

MERYL: Welcome back everybody to the Rebel Nutritionist podcast. Today, I have the honor and privilege of having a conversation with Dr. Jill Carnahan who has Her own journey overcome Crohn's disease breast cancer and mold toxicity and has become an advocate for all people everywhere to heal from all kinds of chronic disease.

She has her book unexpected that I. Suggest and highly recommend everybody reads because it's a fabulous read. She practices functional medicine in Colorado. So welcome, Dr. Chill. —

JILL: Thank you. It's so great to be here with you. Like you said, we were talking before about how we've seen each other last year. And then it's, here it is 2024. Finally, we're getting here ready.

MERYL: I know, I know.

Look, better late than never. As they say, I said, you've been one busy lady. So awesome. Awesome. So I would love to dive right in and talk about your journey. I also am a cancer survivor at Hodgkin's lymphoma 20 years ago.

And you know, I know my journey led me to where I am today to do the work that I do today. And I know obviously after reading the book and you being so I really have to commend you for being so vulnerable and so open and honest like I can't tell you how many times I was reading the book and I'm going, that's me, she's talking to me.

Right. And, and some of that intuitive stuff that you were squashed down on and so yeah I'm excited to have this conversation, but let's talk a little bit about your I want our listeners to hear about your journey. If you can describe that, and I'd like to get into because I think what happens is the overlapping of oh, my gosh, well, I have an autoimmune disease, but.

How do I know if I have mold toxicity? Oh, and then leaky gut, right? Like we throw all these things out at people and people are walking around confused, like, where do I start?

So start with your journey and then let's go into like all of that.

JILL: You got it. And first of all, just thank you for saying it resonated.

I remember like literally meditating, praying through writing the book. And so often you're like, Oh, this is so unique to me. I'm such a freak. This is, I must be the only. — But what I realized in writing it is when we go deep and share deeply personal pieces of our pain points and our struggles and our like, thinking that we're an alien or that we don't belong or that it's actually the most common stuff.

It's just that we don't all talk about it. Right? And I didn't know that until I started writing and then getting feedback and that, but it truly is like our, we all suffer. We all, and just because. You and I have survived cancer, but someone out there listening might have a lupus or, and the journey is common to all humanity.

So what I'm going to tell you in just the next minute or two about my journey, I hope that you can see yourself. That was literally my prayer in the book is like, **I hope that the reader can see their journey in mine and that mine is just a template. It's not really about me. It's about you as a reader or you as a listener because we all have these things and we all have health issues.**

So my journey started, I wanted to I wanted to be a healer. I didn't really know exactly how, and I had applied to like acupuncture school and chiropractic school. Cause I was very holistic minded. And then there was almost a last minute idea of like, well, maybe I could go to medical school because no one in my family, I grew up in a. Farm engineers, farmers. My mom was a nurse, but no other medical things. Anyway, started applying and got acceptance letters. And I thought, well, maybe I can be a doctor.

So then I ended up going to allopathic regular medical school. The first in my family and things were going along well, I did love to learn. But in my third year, all of a sudden during my surgical rotation were taught about breast exams. I felt my breast and I found a lump in my left breast. Now I didn't know any better. I thought I'm 20, I was 24 just right ahead of my 25th birthday and 24 year olds don't get breast cancer. or so we're taught, right?

So I didn't think much of it. I probably would have ignored it because I was on my rotations. My life was insanely busy. And yet my husband at the time I'm, I'm divorced, but we're still good friends. And he was like, Jill, you have to get this checked out. So long story short, surgery, biopsy call from the surgeon that changed my life forever.

I'll never forget that moment. And she called and said, **Jill, you have aggressive breast cancer. You are in for the battle of your life. You're going to need to fight this with all you have.** And I suggest seeing the oncologist and again, you know how this goes. So then shortly after met, **I had three drug, massive aggressive chemotherapy, basically the highest calculated doses that they knew my body could tolerate before I kill me and to kill the cancer. And then I had multiple surgeries and radiation.**

So nine months after my diagnosis. I had taken a leave to do the therapy for the cancer. I was completely bald, completely malnourished, so sick from the chemo and radiation and like limping through life. But my dream was to become a doctor. So I went right back to med school. And I talk about this in the book because I talk about how that. That mentality of being tough, don't complaining, don't have needs show up no matter what. And in residency, it only reiterated that because in out regular medical school, we back in the day were basically like, unless you were in the ICU or dead, you showed up to work.

So there was no like, Oh, I have a fever. I'm sick. You just showed up. Now, of course, COVID changed that, right? Back in the day, it was like, you don't complain. **So I came right back into rotations after my cancer. I was so sick, but I thought, well, I just took nine months off. I have to go back. And I started having cyclical fevers, like literally up to 101, almost 102.** Sometimes I was so sick, but I just ignored it. I thought, Oh, this is what it must be like after cancer therapy. I'm just kind of in a weakened state. So I ignored that for about six months until one day. I'm taking a patient's blood pressure. I'm on my ER rotation. And I literally passed out

myself and got rushed in that night, ended up having emergency surgery on an abscess and was waking up the next morning to the surgeon telling me, **Jill, you have Crohn's disease. So that was the second within almost a year of my life of two kind of life threatening conditions.**

And now I was like, okay, what, what is this? What's going on? Well, now we look back and we can dive into this a little bit. **The chemo was really toxic to my gut and it saved my life from cancer, but it caused massive gut permeability.**

I didn't know I had celiac disease. I was eating gluten full diet. I was on the wrong kinds of foods. And all of this kind of led to this. And then **I have this really high risk. Genetically for Crohn's and Crohn's is just those people who genetically have an abnormally aggressive response to a normal microbiome.**

So you poke Swiss cheese holes, leaky gut happens, this leakage of bacteria into the immune system. And I was a setup for someone to develop this autoimmune process we call Crohn's disease. So now looking back, it kind of makes sense. But then all of a sudden I'm faced with what do I do with the Crohn's?

