

A Guide to Strengthening & Healing Your Adrenals – Izabella Wentz, PharmD. – #1042

Dave Asprey:

You are listening to the Human Upgrade with Dave Asprey. This episode is filmed live at my place in Austin, which I'm really enjoying because it turns out that when I'm in Austin versus my place in Canada, there's all these people here who want to be on the show, including what I think might be setting a record as our sixth time on the show but someone you haven't heard from in a couple years. This is a good friend and master of some of the, we'll call them endocrine systems in the body, a pharmacist known as the thyroid pharmacist. But today we're going to talk about adrenal function, and I want you to listen to this episode because you have an adrenal problem if you're alive today. And I say this as a guy who was born with adrenal problems and we'll probably get into some detail about that. Having had stage four adrenal burnout and all that, I fixed it and I fixed my thyroid problems. The most knowledgeable expert that I've come across around this, particularly with autoimmunity, particularly when it comes to things like toxic mold and things like what gluten does to you and all that, it is none other than Izabella Wentz.

Izabella Wentz, PharmD.:

Hey Dave, it's so good to see you again. I'm so glad that we're in the same city. We get to hang out.

Dave:

It's so much more fun to do an in-person interview, so this is awesome. And you have a five-year-old now, so we've hung out for lots of years. But now that you have a kid, I haven't seen you in a few years because I've been up in Canada and now I'm more mobile. So it's super cool just to get to hang out and to talk about adrenals instead of thyroid. Now I'm going to ground listeners in why this is important. If you've heard any of my intervention episodes or just listened to the show for a while, you've heard me say, "Get your thyroid tested if you have energy problems." And Izabella had energy problems. I did too. And we arrived at similar conclusions and I'd say, I don't know how many followers and whatever you have, but you've changed millions of people's lives with thyroid conditions.

Izabella:

I have. I started off myself in my twenties just being exhausted and chronically fatigued. I was this super ambitious person in my head, like stuck in a "lazy person's body" and that's-

Dave:

Another feeling. Were you overweight too?

Izabella:

I was actually underweight, but-

Dave:

Okay, the other side of it. Yeah.

Izabella:

... this happens a lot of times if you get diagnosed with thyroid issues and later on in life you might be overweight.

Izabella:

This happens a lot of times if you get diagnosed with thyroid issues and later on in life, you might be overweight. If you have thyroid issues earlier on in life, it might show up as fatigue in your twenties. It might show up as anxiety, like depression, mental health issues, so on and so forth. In your thirties, it could be fertility issues for women. And most of the time people aren't properly tested and in their twenties they're told like, "Oh, you are depressed, so let's give you antidepressants. You're anxious. Let's give you antidepressants." Right? Let's give you all these things rather than testing you for a thyroid condition, because typically doctors, it's not on their radar until somebody's a bit older, maybe in their fifties, right?

Dave:

Right. When I was maybe 24, 25, something like that, I was fortunate to go to an anti-aging doctor. Back then, Dr. Miller. He just tested me and he came back and said, "I can test almost no thyroid hormone in your body." And when I took my first thyroid medication, I'm like, "Heaven has opened up. I have my energy back." I felt like I could finally press on the accelerator and then I would move, but I didn't address my adrenal issues back then. And I'm noticing that your arc of information you've shared, you've really gone deep on the causes of a thyroid dysfunction and how autoimmunity ties in. One of the things I want to talk about as maybe a point of crossing over is I've seen a few people say, well, if you have Hashimoto's, which is autoimmune issues with the thyroid, you shouldn't drink the most sacred liquid on the planet -- coffee.

Izabella:

Cheers.

Dave:

So what's your take on coffee for people with Hashimoto's?

Izabella:

I mean, if it's your coffee, then we can drink it, right?

Dave:

Okay.

Izabella:

So generally, there are a few issues with coffee. So if the coffee is moldy, then that's going to be an issue for you because mold can be a really powerful trigger for chronic fatigue syndrome from autoimmunity, Hashimoto's, adrenal dysfunction. So you want to choose a coffee that's clean, you want to focus on not the instant coffee junk, because a lot of the times it can be cross contaminated with gluten proteins, so choose wisely. So that's going to be the first part of that. If you're somebody that has a lot of issues with estrogen dominance, perhaps that might be something to look into doing a detox. My goal is not for people to live in a bubble and live as saints, my goal is for people to thrive and live fully, whether they have a thyroid condition or not, and figuring out what's going on in your body. Why are we so sensitive and how do we build back that resilience? So yes, you can drink coffee if you have a thyroid issue.

Dave:

Oh my gosh, you set so many people free. To your point, there's a lot of people who said, "Dave, you're a con artist. There's a mold in coffee." There was 36 studies that say that that's true and I didn't pay for any of them, so I'm going to go with those and all the world governments. And instant coffee is the most dangerous. The studies that show cross-reactivity of coffee with gluten, I called the lab Cyrex and asked them what they used as their testing agent. It was instant coffee.

Izabella:

Absolutely.

Dave:

Yeah. So bottom line, guys, if coffee makes your life better, I did give up coffee for five years because it was triggering my autoimmunity so much. That was why I created Bulletproof and since the time that I was running Bulletproof, now, Danger Coffee. Guys, dangercoffee.com, which has minerals that support thyroid and all that. But one of the things I also did is I said, "Okay, I'm going to go through this aggressive adrenal fix based on Wilson's book a long time ago." So people say, "Well, I'm stressed." If you're chronically stressed, you get this feeling of like I have no energy, and maybe it's thyroid, but maybe your body doesn't have an adrenal response. So I did the thing we'll talk about with shining the light in the side of your eye. In fact, why you tell me what that is and I'll tell you what happened when I did it. That test.

