

Episode 19: The importance of the mind-body connection

MERYL: Hello, everyone. Welcome to the Rebel Nutritionist podcast. And today I am thrilled to have a colleague, a friend, a client, Laya Seghi who has 40 years of experience as a clinical social worker. Her passion has been learning how to access the answers that each client has within, starting with dreamwork hypnotherapy, then followed by multiple modalities, including EMDR, psych K and neuro emotional technique.

And most recently she graduated from an intensive body intuitive master practitioner training program, based on mind, body medicine, combining the science of Western medicine with Eastern wisdom from Chinese medicine. Love it. Love it. Love it. Welcome Laya. Thank you for joining me today.

LAYA: My pleasure.

MERYL: So Laya and I we're talking, we always seem to go off on these amazing tangents, about the whole mind body piece.

But today, really, we are talking about that mind body connection. Making it real for people, helping people understand what that really is, how to understand it, how to maneuver with it, and really some techniques or steps that people can take to understanding how to deal with it and address it. So without further ado, I guess, Laya I'm going to, why don't you tell us a little bit about the work?

I mean, I read off what you were, explained, what you're doing, but I would love for you to tell the audience in your own words. What your favorite thing to do is with people, or some of them.

And, and it is not quote unquote, the traditional therapy. And I love that about the work that you do, because you have such amazing success with so many people.

So I'm going to let you talk about that in your own words a little bit.

Why talk therapy isn't always enough

LAYA: Thank you. Well, firstly, I call what I do beyond talk therapy because so many times people go to a therapist and they talk and they tell the therapist everything they know, and they come back week after week and talk goes on.

Sometimes there are new insights, but a lot of times it's got to **go into what the client does not know**. And that's where I'm really fascinated by starting with trying to understand what's in the unconscious because the body, and I think Candace Pert said **the body is the unconscious mind**.

And so when there are problems in the body. People have all kinds of issues, whatever it is, sleep issues, digestive issues, weight issues, anxiety, all these body issues are really the result of what's going on in the unconscious that people are not aware of. So once we can begin to **look into the story behind all these symptoms, we started having a path to a solution**.

MERYL: That's great. That's great. I love that. So I guess the first question I want to ask you is. I hear all the time. And I always talk about the mind body connection. And I almost feel like it's very much like that stress conversation, people know they're stressed and they sort of roll over it like, oh yeah, I'm stressed.

And they give it lip service, like, okay, no big deal. And they move on about their lives and don't do much to mitigate the stress. So the mind body piece, and especially. As of the past, I don't know, few years, five years, 10 years. It's definitely come to light with people, engaging in more meditative type of work, more yoga kind of work.

So we're hearing and understanding a little bit more about that mind, body connection. But I feel like we do talk about it, but it doesn't resonate in the way that it should for people. So how do you really get them to, let's call it, buy into that?

Why is mind body connection so important

LAYA: Right? Well, **usually the way people buy into anything is when they're in pain**, when people are in pain, whether it's anxiety that they can't deal with or whether they can't sleep or digestive things that get out of control. They want to know what's going on. So when you say the mind body, how do people get into, what is the story here?

Why am I feeling this pain or this discomfort, or this condition that I have? Auto-immune, why is this happening to me? So **there is a story and the body has that story**. And when we start investigating into. Stress. We think of stress as, oh yeah. Everybody's stressed. What's the big deal? But stress impacts the body a hundred percent in the immune system.

In the nervous system in the hormonal system. And when we look and see if your let's, let's just take an example of feeling let's say you're at a job and the boss is giving you a hard time and you feel threatened. Oh no, what's going to happen. **Your immune system is going to react**. Just like you react.

If you're feeling threatened, your immune system is going to say, oh, let me amp up. I've got a threat here. And your immune system starts going into inflammatory conditions, which can affect every part of you. It can cause pain in your joints. It could create too much immune reaction. Auto-immune dysfunction.

Stress that you're experiencing out here gets translated inside your body. That's just the immune system. The same with the endocrine system, the hormones stress in the hormones, things get that they're producing too much or too little, whether it's steroids stimulating hormone, or whether it's the HPA, the stress hormone too much cortisol running in your blood too much.