And I was told in the office by the diagnosing physician this is lifelong. You're probably going to need part of your bowel resected over your lifetime. You're going to need to be on strong immune modulating drugs forever. This is incurable. I mean, it was a terrible visit because it was very hopeless.

And I remember right before I left, I had one question because I was just going to try to do whatever I could. And I was sincere. I said, Doc does diet have anything to do with it? Can I do something with my diet? And this was 20 years ago. Things have started to change. But he did not even pause and he said, **Jill, diet has nothing to do with this.**

**But that was a point where I started to listen to my heart because I was like, that can't be true. And I went down a path to realize that the microbiome and diet do have to do with it. And now I am 20 plus years later, I don't have Crohn's anymore.**

MERYL: That's amazing. Right. And, and what, what an amazing story of talk about resiliency and listening, really listening to your intuition.

I can't tell you how many times I have clients in my office who have said, Oh, well, my doctor said diet has nothing to do with it. And I am relegated to this forever. And this is going to be my life. So I think when people hear your story, they read your story, they can resonate and, and, and say, Oh, if I advocate for myself, like I really know there's something more than this.

Let me advocate. How do I do that? Yeah, it gives people the light at the end of the tunnel that they're so desperately seeking that, that they're not given in traditional the traditional medical model.

JILL: So true. And I love that you're advocating for your clients as well, because truly that's where **And so often people relegate their authority to someone who they think knows better than them, right?**

**And there's something called medical gaslighting that I'm starting to realize more and more** where a patient goes in, they're like, doc, I don't feel well. I can't sleep anymore. I'm having migraine headaches. I'm really tired. They list off this list of symptoms. The doc looks at their regular blood counts and things, and they look okay.

And the doc says, well, everything's normal. Would you like an antidepressant? Like that's just so now, again, I have no problem. I prescribe antidepressants. There's a place for those. So I'm not minimizing a true case of depression, but when you are feeling ill, you don't come just because you're depressed.

Always. There can be real physical things going on. **And when a doctor kind of negates your truth, which is my body is not right. Something's not right. Can you help me? And he, they negate it by saying everything looks fine. it starts to make you think you're crazy. And you, what you start to do is you start to doubt your ability to trust the signals that your body has given you.**

And I learned over my first 20 plus years to stop to literally live in my head and suppress all the signals that my body was giving me, like, slow down, you're working too hard. You're too many hours, not enough sleep. And I ignored it all. And then the body's like, well, hello, we're going to bring cancer into your life.

And this kind of now, I don't think that's the only cause of my cancer, but there, one piece of it was my body. I'm trying to desperately get my attention to say, Jill, this lifestyle that you're living right now is not sustainable.

MERYL: A hundred percent. And I appreciate that because I often say I had a, I had bulky Hodgkin's lymphoma. And so I had a tumor in my neck, but I also had a really big tumor in the center of my chest. And I also had chemo and radiation and lost all my hair and that whole thing. And, I, I had gone to a healer after much further after I had finished chemo and I, and I needed to find a way to feel better after they completely depleted my system.

And so I had gone to some traditional healers and one of them said the tumor is right near your heart. You need to heal your heart chakra. And at that time I'm in my thirties and I'm thinking, I said, what are you talking about? This is so weird. Right? So this is 20 years ago also. And I'm thinking what heart chakra, what is that?

And it wasn't until much later on that I understood and realized, wow, I really do, do need to heal it. And wasn't that the body's message way, the body's way of giving me that message. And so, right, there's a saying, my, my friends and I joke, like if the, **the body gives you these symptoms, that's the whisper, listen to the whisper, because when it becomes a roar, it's a problem.**

JILL: So true, and some people don't, — I'm not saying, I talk about, I grew up on the farm, there's chemicals, I there's all these things that probably led to that distortion of the breast cells to become cancer, yes, but on this other level, suffering, difficulty, illness, and Are a way and if we think of them as a teacher, if we can reframe, and I'm just saying this because I've been through it, but I also know if you're out there and you're listening, you're suffering, it's hard to be like, Oh, yes, thank you for the blessing of my illness.

Right? Right. I don't want to minimize and be like, Oh, Pollyanna, we have to just but the truth is. There's always beauty in suffering somewhere if you can look and if you can start to reframe What are you going through right now? Is it a financial crisis? Is it a divorce? Is it something with your children?

Is it an illness and always in those experiences if we are aware **There's a teacher there's a lesson and most of the time if we look back 10 or 20 years I'm sure you can do this with**

**your cancer, too You would never wish that on anyone but when you look back you're like, oh it transformed me, right? For you and me both were like, I was transformed by the cancer and the Crohn's. I would never be the doctor and the compassionate healer that I am today without those experiences.** And now I am so grateful because they changed my life and they were hard, but they also grew me in a way that I couldn't have never grown without them.