Izabella:

Sure. One of the tests on Dr. James Wilson, beautiful old school naturopath, and he coined the term adrenal fatigue. We can kind of get into the nuances of that, but it's essentially how you're going to respond to that light. So are your pupils going to constrict when exposed to light because that's what they're supposed to do. So when we have a balanced response between our sympathetic and parasympathetic, we're going to have these constricted pupils, but in people with adrenal dysfunction, with adrenal issues, they're not going to have that same reaction and they may be walking around with pupils that are too dilated and their pupils might constrict and then dilate back up again. So what happened with you?

Dave:

Well, the test, and you can do this at home. You take a flashlight, even your iPhone will work, and you look in the mirror and you shine the light in from the side. And if your eyes, they... What's the opposite of dilating? Constricting?

Izabella:

Constricting. Right.

Dave:

They constrict, so you have little pinpoint pupils. If they hold that way for it was like 30 seconds or something, you're fine. But if instead they start going wa, wa, wa, wa, it's your body struggling to be able to maintain that. Or what it looked like for me was I couldn't drive to work without sunglasses because it was too bright and I don't wear sunglasses at all unless I'm skiing or something where there's just a protective thing. So what I noticed was I lasted for five seconds before my eyes would do this, and to this day, if I stay up all night, which I did last week, the next day I was light sensitive. So I took some cortisol, which is an adrenal hormone, and then I wasn't light sensitive anymore. It's kind of weird.

Izabella:

Absolutely. So we know that sleep deprivation is one of the fastest ways to disrupt our stress response and to put ourselves into that survival mode and that fight or flight mode. And when you have a night of going out on the town and having a good time or whatever you're doing, or staying up with the book deadline, whatever-

Dave:

I was playing with ChatGPT.

Izabella:

Oh my gosh.

Dave:

No, I was at a party. I'm kidding.

Izabella:

ChatGPT though, that that's, that's really cool. You end up being really sleep deprived, right?

Dave:

Mm-hmm.

Izabella:

And so the next day maybe you get some sunglasses, you get a little bit more rest. Most people can bounce back from that. But there are people that are chronically stuck in that state where they're walking around and they're constantly wearing sunglasses. They cannot be outside. They feel like vampires, right?

Dave:

Mm-hmm.

Izabella:

That's a really, really big sign that something is off about your stress response, your circadian rhythm. You're probably stuck in that fight or flight adrenal dysfunction state.

Dave:

The other thing that happened when my adrenals didn't work was I would get sick all the time. So I'd get exposed to something and then all of a sudden it would just turn into a sinus infection over and over and over, or just a cold and it felt like I was just bouncing around. And when I managed to fix my adrenals, and we'll talk about how I did it, I want to talk about how you do it because you have a newer book than the way I did it. I don't get sick. It's very, very rare for me to get sick because my adrenals work. So when you have adrenals and thyroid and heaven forbid your sex hormones working like wow, you might have a really good life. Whereas so many people now are stuck with adrenals not working, maybe more so even than thyroid. In fact, what would you guess in terms of adrenal dysfunction and thyroid dysfunction in the population, which is bigger?

Izabella:

Definitely adrenal dysfunction. I just see it in so many people. So I've worked with people with chronic illness for over a decade now, and 90% of people with autoimmunity, with chronic fatigue syndrome, with Hashimoto's that I've worked with, and I've done tests for their adrenal function, 90% of them have some level of dysfunction, whether they're making too much cortisol, cortisol at the wrong times of day, or they're hardly making any cortisol at all. This was so, so common but now I talk to people all the time who don't have a "autoimmune diagnosis". They're just stuck in that survival fight or flight mode, and they have trouble sleeping at night, their energy is off. They're constantly feeling edgy, so they're like, "Oh my gosh, I'm so scared this person is out to get me." And it's just I feel like so, so common these days for people to feel that way.

Dave:

I was really happy that you wrote your new book, Adrenal Transformation Protocol because your thyroid book nailed it so well. And knowing that you're paying attention to this in your patients and in your own life, I think this is more important than thyroid. Even though thyroid is massively important, like you said, because it's affecting more people now, because I run Upgrade Labs, I get to look at how people are doing. For the first time ever instead of asking for weight loss, people are asking for stress management more than losing weight. And that's just a symptom that our adrenals are just overworked, overtaxed. The other reason it could be chemical and toxic, it's certainly has to do with social media algorithms, and it has to do with the behavior of the overlords.

Izabella:

I definitely think overlord behavior contributes to it. And so we have this bucket that gets filled up with stress, and let's say we're in a pandemic, there's a lot of stress coming from the television, there's a lot of stress coming from our personal lives because everything's shut down-

Dave:

Because you lost your business and you couldn't go outside and stuff like that.

Izabella:

You can't take your kids to school, so they're with you 24/7.

Dave:

Yeah, that'll raise your stress.

Izabella:

Just a little bit, right? And you're feeling like for moms, I know I have a young son, and it was like, "Oh my gosh, my child is learning how to talk and everybody's wearing masks. Is he going to learn how to talk?" Right?

Dave:

Yeah, or how to look at facial expressions.

Izabella:

Read facial expressions. And so we have that, right? So it's the current stressors in our lives, and then we have history of past trauma. That's a stressor that we're carrying around with us.

Dave:

Thank you. Yeah.

Izabella:

We don't even know. We don't even know that there's something inside of us that's suppressing our resilience. The studies have shown when you have a history of trauma, childhood trauma, and all of these things that can happen to us where we end up suppressing and maybe feeling like, "Well, it wasn't really a big deal, or I'm not going to..." It's not presently happening, but it causes low grade levels of inflammation. It shifts the way that you respond to stress and studies have shown people are going to be at higher risk for autoimmunity, for depression, for you name it. They're going to be at higher risk for it because of that childhood trauma or early life trauma or even trauma in adult life.