Epinephrin norepinephrine. These are all. Feel bad hormones if you have too much. So anything that we're doing **when we look at stress is trying to get the nervous system to be balanced.** And we have a nervous system that's designed like a car is designed. It's designed to go to work, to function.

And it's got just like a car, it's got an accelerator and it's got a brake and both of those have to be working, but not at the same time because they can't work at the same time. So when we're in stress mode, which is go, go, go, that's fine. As long as you could step on the brake, what has happened in our culture in general is everybody's go, go going and the brakes are not working.

And the cortisol and the system, all the hormones that are running in the system, the inflammatory immune cells are running into system. So my job and teaching people about mind, body connection is **you want to be running your life like your car. You want to be able to stop and balance your nervous system so that you are able to go when you need to go and you're able to stop and it should be balanced,** but most of us.

Way way, way into the accelerator and not into the rest and digest part of the nervous system.

MERYL: Absolutely. And that was a great analogy. So thank you for that. I think the other part that I want you to touch on as well. How does that emotional or the behavioral fit into the physical?

How our emotions and behaviors can impact our physical health

Let's take something a little less tangible perhaps, and think about things. And oftentimes when I talk to people, we go through their history and they tell me what's going on now. And I said, it's great to know what's going on. Now tell me a little bit about what happened when you were younger, especially if it's a weight issue where so many men and women are. Almost let's say traumatized by their experience, whether they were bullied with their weight issues, whether they had commentary from family about their weight issues regardless. Right. The **emotional connection to their weight issues** started very early on in life or much earlier than when I've seen them.

And I always say a big piece of them being able to lose weight is connecting back to that. For lack of a better way to say that trauma, that incident, or those incidents, those live in your brain, those live in your mind and then subsequently live in your body. And I think people have a very hard time connecting to that.

So maybe you can also talk from that perspective,

LAYA: So I think **any unresolved emotions we can move past it**. We were bullied at 10 years old. And we grow up and we're 20, 30 years old. **Anything that's unresolved resides in your**

body. And what I do with people when they come into see me is look and see where in the body there is some stagnation of unresolved, emotional issues.

It could be memories. It could be belief systems. I talked to a woman yesterday, it's just so crazy. She's in her seventies and she has to have a mastectomy and she's saying, but I was taught I have to look good. **All these belief systems that she's holding totally have to be dealt with because they are impeding her health.**

So looking at any person and finding out what's the unresolved issue, the belief system, the trauma, whatever it was that is still hanging out in your body and energetically when we're using Eastern medicine from Chinese medicine, it's so phenomenal to be able to identify. I sometimes say I'm like a plumber because you have all these subtle pathways in your body, like pipes, and I'm just going in to find out which one is clogged.

Is it the spleen? Is it the kidney? Is it, is it the heart Meridian, lungs, large intestines and find out what was happening emotionally that got this. So congested, was there an original event? What age? Zero to 10, 10 to 20 and identifying it very specifically. And once it's identified and that energetic Meridian point is held, it's like, poof, if I say it's like getting the plunger out and you know, and then the energy flows.

So wherever there's an energetic disturbance because of an emotionally unresolved issue, it shows up in the body.

MERYL: Do you find that people have a hard time really understanding that? I mean maybe by the time they get to you, they don't have a hard time, but I find that many people have a very hard time.

Either believing that or understanding that because it is so sort of intangible, right? People want a diagnosis. They want to know what they quote unquote have, and they want to be treated for what they have. Right. They come into me, they want to lose weight. They want to diet so that they can lose weight.

And yet when we start talking about all of these emotional things and they look at me with their heads half tilted, right. What are you talking about?

LAYA: Right. Well, it's a complete paradigm shift from Western medicine where you go in, you get the diagnosis, you get the pill and you're cured.

Why a holistic approach is so important

It doesn't work like that. I mean, if healthcare really worked like that, we wouldn't have the problems we have, which I don't think we're the healthiest country with the obesity and, and everything else that we've got going on. So once you shift into a different paradigm where you look very holistically, and I know you're a holistic nutritionist, so you're not just looking at how many pounds are you going to lose?