And when we start to be able to look at suffering and difficulty that way, because I always say it's either we've just gone through something difficult. We're in the midst of it. Or it's coming like that's the only three options,

MERYL: right? Right. Yes. And this, and that is, and it is so true, right? That cancer journey for me changed my life, changed the trajectory of the work that I do. And now I get to be a healer and, and what better passion. I mean, I couldn't, couldn't be. And I was more thrilled with with being able to help people. So it definitely changed the trajectory for me as well.

And so, and you know, and I used to think that telling my story it's funny that you say that because I used to think that telling my story, I'm like, Ah, nobody wants to really hear my story. Like, I'm not that important and the more I told her, the more people like, No, no, no, we want to hear it, right? It's inspiring and it's this and that. And, and you did write somewhere in the book about the imposter syndrome thing. Right. I feel that too. And I'm like, Oh yeah, but you know, no, I'm not that important.

It's so and I, but like you said, **there is value in, in sharing it because you want to be able to inspire other people and you want to let people know that there is light on the other side** and, and yeah, you got to put in the work. I think that's the, one of the most important things that, that people really need to appreciate and understand is like, This is not easy and you've got to be willing and able.

**I said to someone the other day and this kind of resonated, like you have to work on your health as if you were building your business, like with that same tenacity and that same, like you want your business to thrive. You got to work on it. You want your health to thrive. You got to work on it.**

JILL: Yes. — You're right. It's interesting. Cause I remember my divorce was really difficult time, 2016 and 17. And I was in the middle of recovering from mold related illness and I had to kind of put a lot of the business plans on hold and just focus on survival. Like who am I as I'm divorced and what is my, like my identity really went through a crisis and a shift.

And there was a ton of work in that time. There still is, but at that time I really did somatic therapies and neurolinguistic programming and seeing a therapist, or I just had tons and tons of work. And I remember someone I really respect in the industry who's been very successful was on a call with me.

And she said, Jill, the personal development that you do is the best investment you could ever do for your business. And at that time I was like, really? No way. That can't be true. Right? Cause I'm like feeling like I'm falling behind and I'm not putting anything out there in the business world. But now that I look back, I'm like, oh, that time gave me the such as firm

foundation for, and even though whether it's just you living your life with your relationships or business, it doesn't really matter.

But sometimes that personal development work is the most powerful business plan. And you don't realize that when you're going through it, cause you're feeling like, oh, I'm not putting in time and energy to work or business, but it really does make a difference. It really does.

MERYL: Absolutely. It changes. It changes how you think and function in business for sure.

**So I want to kind of shed light on this whole area of mold and mold toxicity.** And I know it's intertwined we talk about, we could talk about the leaky gut piece, but I feel like when I talk about mold is it's almost like what do you mean mold like there's no such thing Yeah, I think it's becoming a little more prevalent. Now. People are hearing about it recognizing it, but When I say to a client, well, you have XYZ symptom and maybe we should look at mold and they look at me like what? You know, we live in Florida right South Florida. I'm sure every house is loaded with mold, but How what is that conversation like? How did how do we overcome that stigma of Oh, mold toxicity is all in your head kind of thing because I know that's a thing.

**And then because I know those symptoms as so many do have so many of these autoimmune diseases as well. The symptoms overlap with so many other things. So how do we sort of untangle this web of knowing? Do we look at leaky gut? Do we look at mold? Do we? —————**

JILL: That's a great question. Cause if you're out there listening, you've heard other talks or this or that or other podcasts and you're like, it's almost more confusing, right?

Especially when it comes to like diet, which is a whole nother thing. And you're a nutritionist, so we can go there later too, but like, which diet should I do? What? So same idea. So let's talk about mold.

**So first of all what's happened is this. Slew of events that have created a much more likelihood that your indoor environment could have mold** and I'm going to talk about that first because then otherwise you might be like, well, what my grandmother had mildew in her bathroom in the 1950s and it never bothered her, right?

So why is it now such an issue? So there's a couple things. First of all buildings nowadays are put up much more quickly. Often there's like a contractor doing 200 homes in a subdivision and they're just boom, boom, boom. COVID made it worse because all of a sudden skilled workers in medicine and clerical work and construction were harder to find.

And so there was less skilled workers. And then even **the fact of with storms and hurricanes and things that are happening in our environment that are more prevalent, there's becoming water intrusion. So number one, we have a little bit less quality construction. Number two, we have faster construction in.**

**Weather, water, wind, rain, snow, and then not letting those interior materials dry out.**

Number three, we have sometimes, not always, there's amazing contractors and construction people out there, **but in general, the kinds of people who are doing construction are a little less skilled than they might've been 50 years ago.**

So they're maybe not doing, in fact, my condo that I live in now that had all kinds of construction defects, we had to actually go and get it repaired because there were things that weren't done right for water intrusion. So those basic things. Are happening. And then there's all these wonderful lead certified environmentally efficiency ratings and things.

And that's amazing for efficiency of energy. But what happens is **if you have a super airtight building and it's very energy efficient, you don't have like, say you had an old log cabin, you'd have more wind and air breathing into that building than you would now with a highly lead certified New York city apartment building.**

**And because of that, things like condensation, that can happen way more easily with a highly efficient very building that's very insulated** so that we, for all those reasons, we're having more and more intrusion of water into the interior of the building. And this could happen from a leak in the attic from a storm from windows that aren't properly installed, a sump pump that's not working.