Dave:

After I started treating my adrenals years ago, I started doing personal development work, and I was about 30. I was like, "There's no threats here. Childhood trauma is nonsense or some of my birth trauma." And I got schooled in the fact that it actually matters, and even in my book that just came out, I talk about the meat operating system. Trauma goes into the body and then the body racks before you get a chance to think about it. And it's the adrenal system that's a part of how the meat operating system works. So if you liked my book, you should read Adrenal Transformation Protocol because there's lots of things you can do to mitigate trauma, which help with adrenals, but you might want to support them biologically as well. So how would you go about? I mean, you have a four-week plan in the book, so walk me through, what do I do over four weeks to address my adrenals?

Izabella:

So I know you and I like to talk about danger, and so the way-

Dave:

Just a little bit.

Izabella:

Yeah, Danger Coffee. There's good types of danger like Danger Coffee, and then there are danger signals that we receive from our environment, and they could be like the news, right? This is a dangerous signal. Holy cow, we're in a pandemic. We're in a stressful time. But then there's signals that are coming from within our body, right?

Dave:

Mm-hmm.

Izabella:

So there could be inflammation coming from the foods that we're eating. We could be sending our body dangerous signals by our habits. So if we're eating foods that are inflammatory, if we're not getting enough protein, if we're skipping too many meals and running too much on a treadmill, what does our

body sense? Our body's like, "Oh, we're in a stressful time. We're in a famine. We're being chased." And so we're getting all these messages, and if the danger signals outweigh the safety signals, we shift into this survival mode and our body's trying to preserve our life, right?

Dave:

Yeah.

Izabella:

And so rather than fixing ourselves, rather than working on our immunity, rather than giving us this beautiful energy and calm energy that we can have, we get stuck in that anxiety, overwhelmed fight or flight. So my approach to it is focusing on giving your body more safety signals.

Dave:

It sounds like you're saying that eating less calories and exercising every day might be bad for you.

Izabella:

It can be definitely if you are with somebody that is in a burned out adrenal state.

Dave:

But even if someone's not in a burned out adrenal state, limiting calories and doing cardio every day, is it ever good for you?

Izabella:

I can't say it's never good for anybody, but the people that I have personally worked with, I oftentimes tell them to cut back on cardio.

Dave:

Limiting calories and doing cardio every day, is it ever good for you?

Izabella:

I can't say it's never good for anybody, but the people that I have personally worked with, I oftentimes tell them to cut back on cardio, and I oftentimes tell them to cut back on skipping meals. So because cardio is catabolic not enough, which means that your body's going to be breaking itself down, and if we don't have enough protein, then we're not going to be able to repair ourselves. So part of what I do is I talk about you need more protein to help your body build itself back up to get into that anabolic state. Maybe instead of doing a lot of cardio, we focus on lifting weights or we focus on de-stressing exercises like yoga, right?

Dave:

Wow. I know you're a fan of protein, so I'm just wondering, wheat gluten is protein. How many grams of wheat gluten per pound of body weight do I need to get enough protein?

Izabella:

If you want to be inflamed?

Dave:

Well, maybe it's not just getting enough protein, what's the best protein?

Izabella:

I really love hydrolyzed beef protein. It's hypoallergenic, and it is something that is going to be really helpful for you to feel better, and it's tasty. There are other types of protein people can utilize if they're not sensitive to whey protein -- getting a really clean source of that can be great. Then there are things like egg white protein can be really helpful if people aren't sensitive, right? And hemp protein for some people works really well as well as organic pea protein, but it just depends. I work with a very sensitive population, so we typically look at making sure that the protein source isn't inflammatory to you. Ideally though I do love red meat as a source of protein because it does work really well and what I've noticed in people with fatigue and brain fog and like muscle wasting, which is also a common pattern of people within that adrenal dysfunction survival mode because they're in a breakdown mode, is they need carnitine, right?

Izabella:

Carnitine the only place you'll find it really is in red meat or in a supplement. So part of my protocol does utilize including more sources of red meat into your diet as you can for protein as well as, or if you're not comfortable with that, utilizing carnitine as a supplement. This is actually one of a really big game-changing supplement for getting rid of brain fog, getting rid of fatigue and helping you have better muscles. I love to look at products and protocols that have multi-functional use, and carnitine is one of these beautiful things and it's founded red meat primarily.

Dave:

It is. In fact, I started on Acetyl-L-carnitine when I was 24, and I've been on it most of the time since. But I found if I took too much of it that it was probably ramping up acetylcholine as well. I was getting jaw attention from too much Acetyl-L-carnitine, so I had to dial back on it, but it's a mitochondrial enhancer. So you like either red meat or L-carnitine for people with adrenal dysfunction?

Izabella:

Or both.

Dave:

Or both?

Izabella:

Yeah, absolutely.

Dave:

Yeah, I don't have a problem with both. Are crickets red meat?

Izabella:

I think they're green meat.

Dave:

That was a good answer. But they don't contain carnitine or good fatty acids or high quality protein. It's so interesting.

Izabella:

But they're crunchy if you're into that.

Dave:

It's true. But the deaths per calorie on crickets is really bad compared to cow.

Izabella:

I mean, if you're into crickets, no judgment here. I do think there are other sources.

Dave:

Wow. You're very woke, I didn't know.

Izabella:

I am. I spent two years in California.

Dave:

Oh, okay, got it. Yeah, I spent, geez, like half my life in California, so half my life, whatever.

Izabella:

No, actually probably more than that.

Dave:

Yeah. Okay, so there you go. By the way, I like California. It's awesome.

Izabella:

I love California too.