You're looking at **what is the whole that makes this person function in a healthy way**. Hmm. So it's a holistic paradigm and it's, it's looking at the mindset, the belief systems, the emotions, and the, the basics of good health. It's when you hear it, it's so simple. It sounds stupid. But if people actually did it, so what is it?

It's exercise, a good diet, and enough sleep. And having friends support systems why should life be so difficult? People may not have one of those or more of those, but if we just had a

basically healthy lifestyle, which many of us do not have. We would be a lot healthier with a balanced, nervous system where we relax.

We take time for self care and all those good things. And then we go out and live in the world, but it's not, it's not so simple.

MERYL: No, it's not. and I feel like, again, it's something that we hear about and we should be doing, like you said, we need a paradigm shift because our culture does not really profess that nor do they support that or nor does it support that is especially we live in this.

I get tired and I really don't try to convince people. I don't convince people that they need to not be on a diet. I will really explain it. What is being on a diet going to do, keep you on that hamster wheel over and over, what's the definition of insanity? You keep going on different diets and you get the same result.

You haven't really gotten to where you need to be. So, yeah, I agree wholeheartedly on that. One thing that I see commonly that I think relates very much to emotion. I mean, everything goes back to emotional and mental stuff, but trying to get people to maybe understand and speak to some of these things like chronic fatigue syndrome and fibromyalgia, and these anxiety disorders and these depressive disorders and things like that, but maybe more.

The fibromyalgia and the chronic fatigue, because it manifests as such physical pain for people and taking that back to really recognizing that most of that really originates. Earlier on, in very much that mental, emotional way, correct?

LAYA: Correct. But there's also another piece that goes along with the whole upbringing and early experiences, which is **an epigenetic piece**, which I think is just fascinating to be able to see what was acquired.

Epigenetics - how behaviors and environment can affect our genes

That created marked genes in a person's system acquired because of either toxins from, I mean, we live in a very toxic environment, whether it's in the water and the food, the processed food, the plastics, the mercury, we live in a toxic environment. So. That impacts some people more than others where **it affects the genes because of toxins.**

Toxins and emotional issues that haven't been resolved. Those are the two things that we acquire in our own lifetime. And then **we also can inherit something through our parents before we were conceived. Either they were exposed to toxins or they went through emotional issues.**

And when you just think a generation or two beyond ourselves, how many immigrants going through the transition, how many people went through wars? How many people went through starvation? All of these things can be transmitted epigenetically so that we are. **Living out a story that doesn't even belong to us**, but we, we are carrying it out to heal in our lifetime so that we don't pass it on to our children.

So it's a fascinating piece of work. It's relatively new the last couple of decades. I always loved being on the cutting edge with these new discoveries, because it's so exciting to think about

changing people's health. In a much simpler way using body knowledge and intuition to tap into where is the source of that?

Condition. What are the, what's the story here and **getting the story tells you how to resolve it.**
It's exciting.

MERYL: It is. One of the more recent podcasts that I've done was also on the genomic, right. Nutritional genomics. And so. Definitely cutting edge. I think people are still trying to wrap their heads around what all of that is, but it is true.

Being able to look at someone's individual blueprint, whether it's through nutritional genetics and genomics or epigenetics, is really what drives them. It's their blueprint, it's their roadmap. And knowing that, yeah, I always say the N of one, because then **it really becomes all about that individual and understanding the nuances of that individual.**

And, I too, like being on the cutting edge of that, but it is so important to understand that what manifests as an adult, whether it's in the form of pain, whether it's the form of imbalance, like you said, I talk about imbalances all the time in the body, looking at biochemistry and all of that.

Yeah. So there's biochemical or physiologic imbalance, and there's mental and emotional imbalance.

LAYA: Right. One affects the other. I mean, the immune system is such a perfect example of that. That, if our nervous system is in balance and our immune system is going to take its lead from that, in body intuitive.

We talk about the immune system being kind of like a mini me.