The foundation gets. It comes up to the concrete washer, dryer, all these things, not dryer, but washer refrigerator. I had just last summer, my neighbor who I love had a leak in his refrigerator and it leaked down into my wall and into my floor and massive mold in my kitchen. So that was nothing to do with me.

It was just a person that was above me whose water leaked down and that can happen all the time. In fact, one of the little pearls I like to give is. For now on, if I ever have a fridge, I'm not connecting the water line. It's too risky. I'm like, I'm making, I make my ice cubes the old fashioned way because it's just not worth it for me with a mold illness in my past to have that risk of water leaks.

So all those things are leaking. **Now, then what we have is mold is an organic organism. It's a living thing and it's made to break down materials. And what's happening in our environment is as there's more wifi intensity. We've actually had studies, mold responds to signals in the environment. And as there's more dense wifi that mold actually produces more mycotoxins because it feels the threat of some of the EMFs that are increasing our environment.**

So the production of the toxins that mold does to protect itself is actually increasing as well. And then to say on another thing **in the 1970s, they started putting. Fungicides in paint so that all of a sudden they're like, Oh, well, if we paint the house with things that are anti fungal, won't that protect us?**

**Well, yes, in a way, but what it did is the same thing as antibiotic resistance is it created super molds.** So all these like tame, mild mildew kinds of molds. We're not really growing anymore because that fungicide eliminated them. **So typically now in a home that has water damage, the kinds of molds we're finding are stachybotrys, ketonium, really, really toxic, nasty molds that are growing and producing their mycotoxins.**

So that's the perfect storm in the background. And then what we have is when we get this mold in, we could, I could be in my condo here behind the wall, there'd be a water leak. I never know about it. So I don't see it. I don't smell it. But I just started to feel brain fog, or I have symptoms of fatigue, or I have increased mast cell activation, rashes, and eczema or asthma or sinus issues.

**And one of the ways that we might be able to tell if there's mold in our environment is if we go somewhere or vacation or leave the home and we start to feel better. Or if every since I always do a timeline when I'm taking a history and often I get information from the timeline, like, Oh, 2018, we bought a new house.**

**And every since then, our whole family's kind of been like sick.** And my son has autoimmune disease. My daughter's new onset asthma. So you'll see these patterns of. family systems that all have little bits and pieces of sensitivities or illness. They all started when the family moved to a new environment and they all get better when the family goes on vacation. Like that's a classical story. So this building stuff I talked about is part of it. The indoor environment is part of it. And a lot of people don't know because they don't put that together because it can be subtle and it's say you move. 2018, it might be the next year that you start to not feel well.

**And then there's a difference in genetics. So some of us are super susceptible and get autoimmune and illness or dementia or brain fog, and others can barely tell.** In a classical medical school, we were taught that mold is an allergen. And we're not taught that it can trigger the innate immune system.

**And now with COVID, we all know a lot more about the native immune system, but what mold can also do is not just that allergic response, but it can trigger cytokines that stay triggered and can cause everything from autoimmune lupus MS to — brain fog.**

**Dr. Dale Bredesen, who I work with on some of the protocols for Alzheimer's disease is now saying 70 to 80 percent of the Alzheimer's he sees. Has mold as one of the main factors that's profound.**

MERYL: Wow. That is totally profound. — So if someone's coming in and you know, they've got some of these symptoms again, a lot of these symptoms overlap with other symptoms. Are we do we now kind of shift our focus and go, okay, well, do we think of mold first before we think of leaky gut?

Do we like there's so many confounding factors here. — You know, what, what, what are you doing? How are you looking at this?

JILL: Yeah. So — this is an environmental insult. And so I always start with the layers would be limbic system. We didn't even talk about that, but I'll briefly talk about that because I think that's one of the first places to start.

**So whether you have childhood trauma or whether you have illness we all have limbic system activation at some point. And these are little traumas, big traumas, any kind of traumas. And illness and especially mold related illness can trigger the limbic system and the amygdala was, which is our fight or flight into feeling like we're threatened, our safety is threatened.**

**So at one level mold always will trigger a chemical limbic response.**

So if someone does have a mold exposure, I'm. Having them work with maybe somatic therapists, maybe just do an online program like DNRS or Gupta — or Primal Trust. There's a

ton of stuff out there. It doesn't have to be long or in depth, but some sort of thing where you start to feel safe in your body.

**Because what I know to be true, if we don't feel safe in our body, We can't heal. So we have to start with some sort of idea that limbic has to do with this. And it's not the person's fault. It's not that they're afraid. It's not that we know from the research that just inhaling chemical compounds like mycotoxins or chemicals that are harmful to our body goes right up to the olfactory system through our our nerve into our brain and can cause limbic activation just by smelling the chemical.**

So this isn't someone's fault. That's first. Then if you have mast cell activation, which is often part of these illnesses. It's **these primordial cells that get triggered and create a bunch of release of histamine and prostaglandins and things that cause inflammation. They can cause rashes. They can cause leaky gut. You have to deal with that too,** because if someone has severe mast cell activation, they're not going to tolerate a lot of supplements or protocols or things, and they might be really sensitive to histamine containing foods. So those are two at the kind of top that you have to deal with before you go to gut or mold.

Now you mentioned like leaky gut or mold. Well, mold in general, if you have a mold exposure or you have mold related illness, **mold causes massive leaky gut. So one way people might know that they have mold is all of a sudden out of the blue, they're really sensitive to a lot of new foods.** Like I used to be able to eat.