Dave:

Yeah. All right, so I think we settled red meat. By the way, guys, if you read Smarter Not Harder, you'll recognize some commonalities here that are concepts about trauma, about the meat operating system, and even about sources of protein that work for people. I look at people with chronic fatigue, people with autoimmunity and people who have their mitochondrial function taken way down. They're the test cases for what works for everyone. So you take people who are near the brink, and I know I was near the brink when I was really sick, and then when you take someone running at 10% of their capabilities and you double it, they're like, "I got my life back."

Dave:

So if you take someone who's running at 90% and you put them at a hundred percent, unless they meditate and they have self-awareness or tracking, they won't feel it. So we go to our edge cases, whether it's an astronaut recovering from orbit or a professional athlete or a racehorse or something, and we look at those and we look at people who are really disordered, and then they provide this

beautiful lens on what makes the rest of us strong. So the things you're talking about here, even if you're not broken, if you don't want to get broken, like eat a steak or a hamburger.

Izabella:

I love burgers.

Dave:

Now, I got to ask about this. Hamburger is a relatively high histamine food because you get bacteria that break down all those little bits of ground up stuff. What is the role of adrenal dysfunction and allergies or long COVID or mass cell activation and stuff? We seem to be seeing more and more of these days.

Izabella:

So when somebody is in that state of adrenal dysfunction, there's usually a lot going on in their bodies. And I think the old approach was like, "Oh, you're drinking too much coffee. You're not getting enough sleep, or you have a stressful job or whatever." There's a lot of arguing about what causes adrenal dysfunction if it actually exists. People are like, "No, no, it's not adrenal dysfunction. You just have mitochondrial issues." And that's true. You actually-

Dave:

They're both.

Izabella:

... probably have both, right? Or people will say like it's not adrenal dysfunction, it's mold exposure. Or it's not adrenal dysfunction, it's H. pylori, so on and so forth. So there's a lot of different causes of adrenal dysfunction where essentially what it is in very simple terms is this is how your body responds when it's under a lot of stress.

Dave:

It could be a toxin, it could be a deficiency, it could be an external threat, or it could just be an emotional story you made up in your own head, which does happen, but much less frequently that people think. Usually, I have a toxin, or I have dysfunction, or something's going on and so my body's stressed, therefore I'm going to find a stressor and it's my mother-in-law, or whatever story you make up about it and say, "I'm so anxious." And actually, no, your body's not working right, and it's telling you to do something about it. I think you cover that well in just the way you think about adrenals. It's really cool you've got the biohacker brain.

Izabella:

I love that. And your bucket gets too full with all these triggers, right?

Dave:

Yeah.

Izabella:

And so a lot of times what I see in people is with histamine issues, with adrenal dysfunction, sometimes the two go hand in hand, is that they likely have something going on in their gut. It's not that high histamine foods are evil, like bananas are not evil, right?

Dave:

No.

Izabella:

Chocolate's not evil. But what's going on is there's something in your gut that's causing you to produce too much histamine. It could be *H. pylori*, it could be *Blastocystis hominis*, it could be another type of protozoa. It could be mold colonization, it could be mold exposure, long list of things. Potentially you are also depleted in some of the nutrients that help you break down histamine. P-5-P and methionine, I've utilized this protocol for people for quite some time now, and I was trained in it actually in pharmacy school at the Pfeiffer Treatment Center back in Illinois, where there's a way to support your body clearing of histamine.

Izabella:

What I've found in people with adrenal dysfunction, adrenal issues, their B vitamin levels are just really, really low. So they're oftentimes going to be low in B6 or P-5-P, so they're not able to tolerate histamines, they're not able to tolerate glutamines, they're not able to clear out oxalates properly out of their body, and they can walk around being super sensitive to everything. So part of that healing is figuring out how to raise your body's ability to fight infections. We do that with *Saccharomyces boulardii*. There's other ways to do this where you just raise your secretory IgA and then you clear out these infections more naturally, like the protozoa pathogens, a lot of them can clear within 30 days of using that. And then we can also ramp up on some of the B vitamins, and that will help you clear out histamine naturally out of your body.

Dave:

So you talked about P-5-P, which is a form of B6 that's methylated.

Izabella:

Yeah. Yeah.

Dave:

Now I have a bone to pick with you about this.

Izabella:

Don't take B6, let's just put it that way.

Dave:

Oh, okay. Maybe I don't have a bone to pick with you.

Izabella:

Yeah, do not take B6.

Dave:

B6 is dangerous. Okay?

Izabella:

Yeah.

Dave:

Now, explain why.

Izabella:

So B6 is pyridoxine, it's a manmade version of the active version of the vitamin. And what it does is it tends to accumulate in the body, not actually B6, but there's an intermediary metabolite that has a super, super long half-life. Typically, we say that most B vitamins, you can take as much as possible and just pee them out. Not B6, you don't actually want to exceed more than 300 milligrams. I've actually-

Dave:

300's a lot. It's like tip milligrams is about-

Izabella:

Yeah, and I've seen people even reacting to small amounts of B6. The literature will say like 200 or 300. I actually don't recommend hardly any of it at all because it can have that intermediary metabolite where that sticks around for a hundred plus days, and that can cause neuropathy and all kinds of issues. So, when you think about a half-life of a drug, it takes a hundred days to get rid of half of it, to go to half of it. So if you've been taking it for a long time, and I've taken people off of the B6 when they're like, "I'm taking B6 and I have neuropathy" I'm like, "Get off of B6." So never, never take B6. You can take P-5-P and in smaller doses. You don't need as doses that are as high, and that doesn't turn into that intermediary metabolite.

Dave:

So there's no risk of neuropathy with P-5-P.

Izabella:

There is a much lesser risk, but if you already have neuropathy from B6 toxicity, then I would consider holding off on that and really testing your levels. You can do like an organics acid test to see what your B6 status is, right?