MERYL: Absolutely

The emotional operating systems in our body

LAYA: It just follows the lead. And, and when we think about our emotional responses to life, I mean, in very simplistic terms, I mean, there are many other ranges, but if you think in, just these **three basic emotional operating systems**, we all know about **fight and flight freeze and faint** just that sympathetic nervous system, just going all out with feeling threatened.

And then there's **seeking or the challenge mode** where you've got a problem, but instead of getting totally into fear, you get into seeking a solution and considering it a challenge. And going forward that way. So that creates a whole different set of hormones, set a cortisol it's like dopamine, GABA, all that.

And then there's the **tend and befriend** that care, the self care that nurturing and getting love and support from people. So when I talked to a client and asked, where do you think if you were to see **where you spend most of your emotional operating system, how much of it is in each one of those three?**

And for many people, it's mostly drive, drive, drive this fear mode or challenge mode, but both of those are with the accelerator on yes. And to slow down and breathe, do yoga. We're not spending enough time in that place.

MERYL: I totally agree. I totally agree. And that's why we've got so many stressed out anxiety written pill, popping people in this society.

But, they definitely need more of that. I mean, I know I've spent a lot of time on that work. So what would you say would be the first steps for someone to really, if we're going to try and make it practical for someone, if someone can't let's say at this moment afford your services or and I talk about this all the time in terms of my services or whatever it is, or maybe price is a bad example because you can invest in things that are important, for some.

Practical tips to help the mind tell the body to calm down

LAYA: I like when people say, yeah, but it's worth it, it's worth it. It's, it's worth it. If you have the money to spend, it's worth it. But if you don't have the money, it doesn't matter how worth it is. You can't buy it. So because of that, I have really felt it's so important. To teach people about these basic, simple things that they can do for themselves.

And I have **a whole YouTube channel or it's on my website of self-soothing tools to balance your nervous system**. And a lot of things that I was teaching people in therapy, but I thought everybody should know this. They don't teach this in school. Everybody should know this. It's how to bring yourself down when you're in high stress.

So often, and most of these techniques that I have on my YouTube channel, I tell people I demonstrate how to do it, but I tell people too, **before you do it, gauge or measure yourself on a scale of zero to 10, how distressed are you right now?** And if it's 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 some things people say it's 20, but you figure out how far are you on that scale, then you **do the technique and bring yourself down, bring it down further**.

Just being able to do that for yourself is so empowering to know that you don't have to be as stressed. You don't have to go to the doctor. You don't have to get a pill. **You can be in charge with mind body intervention.** And that's what it is. **It's the mind telling the body to calm down** and the very simplest, practical thing that I can tell you for , mind, body intervention.

And whoever's listening to this right now. I would say let's take a minute. For this mind-body intervention that I'm going to tell you that is so easy.

MERYL: Excellent. Let's do it. We got a minute.

LAYA: Okay. So bring your mind to attend to your breath as you breathe in, notice that you're breathing in and as you breathe out, notice you're breathing out.

Breathing in you're breathing in, breathing out you're breathing out and as you're bringing your mind into attention of your breath in your body, you can begin to notice that your breath becomes slower and deeper.

And just bring your attention with your mind to any tension that you feel in your body. And by being aware of the tension, it may be in your neck or in your back. You can release that tension. Your mind can tell your body to release the tension. And that's a minute of mind, body action. So simple, bringing the mind and the body.

Let your mind pay attention to your body. When you breathe, always have that. You don't need special equipment, wherever you go. You're going to have your breath. So bring your mind to your breath and that's mind body.

MERYL: I love that. Thank you. I just did that, my eyes were closing. And I literally felt my whole shoulders and my chest. Like everything. Just go down. Great. It is amazing. Before we go, I also want to address something that I talk about often and would love to have you speak to it, about visualizing.

How visualization can help heal the body

So it's different from, breath work is a little bit different than visualization work, but there's been so much in the literature. And so many studies about how visualization can really help heal the body. Can you speak to that?

LAYA: Yes. Well, I think the original research that I learned about was with cancer patients and visualizing the cells that were going to eat up the cancer cells kind of like little Pac-Man.