Dairy or I used to really eat carrots and pineapple and all of a sudden I'm reacting to these foods. That to me is often a sign of something created more permeability in the gut and mold is one of those things that can do that. So I always deal with the gut pretty close to the beginning of a mold related illness.

So if I'm going to, if I find out someone has mold related illness, they're in a moldy environment. The first step, like I said, think about limbic system, do something, even if it's small, that creates safety. If there's mast cells involved, you have to do a little bit of work there because you can't do much protocol until you calm down the mast cells.

And in the realm of mast cells, mast cells create histamine, which creates massive permeability as well. So you kind of have to do that as you're doing the gut. The gut's going to come right alongside in the beginning. And how you could do that is you're not going to get someone well with mold related illness.

If you focus on the gut and leave them in a moldy environment, **you have to talk about first, which is the hardest part of the conversation, is Is your environment harming you? Is it your home? Is it your workplace? Where is it? And what can you, with your financial means, with your family, with your situation, do about it?**

So there's some people who are stuck. They have a lease. They have a landlord that won't do anything. They maybe can't afford to remediate. What you do in that situation is do the very best you can in opening windows, getting an air filter, doing the very best you can. If you can remediate at all, you want to do what you can.

Because I will say, if someone's in a massively moldy environment, It's going to be really hard to heal the gut or to do anything at all to get them well if they continue to get exposure to that mold. So you got to do something there, even if it's small.

Second thing is if you can remediate or change your environment or move or whatever you can do there, that's the best situation.

Because if you can get to an environment that's fairly mold free. That's when you start to work on the gut and the detox. Now, gut and detox are going to go simultaneously. You got, you have to shore up the gut to some extent because if you, you're using the gut to detox.

**So how we detox is we increase our glutathione by either taking precursors or supporting glutathione IV orally, liposomally, and enhance the ability to mobilize toxins from our tissues into our bloodstream where our liver and kidneys can filter them out.**

But if your gut is a mess and you're constipated and you have terrible bowel issues you need that gut to mobilize from the liver to the gallbladder. The bile is excreted into the gut lumen, and then it goes out through the stool. And if you're lucky with binders, it'll help to pull those things out.

But if your gut is a mess, you have to kind of start with the gut because you're not going to get a lot of detox. happening if you're constipated or you have massive permeability. So I would say the limbic system first, mast cell second, gut probably third, but right alongside that is starting to do the detox.

MERYL: Right. Oh, that was, that was brilliant. I like how you laid that out. I mean, that's very much how, how we look at things, how I do it, right. That's what we're taught in functional medicine. But I think one thing that you touched on, and so for people who are not understanding this whole limbic system piece, can you dive into like, what is the limbic system and why is it so important?

And I think You know, just to tag on to that is I've talked a lot more and I interviewed I had a great conversation with Dr Catherine Clinton, who talks about quantum biology, right, understanding that what goes on in the brain actually, and the mind is physically becomes physical and it changes our biology.

So similar along those lines, but when you're talking about limbic system, can you kind of pare that down for people so they understand that a little bit better.

JILL: Yeah. So our limbic system is to protect us. So years and years and years ago, we'd see a lion and our limbic system like, ah, this is scary, run.

So we'd either, or if it was like just a dangerous neighbor, we might fight or we might flight. So that's the fighter flights. We might run, which is the flight, or we may fight, but it. **Our limbic system is anytime there is like dark alley, ooh, something doesn't feel right, we might turn and go the other way.**

Or I mean, someone pulls a gun, God forbid, that's all these things. Or if you had a father or mother who was alcoholic and they were constantly yelling, you might have this limbic activation

around when someone starts to yell or you hear through the walls a neighbor yelling and it might just signal this like, oh, it's not safe.

**So it's our brain's way of signaling there's something not safe in your environment. And it's so protective** because. As you can imagine, if you see a lion, you run, you get away, you survive. **So for many, many, many, many decades it has been the way that we survive as a species. It's really important and it's not a bad thing.**

However, sometimes we smell mold. We don't know what's going on, but we're like, **I feel anxious. I don't feel well. I don't feel safe. We might not even be conscious of that.** Or like I said, someone, our neighbors yelling. And for some reason, yelling was a threat to us when we were young, or there can be all these kinds of things that signal a threat to our body.

**And some of them make sense consciously. And some of them make no sense at all because our brain has started to associate with a danger signal with something that has no business being dangerous.** Now, if you think about chemicals, they are dangerous to our systems. And they can cause cancer and all kinds of things.

So it doesn't, it does make sense that smelling a chemical or smelling a mold mycotoxin could trigger a limbic response because again, it's protective. But what happens is. **I would say 100 percent of patients I've treated with mold have some sort of an ingrained limbic response that started getting attached when they were in that moldy environment.**

And so their body starts to feel unsafe. And again, they may not even be conscious. They're just like, I'm not well, something's wrong. I don't know what it is. But I mentioned that because if you're not aware that your body is unsafe you're **You cannot heal if you really, truly don't feel safe.** So I always go way back to that foundation because that, and I'm not the somatic expert. I have people I refer to for that, but I just know, and I've done my own work with professionals, but I just know that that's such a key part underlying the healing process. And let's talk briefly about autoimmune disease because **I think it's one in four women who are suffering from some sort of autoimmune disease.**

And since COVID, it's only. Increased? Yes. And autoimmune by nature, Gabor Mate writes in his book, **The Myth of Normal, about autoimmune as a metaphor for attack of self. So at an autoimmune level, it's our own cells attacking our thyroid or attacking our adrenals or attacking our nerves or attacking our joints in different diseases.**

And the truth is, it's this. our own immune system turning on ourself for some reason. And instead of attacking dangerous strangers like bacteria and viruses, it goes on to our own tissues and starts to cause damage and inflammation. And I love thinking about that in terms of trauma and limbic system, because — at like Gabor Mate says at a metaphorical level, it is some attack of self.