Dave:

Okay. Guys, this is really important. If you're like me and you take a hundred supplements a day, lots of companies, especially cheaper supplement companies or even energy drinks, they'll just wantingly throw B6 into the formulas. And if you count all the B6 you're taking, you might be getting enough and it's like, "That's weird. I can't feel my toes." Maybe you should lay off the B6 and we have a thyroid pharmacist here agreeing with that. So thank you for talking about it. P-5-P is the form that I use, so thanks for that kind of side thing. And if you're someone who has chronic allergies, and I'll look at P-5-P and look at methionine, which funny enough, it's an immuno acid we restrict on plant-based diets.

Izabella:

Don't get me wrong, some people feel amazing on a plant-based diet, but the people that I've typically worked with, they're struggling. And a lot of times, if they don't have religious reasons or sensitivity issues, we really focus on getting clean sources of protein to them. A lot of times it's protein and we're eating more protein and more fat throughout the day to try to get your blood sugar balance. That's a huge safety signal.

Dave:

I imagine that, right? I love it. And you're just willing to completely call BS on stuff that doesn't work. Okay, something else I would do that really made a difference and I've been recommending this since I started my blog, is either mined salt or sea salt in water when I wake up as an electrolyte source and as a sodium source. What's your take on that? How do you do that? The adrenal transformation diet.

Izabella:

So I do recommend this, and I do recommend it in a glass where you sip on sea salt throughout your day to balance your adrenals. People oftentimes have what I call I-just-ate-a-whole-bag of chips syndrome where they're really craving salty things. And even if you're eating clean, you might be like, "Wow, this food that somebody made for me or that I prepared, it's really missing salt." And we want to get a healthy salt source, we don't want to get the iodized bleached stuff. So we want to look at sea salt and you add that into a drink. The funny thing is, I used to call it sole, but I think it's actually sole, if that helps anybody to be more fancy.

Dave:

I just take a pinch of any of the salts I use. I like Oryx, I like Himalayan, I like Redmond. These are all good salts, and sometimes Celtic Sea Salt, that's all. It might have microplastics because it's from the ocean these days, but still it's all the minerals. And I do that on all my food, and I do it in water whenever I drink water, or I'll put electrolytes that also have magnesium and potassium. Talk to me about potassium and sodium and adrenal dysfunction. Do we need more potassium than we're getting or not?

Izabella:

It really does depend on the person. Typically, I recommend doing electrolytes for most people throughout their day, especially if they're having morning fatigue. I will recommend giving them just an electrolyte drink in the morning to help support healthy cortisol levels to help support a healthy blood pressure. People may want to play around with that a little bit, so I have a section on that in the book where if you're feeling like you're having a lot of cramping, if you're doing a lot more exercise, typically you might need a bit more potassium and sodium than another person. Generally, what I find is sodium is going to be one of the first things that people need to address, and then we want to look at, do you need more potassium as well?

Dave:

Got it. I typically would say almost everyone is deficient in potassium compared to historical levels. And so when you're stressed, you need more salt and your body wants it, and you should give it to your body, and then you'll perform better and feel better. Whether you're putting healthy salt on your food or you're putting it in your water, but as your salt goes up, you want your ratio potassium and sodium to go up as well. But what I would have happened before I was on top of my adrenals, I would try to take potassium in the morning and it would just trash my day because it would drop my blood pressure. So

when you're chronically fatigued and your adrenals are not producing enough cortisol, which is where I ended up, then you don't have enough blood in your brain. And if you do that, you can even have something like POTS where you start to pass out when you stand up. I found out after a lot of testing and all that I have a condition where my body never has made enough cortisol, even as a kid. It's a kinetic thing.

Izabella:

Wow.

Dave:

So I've been low cortisol, I supplement with bioidentical cortisol for a decade now, and it makes a huge difference. But if I take too much, I get a little bit puffy. So there was a time about four or five years ago where I was starting to get a little bit moon faced because I hadn't backed off as my health got better and better. I needed less and less cortisol to maintain healthy levels. But if I went off thyroid hormone and I went off cortisol and I went off testosterone right now, I would probably age 20 years in two years, and I would likely die.

Izabella:

I'm with you on that. There was a time when I did an experiment, when I came off of my supplements and all of my health habits, and I was like, "I gained 20 pounds in two months. How did this happen?" Everybody's like, "Oh, you're just genetically or naturally thin, or you just always... There's no way you were ever sick and there's no way you ever had chronic fatigue." And I'm like, "Yeah, I did." And it happens if we don't manage our health and if we don't learn how to let go of that stress, and if we don't learn how to shift into more of a thriving state, right?

Dave:

It's true. If your adrenals are trashed, you're walking around going like, "I can't bring it. No matter what, I don't have any energy." And everyone says, "But you look fine. You look healthy. There's nothing wrong." But you know, you really know there's something wrong and it's a really disturbing feeling when you're trying to do something and you know that you ought to be able to get up off the couch and you know that you ought to go do this for the kids or do this for work or whatever. And it's just not in there. There's no more gas in the tank.

Izabella:

But it's super frustrating and I know I along with many people with autoimmunity or health challenges that maybe you look thin or you don't look like you're sick, you get this message, "But you don't look sick, but you don't look sick." And people think that you're just lazy, right?

Dave:

Mm-hmm.

Izabella:

And people are like, "Well, you should just exercise more, or You should do this, or you should do that."

Dave:

Maybe you should go plant-based.

Izabella:

Yeah, exactly. But people with those flat lined adrenals, they end up doing exercise and it makes them feel worse. So it makes-

Dave:

So that's for days.