And that was very powerful work. And it's expanded, certainly used a lot with cancer, but I've used it. Yes. In every dimension, because I did a session this morning, it was kind of amazing a person that has a tremendous amount to offer, but he's kind of stuck. And he said, well, I feel like there's a back room.

It's like an interrogation center and it's dark back there and there's a guy that's tied down with his hands tied and there's another guy slapping his face and saying, why can't you do anything? I mean, it was such a great image that guy gave me. And we worked with that to see whether we could get the slapper to realize.

It wasn't working no matter how much he slapped this guy, nothing good was coming. So like your definition of insanity, keep doing the same thing and get the same results. It's not working.

So we talked to the slapper to say, might you be willing to release this guy? He said, only the hands, not the body. So he released anyway, this whole dialogue with this imagery, it was sensational.

There is a whole new possibility of working intrapsychically, working within his own imagination to release himself from this constriction that he's been in and everybody, that's why everybody has their own story. Everybody has their own innate wisdom. And that's the way I like to work is to find out what is your story?

What's, **what's the imagery that works for you** instead of having. Okay, you're going to do this image because it's in a book, it doesn't really work so well. It's got to resonate with your own experience and it's very powerful because you're using a different part of your brain. Again, it's. The part that doesn't know from the logical side, ya know the right brain, as opposed to the left brain.

We spend too much of our time in our left brain trying to figure everything out and the right brain, when it's in conjunction with the left brain, all the answers are there. Just get communication going.

MERYL: Yup. I love that. That's great. I mean, I, this work is fascinating and, and I've also read Candace Pert's work on the molecules of emotion, right?

The fascinating stuff, because the more we get into understanding that, and the more it becomes accepted, I think that's the other piece. Yeah. **We're starting to accept it more.** And maybe people will start to get it a little bit more as these things come out, the energetic work and all of that.

And yeah, we are intuitive beings and **we need to listen to that and the energy of what the body tells us**. And it's all completely fascinating. I love the work. I love the work that you're doing, keep doing it because, and I will keep sending people to you because you are. Are just so great at what you do. I love this.

LAYA: Thank you. Thank you. Well, again, I invite people to look for self-soothing tools, either on my website, which is my name or on YouTube. There are all these different things that you can do for yourself. My videos are no longer than the longest one is eight minutes. So in two minutes or three minutes, you can do a technique like we just did for one minute, that can help.

Huh? Just exhale. Yes.

MERYL: Yes. And it makes all the work that I do with people so much more effective because when they can exhale and get out of that out of being stuck, it opens the possibilities of them healing their body in their own wellness in their own overall health.

So we will also share those that site, YouTube on our podcast site as well. But any other last comments that you want to say?

LAYA: Well, I was talking to a client yesterday and just made me realize. I thought people like to hear stories. She came to me with such a terrible migraine. She was vomiting with migraines and it was all stress-related, but she was getting MRIs and all these fancy thousand dollar kinds of tests to figure out what to do for her migraines.

We worked on her stress, which was all about, or whatever her thing was, relationship. No more migraines. I mean, it. Let's go into that paradigm shift. It's so much, it's so much better. I mean,

if you're run over by a car, I do recommend going through a trauma center, but otherwise look to the east west.

Holistic way to understand the mind and the body are one whole.

MERYL: I always say we're connected. Our head is not disconnected from the rest of our body. So, there must be something to that. And so thank you for reiterating that and bringing these points home because people need to hear them and we need to be sharing that and sharing more of this work.

Because Western medicine is great at acute. You get hit by a car, you get hit by a bus. Great. They do great work there, but the chronic stuff that we are dealing with and the stuff that people are dealing with day to day, **the chronic illness is a result of an imbalance between the mind and the body.**

And the sooner we realize that, and the better off we will all be as a society, as individuals as well. So. Thank you for your time. Thank you for your wisdom. And, go check everything out on YouTube guys.

LAYA: Okay. Thank you, Meryl. A pleasure. And you keep doing what you're doing. I love sending people to you too.

Thank you.

MERYL: Thank you. All right, everybody. This is your rebel nutritionist signing off. Thanks for joining us. Make it a great day till next time.