? How many times a day?

Sachin: Twice a day. So usually, I have practice gratitude in the morning when I wake up. And not to say that I don't practice it throughout the day or in between. I'm grateful for this conversation, as I mentioned when we started. So there's lots of things for us to be grateful for, but I have dedicated time. And my family knows, okay, when the alarm goes off, we all list something that we're grateful for. We usually list three things that we're grateful for—

Jodi: I love that.

Sachin: no matter where I am.

Jodi: That scheduling time is brilliant. I schedule time for friends now because I was getting too busy. So you put it in your calendar, it's there, and you work around it. That's wonderful.

Sachin: Yeah, and it trained the family. So every time it goes off, people know and they shout out what they're grateful for. But I'll actually even do it when I'm with my friends. So if I'm at a dinner party or if I'm hanging out with my buddies, then I'll actually ask them, like I'll let the alarm ring, and I'll be like, "Hey, guys, like that's my gratitude alarm. I want to know what you're grateful for today." And it's such a simple thing for us to do that you can do. It doesn't really cost you anything to do it. It costs you everything not to do it.

Jodi: I was at a friend's birthday party recently. And we went around the table and just said what we were grateful for about that person. And they're a shy person. And they were so touched. So I love that. Even if the alarm goes off, you might even say to one of your friends what you're grateful for.

And the other thing I wanted to loop back about, like happiness, smiling, laughing, all of these things, your vagus nerve, which is the on-off switch between your sympathetic state and your stress state innervates the mouth and the face. So laughing and smiling can really help activate that nerve because it innervates that area of the body.

Sachin: Amazing! Yeah, so do things that bring a smile to your face.

Jodi: Exactly.

Sachin: I don't know if this has ever happened to you or maybe somebody who's listening to this, but sometimes I'll catch myself with my cameras on, and I'll catch my face as I'm sending an email. And it'll be like a neutral face or it's like my email face. You know what I mean?

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Sachin: And sometimes, it doesn't have a smile on it. So it reminds me like, "Hey, there's always somebody watching. So put that smile on."

And I would imagine that a smile is an excellent way to communicate with somebody and you usually get a smile back. So if you're happy and smiling, or you smile at somebody, you can positively affect that person's nervous system, and stimulate their vagus nerve by simply getting them to smile back. Some of these things are emotional. Some of these triggers are emotional. But some of these triggers are physical, as well. So just physically changing the physiology or the shape of somebody's smile can actually activate parts of their vagus nerve that would get them more parasympathetic. So it's so powerful what we can do and the impact we can have on other people being several feet away or sometimes being through the Internet.

Jodi: Even over the phone line. And my favorite yoga instructor actually said that she very intentionally, when she has to make those calls, calling the credit card company to dispute a charge or something, she's like, "I always smile and I always get better results." And I was like, "Oh, I'm going to try that." And now, whenever I type emails, whenever I'm making a call that feels hard for me, I always try to smile and it always seems to pre-pave in a better way.

Sachin: Well, think about this, now that we're talking about smiling. When you play with children, you usually have this big smile on your face.

Jodi: Oh, always.

Sachin: And like if you look at the way people talk to adults versus the way they talk to children, imagine we started just maybe not all [crosstalk 27:55]—

Jodi: Or your dog, the way you talk to your dog. Sachin: Yeah, or your dog. And that's probably one of the reasons that we feel better just because of the contour and shape of our smile, and because we're activating those receptors in the face.

Jodi: Well, I hope everyone that's listening will like share on our smiles. And I'm so grateful to you and your time, Sachin. Thank you so, so much. This was amazing.

Sachin: Well, Jodi, thank you. I appreciate the opportunity. And I'm grateful for our friendship. And I look forward to using this platform, and helping you use this platform to spread your message because it's awesome what you're doing. So thank you.

Jodi: Thank you so much.