Izabella:

Yeah. If you've heard of the analogy of a spoony, they only have so many spoons per day to use up for their energy like the average healthy person with healthy adrenal function, healthy thyroid function, healthy hormonal function is going to have unlimited spoons. And these people are walking around with six or seven spoons, and if they go out with friends, it's like they have to recover for three days after that. If they push themselves, if they do an exercise, a regimen that's too long for them or too intense, they're going to be bedridden. Their body doesn't know how to recover from stress, but there's a way out. So if you have POTS, if you're a spoony, if you're chronically fatigued, there is a way out and it can take three to four weeks.

Dave:

Three to four whole weeks to get out of that. I mean, geez, guys. I mean, it's almost like you might want to read the Adrenal Transformation Protocol. I'm not kidding. It took me a couple years to dig out of that, and I did reach the point of exercise intolerance. It was a while ago, but I would just lift and not even that crazy, and then I would just be completely wiped for three days. I would need 10 hours of sleep. I'm a six and a half hours a night kind of guy and that's all I need. An hour and a half to two hours of deep and like I am so high energy. But I wasn't then and it was like, "How am I going to work today? I know I'm supposed to work, but I try to look at my computer, my eyes glaze over, and there's just nothing in there."

Dave:

One of the things that I did do is I went off coffee because I read it in that old book that said it was somehow bad for you. And I did the salt thing, and I've maybe twice in my life got into really deep adrenal dysfunction. And the second time I'm like, "You know what? Fuck that. You're supposed to have higher cortisol in the morning, and that's how you get out of bed. And a glass of coffee is life giving to people with adrenal fatigue in the morning if it's clean coffee. Not 10 cups a day, but one in the morning with some salt to get things going so you can have a quality of life while you heal." Am I on the right path or not?

Izabella:

Yeah. So I've actually gone into adrenal dysfunction three times. So I have experienced with all of the things, and the first time I healed, I focused on utilizing hormones. So pregnenolone and DHEA, some cortisol, getting all of the things like quitting the caffeine and so on and so forth. Then that helped but it does take three months to two years to work. And one of the unfortunate side effects I had with some of the hormones is that they gave me chin hair and bacne, which you don't really want when you're a woman. But the second time I was like, "Okay, I don't want to go through the whole hormonal route."

And it was during a time when I was working through... I launched a documentary series and a book and just was burning the bridge at both ends.

Dave:

Yeah, you were on the show during that time, right?

Izabella:

Oh, I was. That was fun.

Dave:

I noticed your goatee at the time.

Izabella:

Well, I didn't use the hormones then, so maybe that was just my natural look that I was going for.

Dave:

Okay.

Izabella:

But thank you. I'm going to go look in the mirror now when I get home. And so the second time, I just really focused on lifestyle. So I was like, "Let me sleep 10 to 12 hours a night and let me quit all the caffeine and whatever, and just start saying no to a bunch of stuff." And so I was able to recover my adrenals within 30 days, and then I got pregnant and had a beautiful baby. Throughout that whole process, I had been telling people, "You need to quit caffeine. You need to do this to really heal your adrenals. You need to take hormones, so on and so forth." It worked well for a lot of people, but then there were some people that were like, "I'm not going to quit caffeine." And there were people that said, "I don't want to take hormones." Or they would take the hormones and they would over convert to estrogen and cause more estrogen dominance.

Dave:

That happens to me. You give me five milligrams of DHEA and I have no libido for a week.

Izabella:

I was going to say maybe you have man boobs and I was kind of looking.

Dave:

Oh, I've had A-cups before, but I don't have them now but I don't like that stuff. I have very low DHEA, but I cannot take it because I don't like having nipples that sensitive because it's distracting.

Izabella:

I mean, it works well.

Dave:

It's just not good for me.

Izabella:

Yeah. I mean, I don't know. It works well for some people, but for some people it doesn't.

Dave:

Yeah.

Izabella:

And then I got into that adrenal dysfunction for the third time when my son was eight months old.

Dave:

That's such a classical time because of all that lack of sleep and lack of nutrients because babies steal your food.

Izabella:

Yes, yes.

Dave:

Oh my gosh, what happened?

Izabella:

Well, I was like, "Okay, I'm not sleeping, and I know that I can't go back to my adrenal protocols of sleeping 12 hours a night." That would fix me, but I can't do that. I'm taking care of-

Dave:

Because you're feeding a baby.

Izabella:

I'm taking care of a baby. And then I was like, "I can't take hormones because again, I'm feeding a baby." I don't chin hair. I don't want my baby to have chin hair. I don't want him to have bacne.

Dave:

It can nestle right under your chest hair or your chin hair, it'd be great.

Izabella:

Oh my gosh, I'm so sorry that I told you about this. Then I was like, "There's no way I'm giving up coffee. This is how I function. This is how I get through." Then it finally occurred to me that I was like some of my clients who I told them to quit coffee, but they were like, "Okay, so I quit coffee-"

Dave:

Just quit life at the same time. Why don't you?

Izabella:

They were tired throughout the day, they were drinking lots of coffee and then they were having anxiety, they were having headaches, and then they were waking up all hours of the night. I was like, "Okay, quit coffee." And they're like, "I quit coffee. Now, I'm still tired, I still have headaches. I'm still waking up all hours of the night, but now I have lost the joy as well."

Dave:

My morning went away.

Izabella:

So this is even worse than the thing of being sick and drinking coffee. If this is how you want me to heal, I can't do it. Then I was like, "Oh man, I get it. I get it." I get it as like a new mom and drinking coffee and then I kind of realized, I was like, "Oh, this is what people are doing with the coffee. They're self-medicating."

Dave:

Yes.

Izabella:

Yeah, they have low cortisol in the morning, so coffee raises our cortisol.

Dave:

Coffee and salt in the morning equals lunch.

Izabella:

Yeah, yeah, absolutely. And then in the evening time, a lot of times people would be self-medicating with alcohol-

Dave:

Even worse.