And just like you said, with the heart piece and the heart chakra, and for me, I've done a lot of work around those pieces too. — **autoimmune at some level is there's a piece of ourselves that we're not accepting or maybe hating or attacking. So part of that healing as well as going to that deep level and creating safety and creating acceptance of all the parts of ourselves and love for ourselves at a deep, deep level.**

**And those things may sound kind of woo woo, but really as an MD, a medical doctor, I have found that there's so crucial as foundation for healing.** And then, like I said, we go on

and you think about mast cell activation. I just touched on that briefly. What is that? These are these primordial cells that are. to protect us from bad guys out there, viruses, bacteria, and things. And again, they react to things that are threatening in our environment and they help us to heal. But more and more as there's more EMFs in our environment, there's more chemicals, there's more toxins in our clothing or in our laundry detergents or in our household cleaning chemicals or in our environment, if it's moldy, **our mast cells are getting more confused and they're trying to protect us.**

**But they start this response and they start to activate the things that they throw out to protect us. And again, it can cause harm to our own bodies.** So this is a real common thing people are experiencing, mast cell activation. And once again, if you think of it as a safety level, the mast cells are trying to protect you because they think something's unsafe.

So part of mast cells on that metaphorical level is how do we create safety where they don't have to. jump out and throw out their chemicals and make us sick as they're trying to protect us. **So this limbic loop we can call it is when, when we subconsciously or consciously detect a threat in our environment and start to activate the limbic system, which is our amygdala to protect us.**

**But instead of going to run from a tiger and then we go back to sleep and we're fine, we're in a constant state of activation of that limbic system.**

MERYL: That was beautifully said and, and so we can, right, we can say stress on any level as, as it were, but, and I love that more and more of us are having this conversation of whether it's we can call it the limbic system, the whole mind body connection, because I feel like it's finally starting to make its way front and center.

And and it's met with so much less resistance than it's been in the past. And like you said, right, people think it's woo woo, yet we know from so much data, right, that has been out there that the Gabor Maté of the world and the work that you're doing. And I talk of Catherine Clinton and Joe Dispenza, who's doing all this work in this area of how does our mind literally change our physiology and our biology.

Like, we have to start paying attention to it and really giving it the credibility that I think it so deserves. —

JILL: Yeah. **And that's a thing years ago, we knew, Oh, this seems like it should be a link, but there wasn't as much science. Now there is undeniable science to support that it really,** and I've seen in my practice, I've been doing this for 20 plus years.

And what I see is when people are stuck in a chronic illness. Often there's a piece of this that needs to be addressed and this is not to say it's your fault or that it's all in your head because that is not true at all but the truth is like **as we have these subconscious patterns of thinking whether it's I'm unsafe or I'm not worthy or I don't love this part of myself or these unconscious patterns, those will really drive reality.**

So when we go back to examine, what are we thinking truly about ourselves? Do we truly love and accept ourselves? Do we truly trust our intuition to guide us and direct us into healthy patterns? And if we don't, if we find some things that are disconnected or disharmonious in our thinking, it will manifest physically.

So we have to go back and address those things in order to get fully well.

MERYL: A hundred percent. So let's kind of go down because we talked about nutrition and I want to make sure you mentioned it. I really do want to cover it clearly since that's the the crux of what I do in combination with everything else.

But in terms of What is nutrition's role? Obviously, it played a huge role in you battling your Crohn's and autoimmune and even everything else. I mean, there's always that we have to have that's one of the pillars of health. We've got to talk about it. But from your perspective, because I know yeah, there's been so much talk about. Well, if I have leaky gut, if I have autoimmune, am I staying away from Oh, what are the, now we're talking about anti hungrians, right? And I know you just spoke to Dr. Gundry, and then we talk about the lectins, like people are lost about, I mean, I know what we do, right. And, and, and all that kind of stuff, but **people are really lost and confused about what do I do for my health when it comes to my food.** —

JILL: Yes, and I could not agree more. I want to say, **I don't feel like there's one diet for everyone. So if you, I would say the first thing, first red flag, is you're out there and someone's out there saying, this one diet is going to cure you from every single thing. It's probably not true.** That might, that one diet might be good for 30 percent of the population.

**What I have found is, Everybody's unique. And not everybody reacts to lectins. Not everybody reacts to grains. But in general, I see the people who have complex chronic illness, autoimmunity frequently, Lyme disease, other types of infections, reactivation of Epstein Barr or mold related toxic illness. So I see the more complex chronic illnesses. And in general, I would say most of my patients do better in a gluten free diet** because even those who are not celiac or not non celiac gluten sensitivity, which are the two kinds of illnesses that manifest with reactions to gluten, **gluten will increase the permeability of the gut after consumption in all of us.**

**So, if we're already dealing with a leaky gut due to autoimmune disease,** and I didn't mention this, but **autoimmune disease always has a genetic component, a leaky gut immune component, and an environmental trigger, that's the triad that you can count on in every autoimmune disease.** So if that's true, we know that leaky gut is at the root of every autoimmune disease.