Izabella:

... and with wine because they have high cortisol in the evening and their cortisol curve is flipped. So the program, and you'll be very happy to hear that, it doesn't tell people to restrict coffee, it doesn't tell people that they need to go off of coffee. We actually focus on building their energy levels first and aligning them with the circadian with them, so they have lots of energy throughout the day-

Dave:

That's the gift.

Izabella:

... and sleep at night really, really well. And then some of them, if they choose to, they will wean off of coffee naturally over time. Typically, having a cup of coffee a day, two cups of coffee for most people is great. It has health benefits.

Dave:

This whole anti-aging thing, even three to five cups in the studies. I don't do well on five cups of coffee a day.

Izabella:

Me neither.

Dave:

So I do if two or three of them are decaf, but one to three cups for my body weight anyway, it works really well. I just want to thank you for telling people with adrenal dysfunction that if you're using caffeine in the morning to raise your cortisol so you feel good, that it's okay. Because I think it's actually very mean-spirited to tell people with chronic fatigue and exhaustion, the one thing that's working for you, stop doing that. It doesn't work for the vast majority of people, or like you said, it can take two years.

Izabella:

Absolutely. And there's other things, like you talked about utilizing sea salt or stepping outside and getting some sunshine, that can raise your cortisol levels naturally. When you sleep better, that's going to help you build that morning cortisol when you get rid of some of the inflammation in your body. So you can enjoy your coffee, but not be dependent on it. I have people that have gone through the program that were drinking six cups of coffee-

Dave:

It's not healthy.

Izabella:

... a day, and their goal was to wean off. And so usually by week three, when they have enough energy, we're like, "If this is an optional ween and this is how you do it, you don't do it cold turkey." I tried that once. Yeah, that was not fun.

Dave:

You just switch to aspirin if you're going to do that.

Izabella:

Yeah. So you can do it gradually over time where maybe you cut down by 25% and then you get to your goal. I still drink on average two cups of caffeine a day. If I go any more than that, then it's a gateway drug to overwork for me.

Dave:

So when I was younger and growing my Silicon Valley life, I would go on the cycle of like one cup, two cups, and just keep adding coffee throughout the day and then I'd go, "Oh, I have to do something." And then I would go cold turkey for two weeks, and then I would slowly climb up. I would just say, if you find you're constantly adding cups of coffee, something is not working. I've been at the fixed level of coffee, which is about three cups a day forever, and maybe it's five sometimes, but I'm doing espresso which is half the caffeine of normal coffee. So if I do five of those, those are three cups of normal coffee, same

difference. But I've been that way for a long time and I don't want or need more, and so the deal is if you need more coffee, you're probably doing it wrong.

Dave:

And yes, guys, I sell Danger Coffee and I'm telling you, drink the right amount for you, but don't do more than you need. If it's a dependency where you can't get through the day at all without increasing your consumption, you have a problem. But if you need a cup of coffee in the morning so that you can feel like yourself, you probably should work on your adrenals, but you don't have to give up the coffee to work on your adrenals, because if you do that, you won't have the energy to work on your adrenals. That was my experience.

Izabella:

Absolutely.

Dave:

So here's what I would tell someone, I want you to poke holes in what I do. Okay. I'm lazy. I'm a biohacker. I like results in the smallest pulse amount of time. And my strategy is generally, "Oh, you have a problem? Let's just do everything that'll work all at once, as long as they don't counteract each other." So you get results, and then you can back off and see what actually worked, because I just want you to have your state, and this is one of the criticisms I had of just western medicine in general. They're like, "Well, let's try one thing and see if it works, and three months later we'll try another thing." I'm like, "I only have that many three month periods in my life, and I'd like to have those maximized where I'm like awesome."

Dave:

So someone came in with really clear adrenal fatigue and I said, "All right, here's what I want you to do. Have a cup of coffee in the morning. Have some salt in your water in the morning, have some magnesium too, and take the supplements and all that. But I also want you to take relatively high dose adrenal glandulars. I want to take licorice root extract, and I want you to take 2.5 to 5 milligrams of cortef in the morning and at lunch." That's bioidentical cortisol, guys. It's prescription. "And then I want you to take whatever you need to go to sleep, not alcohol. You can use kava from TRUKAVA if you want to, or you could use any of the sleep formulas like the Qualia Formula." I think you can use Code Dave or something for Qualia. Sorry guys, I don't remember the code, but I'm an advisor to them. But any of the sleep formulas that you like, and if you just do that for the vast majority of people, you're probably going to be okay. So poke holes in that. What's wrong? What's missing?

Izabella:

Oh my goodness. Okay, where do I start?

Dave:

You're going to just shred me here. I just do what works.

Izabella:

Okay, so starting off with glandulars, I think they could work really well for some people. They are amazing, but if you get the whole cortex extract, you can actually get some adrenaline into your system. So where that's not super fun.

Dave:

Doesn't that feel good though?

Izabella:

No. You feel like your heart is racing and you're having a panic attack. So I've had people that have my clients that have come to me or people just commenting on my Facebook page that said, "I tried this adrenal extract and I went to the emergency room with a panic attack." Right?

Dave:

Oh my God.

Izabella:

And if you do doses that are too high, this can happen. If you dose them at night as well as dosing-

Dave:

Yeah, they can keep you up.

Izabella:

Hydrocortisone at nighttime or too late in the evening, or a dose that's too high for you. You can suppress your pituitary access and then your body won't make its own cortisol. So this could be an issue for a lot of people.

Dave:

Yeah, cortisol at night is rough.

Izabella:

It can be rough. And just applying topical steroids for prolonged periods of time, all of these things, it's like our body is a feedback system. So if you're giving yourself external hormones, your body's going to say, "Huh, we're good. We don't have to make our own, right?"

Dave:

Is that a bad thing?

Izabella:

It is a good thing if your body physically can't produce those hormones. But if your brain is disconnected from your adrenal glands, which is what's happening in HPA axis dysfunction, then perhaps there might be another way to wake up and reestablish that connection again. But there are ways to reestablish that connection really, really well and a lot of it is focused on some of the lifestyle tools and shifting your body, teaching your body how to naturally get out of that survival state and teaching it to go into a more

thriving state. So we talked about the glandulars and then kava, right? And so utilizing things at bedtime, kava can be a helpful supplement for some people and then there are-

Dave:

As long as it's clean, because that's another with a histamine. That's why I do the TRUKAVA stuff.

Izabella:

Yeah, there could be some issues with it, like you said. But generally, there are other ways to really support your circadian rhythm. So if you're having trouble sleeping, then there are some considerations. It's not always a melatonin issue. It's not always like because you're kava deficient, right?

Dave:

Or ambient, I mean.

Izabella:

You're ambient deficient, right? Don't get me wrong, I think I am always like, there's more than one way to skin a cat and I think I'm supposed to say there's more than one way to peel a potato these days. But the issue comes up with people where they are just disconnected from the circadian rhythm, which is the majority of people that I work with and there's a way to connect with it again. So the bright lights in the morning, eating in daylight hours, spending time in nature, spending time outside throughout the day, this is going to be great. That lets your body know it's wakey wakey time.

Dave:

Shocking, right?

Izabella:

Yeah. And then in the evening time, you have a wind down routine, so you're not like... If you're watching Netflix, if you're looking at your phone after dark and you don't have that dark mode on, or you're just exposed to bright lights, then your body's not going to know that it's time to wind down and go to sleep. In our house, our new house, we have these red lights that turn on every night after sunset, and all of our neighbors have come over and been like, "Hey, what's going on here?" So you don't have to get that intense, you can just get some of Dave's glasses to block out some of the lights so that your body knows it's time to fall asleep.

Dave:

I would really encourage you, I'm not even kidding. LED lights draw five times more insects than incandescent light bulbs. It's one of the reasons that we've lost about 60% of the insect mass on the planet, which is part of the destruction of the soil. It's the big chemical companies like Dow and Monsanto and Bayer that are killing the rest of the bugs. But it's your lights. So turn off your outdoor lights at night or make them red, and if you do it, you'll be as cool as Izabella and as cool as me.

Izabella:

So shine your weirdo light, find others like you.

Dave:

Yeah, it's like it attracts other biohackers like moths. So when you see the red lights outside, it doesn't mean that they're in a submarine.

Izabella:

Another habit that I utilize is Epsom salt baths where they just really load me up on magnesium before bed. And I have found that my deep sleep is about three hours when I utilize those, and I do them longer than the average person so I do recommend people start with 10 to 15 minutes and they can dry out your skin and so on and so forth. But usually that in a dark room helps me sleep really well and then a cold room, you generally want it to be around 65 degrees because you'll wake up with nightmares if you don't have a cold enough room. So this is part of what I teach people, just really focus on your sleep. So part of that magnesium and that dark light or that darkness in your room and all the light exposure, this works for about half of the people.

Izabella:

I also focus on blood sugar imbalances. If you're waking up at that 3:00 AM, let's focus on balanced blood sugar eating. We can do something like myo-inositol. We can utilize carnitine to help your body burn fatty acids throughout the night so you sleep longer. Then I'll focus on, if you're waking up frequently throughout the night, this could be like an ammonia toxicity. You have too much ammonia in your body and that's causing frequent night wakings. And so magnesium can be really helpful with that as well as carnitine, making sure you're pooping on a regular basis.

Dave:

What else helps with ammonia is ornithine.

Izabella:

Ornithine, yes.

Dave:

I put that in the sleep formula that I did for Bulletproof when I was involved with the company, and it was really popular. The reason it was in there is because ammonia is messing with people's sleep and the people were saying, "I can only use this one and it works." It was because we are addressing ammonia. That's just mostly formulas don't even consider that. I love it. You're the only person I know who talks about ammonia and sleep.

Izabella:

Interesting. We both came up with that. Interesting. I talk about ammonia in this book as well, because it can really mess with people and people don't realize that this is a trigger. And things like H. Pylori, protein malabsorption, constipation, CBS, gene mutation, all these things can actually contribute to people creating more ammonia in their bodies. Yeah, ornithine is kind of the thing if you're waking up a lot throughout the night.

Dave:

Wow, that's so cool. Literally no one knows that stuff except for you because, well, you're the thyroid pharmacist. You know all your cool stuff. Anytime we get to sit down, because we've known each other for a decade now. Anytime we sit down, I just love nerding out with you because you know all the weird

stuff that I know and so I'm always swapping notes and like, "Do you know about this? Do you know about that?" I do want to plug a couple things here. Number one, you should get Izabella's newest book and her last book too. If you're into biohacking and all that, Adrenal Transformation Protocol. I cannot recommend this more strongly. If you just feel like you have no energy, there's a very good chance it's your adrenals.

Dave:

I've dealt with this actually for much of my life. I'm super on top of it. I have more energy now and I have eight companies and 300 million downloads and eight books and all sorts of cool stuff going on. It's because I got my energy back and it's because my adrenals work, my thyroid works, my sex hormones work, and I dealt with all the other stuff that you hear about in an Adrenal Transformation. So just got to say, Izabella, you rock. You're one of the most knowledgeable people I know, which is why you've been on six times on this show, and you just keep bringing new information and making it real accessible. So thank you.

Izabella:

Thank you so much for having me, and thank you for all the things you've taught me over the years.

Dave:

Oh, very welcome. Again, the book by Izabella Wentz, Adrenal Transformation Protocol. See ya.