If that's the case, why would you put in gluten, even if you're not sensitive, if it's going to create more permeability? So for me, everybody autoimmune in that realm, gluten free for sure. We also know in the U S at least gluten is sprayed with glyphosate at right before it's harvested. So unless you're getting organic heirloom types of varieties, you're going to get a load of glyphosate, which also causes its own.

Damage to the gut disruption, the microbiome and toxicity in general. So lots of bad things for gluten, especially in the U S unfortunately,

**dairy for many people, cow's milk dairy is an issue.** So some people can do sheep, goat, camel types of alternatives or some of the almond coconut, other types of milks, but.

Most of my patients are gluten and dairy free. **Sugar is the other big one. Because sugar is inflammatory, it's disruptive of the microbiome, it causes fungal overgrowth, it's horrible**

**if you have mold related illness.** So at the very basic, most of my patients are gluten, dairy, sugar free. Then you can go broader, and I find with autoimmune disease, **Grain free does really well with some people.**

**Now my theory on that is grains are the most highly contaminated with mycotoxins.** So I think that it might be more or less even getting out one big source of mycotoxins in the diet.

**Other things are sadly chocolate and coffee. Two of my favorite food groups, but if you're not really making sure you're getting clean source chocolate and coffee, those are actually other big sources of mycotoxins.**

And even though we talk about environment you can get this from the food supply. And so if you're not careful nuts and grains coffee, chocolate things like that can contain mycotoxins and make you more sick as well. So that's kind of some of the basics. And then. Depending on the patient, we may go more deep into that.

We may go more with like a low FODMAP, SCD diet if there's really disruptive gut issues. So Crohn's, colitis, even IBS that's not treated often does well. SIBO and SIFO are fungal and bacterial overgrowth in the small bowel. And they often need a specialized diet that decreases the amount of small chain sugars.

Because then you starve that bacteria and that's called a low FODMAP diet. And if you really have a fungal overgrowth or mold issue, you might need to temporarily avoid all sugar, dried fruit, fruit juices, things that feed yeast, and even things like mushrooms temporarily. So those are kind of the span.

And then what I find is I was a vegetarian for It's almost 10 years right before I got cancer. So I thought it was the best thing in the world, but I was doing a Carbatarian diet with like processed soy and all this kind of junk. And then I got cancer and realized that was not the right diet for me.

Most of my patients, because there's only so many, there's only three macronutrients and there's only so many ways you can. move this if you're eliminating things. **So when you really eliminate refined and processed carbs and some of the things that trigger yeast, I feel like most of my patients do better if they have a little bit of wild fish organic grass fed chicken or, or free range chicken or eggs if their source is a protein.**

Now, again, You can be vegan, it's just harder if you're dealing with some of the spices in the gut because it's harder to get purely protein sources of macronutrients. So I tend to do more of a paleo vegan, I call it, where you get clean, clean fish or chicken and lots and lots of plant based foods. **No matter what, and I'm sure you agree with this, we need plants.**

**So I feel like at the core, leafy greens and some of these powerful plants are essential.**

I'm, I'm a fan and sometimes carnivore or low FODMAP are these really extreme diets can temporarily shift your microbiome or shift you. But most of those very restrictive diets will starve your microbiome longterm. So I'm not a fan of super restrictive diets over the long haul.

MERYL: Right. Thank you for that. So what about this conversation? You know, there's, there's a lot of talk also about the, well, if you eat plants, there's anti nutrients in plants, right? — I

mean, yeah, I think it's really, for me, it's always about, are you eating a variety and what does that look like?

And again, goes back to the gut microbiome, but **what are your thoughts on, on all this conversation out there about anti nutrients?**

JILL: Yeah. I think it's real. And for some people it's a big deal. **And for someone with like Crohn's or colitis, which is what I had, you should like raw fruits and vegetables are going to not be tolerated, not digested.**

**There's no way you can, you can heal.** So you must cook and nourish and do that's where you might do more of the gaps diet where you're doing broths and nourishing and like every vegetable is well cooked, which again, you lose some of the enzymatic factor, but a raw diet for a Crohn's patient would be So bad, right?

So in that sense, you really have to think about who you're dealing with, because if your gut is really damaged and inflamed, you need to give nourishing, almost predigested types of food. So that's easy to break down. **One thing I think a lot of us are deficient in because of our high stress lifestyles is enzymes and hydrochloric acid.**

**So if you're having trouble, one of the ways to break down those things is either pre cook them, sprout them, allow them to start to germinate or take enzymes and. Betaine HCL to help your stomach and gut actually absorb these nutrients, right?**

MERYL: But if we go back to, and I agree, right, you can, if you're, if you have any of those Crohn's or whatever, you can't do the, the raw, but you know, we're, we're getting people are like, oh, well you can't have the leafy veg, right?

Because they have oxalates in them and then you can have, so again, like, right. I do think it may be, it comes down to, but go ahead, what were you going to say?

JILL: Cause I'm like, cause oxalates, lysolates, histamine, right. I have patients that are like low salicylate, low oxalate, low histamine, gluten free, grain free, and there's no foods left or they have like four foods.

And so I'm always like, **yes, temporarily, if you're really, really sick, you might need to for three months, eat a very limited diet to start to heal. But that limited diet should not be maintained forever.** And here's the deal. Say you have oxalates. Oxalates come from yeast and they come from mold and your body will produce them so **you have to go to the root and get rid of the yeast and mold sources in the body that are creating more oxalates.**

**Salicylates, same thing.** There can be some genetics in that, but a lot of times it's because of overgrowth of the wrong types of bacteria. And then histamines from mast cell activation. I for years had histamine intolerance and I had to do a very low histamine diet. Now I can tolerate more of that because I healed the gut.

So there's always even with those restrictions, those mean that there's something else you have to deal with. — Oxalates, histamines, salicylates, etc.

MERYL: I'm so glad you said that because that's what I was going to say next. Right. **The moral of the story is not to eliminate these things permanently, but to figure out why you're reacting to them so that you can heal and then bring them back in a way.**

So thank you for saying that, that I didn't have to. Gosh, I could talk to you forever, but I know we need to be mindful of the time. So one of the other things I really want to mention, because I've had a lot of people ask, and I think this is we talk about toxicity personal care products, right?

**Toxic beauty.** I mean, right? Women, we're talking to women. I mean, my audience, I know is not primarily women, but we have a ton of women and, and even the younger girls I've had, I'm at a — At a retreat and I've had a bunch of women come up to me and go my daughters and they're all being targeted with these makeups and these things.

And I'm like, Oh what do I do? You know, so what are your thoughts on that whole toxic beauty thing? And, and what are our options and, and why do we need to stay away from these products? So more importantly,

JILL: Oh, I'm so glad to talk about this because this was one of my first lessons with breast cancer. 25 years old. Right. And, and I started realizing that in my cleaning products, my lotions, my shampoos, my conditioners, my bath, and **the average woman uses about a hundred products and I am no different. I love my products — realized years ago was, oh, these products are. Slowly killing me because there's so many parabens, phthalates, things in our Bath and Beauty products, and our skin is a wonderful absorption organ.**

**So it will absorb the toxic products that we put on it.** — And so I started way back then. And I want to just encourage, if you're just listening and starting to realize this and you're like, Oh my gosh, I'm so overwhelmed. Start small, start with the things that you put on your body. And then maybe start with the cleaning chemicals in your house.

**You can clean your house with vinegar and water and lemon and very simple things. You do not need the chemicals.** They. advertise. **You do not need air fresheners in your house. Those are VOCs. They're guaranteed to make toxic chemicals in your house. You should have an air filter. I always say at the very core, clean air, clean water, clean food.**

Even if you can't afford a functional doctor, most everybody has access to doing something about their air quality. clean food and clean water.

But with your bath and beauty products, start with something and make the changes because it can be expensive. It can be overwhelming. **I took me probably two years after my breast cancer diagnosis to go through all of my products and little by little by little get clean alternatives,** whether it's cleaning products, bath and beauty products, all those things that we put on our face and you need to read labels.

**Because anything with a methylparaben, ethylparaben, parabens are toxic, phthalates, anything that says fragrance is going to be likely toxic because they don't have to disclose what's in there.** If you're confused and want some help, **there is a free non profit environmental working group, ewg. org, and they have a database called Skin Deep.**

It's all free. And that will actually, you can look up your products and see what you'll find. I won't say any names, but **some of the most real popular common names that have been out there forever as makeup products are the most toxic. So you want to find a couple brands that you can use that you know are non toxic and you can trust.**

What I find to be the difficulty, whether it's hair or makeup is years ago, the natural stuff was beautiful. You could probably eat it, but it didn't work. Right. — So like I found, but now I've really, in fact, I even have some of my own skincare now, but that as that we sell, but the bottom line is you want stuff that is super clean, but still has effectiveness.

And that can take a little bit of time. I just say, go to the environmental working group and start to get to know your products. And then if you find something toxic, start to switch it out.

Sunscreens are another big one. **So these are all sunscreens, bath and body products, makeup, shampoo, conditioner, lotions. especially the stuff you put in your skin.**

And let's just mention children and girls for a moment because the body surface area is smaller. So as we have younger girls and they're going through either just starting menarche, having their periods and hormonally, and a lot of these toxic chemicals are hormone disruptors.

So they can be a really big deal for young girls. In fact, we've seen the age of starting periods. It's called menarche. Go down. And part of that is because of the increasing endocrine disruption that hormone like chemicals in our environment are actually affecting our young girls. So that used to be 15. They started their period and now it's 10 or 11 because the endocrine is having an effect on their system.

MERYL: Yeah. Great point. And so important to pay attention to. So yeah, I, I also recommend EWG all the time because it is a great resource for people and it's a great place to start. So thank you for that as well.

So this has been amazing. I can't believe we're already at an hour. Like time has flown and I feel like we barely scratched the surface, but I think we covered a lot, which was great. You're a quick talker, so that, that helps. But so appreciate your insight into all of this and your expertise and You know, really just having this conversation because it's it's it is shedding light in an area that I think a lot of people often don't don't pay attention to or think about.

JILL: So thank you. Thank you. Thank you for the work you do and just bringing light to it as well. Thank

you. Thank you. And I look forward to seeing you at an event soon. — Sounds good. — Everyone, I hope you enjoyed this as much as I did. This is your Rebel Nutritionist signing off. Make it a great day. —