



**THE SPECTRUM
OF HEALTH**
— P O D C A S T —

Podcast Session #41

How to Beat Autoimmune

With Palmer Kippola

*Palmer Kippola is an author, speaker, and functional medicine certified health coach who has used her two decade battle with multiple sclerosis to help others fight their own autoimmune battles. She's the author of **Beat Autoimmune: The 6 Keys to Reverse Your Condition and Reclaim Your Health.***

<https://palmerkippola.com>

00:07 Dr. Christine Schaffner: Welcome everyone, I'm Dr. Christine Schaffner, and today, I'm speaking with Palmer Kippola. Palmer is an author, speaker, autoimmune recovery advocate and functional medicine certified health coach. She developed the FIGHTS framework to help others beat autoimmune conditions based on her two decade battle to overcome MS. We're talking about how you can beat autoimmune. She has a wonderful book called Beat Autoimmune: The 6 Keys to Reverse Your Condition and Reclaim Your Health. So please enjoy the podcast. Welcome Palmer, I'm so excited to interview you today.

00:45 Palmer Kippola: It is an honor to be here, Christine, thank you so much for having me.

00:49 DS: I know that we've recently met each other in person at a conference this summer and you shared your work and your book. I was really, really impressed with your book, Palmer. You cover really all the aspects that we're constantly looking at at Sophia Health Institute. I really admire your framework in that you're trying to make such complex topics simple and less overwhelming and accessible for those who need it. So thank you for tackling this project, your book is fantastic. As we jump in, we have a lot to cover and I just want to make sure we highlight everything that you want to share today. Your journey began with your personal story. Can you share with our listeners what made you become an autoimmune expert?

01:47 PK: Well, yes, I have to take you back in time a little bit, because I was 19. So, let's go back to when I'm 19. I had just finished my freshman year of college, I went home for the summer, for summer break, I was working a summer job, and I was a happy, healthy, well-adjusted teenage young

woman and one morning I woke up and the soles of my feet were all tingly, like that feeling that you've slept on a limb and the blood rushes back and you have a tingling sensation. Well, this happened to me that morning and as much as I shook my feet, the blood didn't rush back. I still went off to work thinking it's just going to go away. Off I went and the tingling kept creeping up my legs, like a vine that morning, and I knew something was wrong. So I called my parents, who called the family doctor, who said "Get her over to the neurologist at UCLA this afternoon," and that's what we did. We sat in the neurologist's office and she did this cursory exam, had me walk across her floor, heel-toe and touch my nose and all of those things, did my reflexes, and after only about five or six minutes, she said, "I am 99% certain that you have MS, multiple sclerosis, and if I'm right, there's nothing you can do." And we just looked at each other, we'd never heard of MS, multiple sclerosis--this was in the '80s, before the Internet, and we just didn't have any friends with MS. We had never heard of this and as we left her office, she said to my mom and dad, you'd better get ready to prepare for her life in a wheelchair, because that's the likely prognosis. My parents didn't tell me that for years, but we left her office with very little information, very little hope, we didn't know what to do and she just had us go home and wait. Fortunately, I didn't take any steroid medications, it was just a waiting game to see if it got worse, and it did. We went home and that night, my mom crawled in bed with me and she's holding me, and crying a little and by this time, the tingling had reached all the way up underneath my chin and then all of the areas that had been tingling went completely numb, and my whole body would stay numb for a full six weeks. It was an absolutely terrifying time and we had really no idea what to expect.

04:15 PK: We didn't know whether or not I needed to stay home and live with my parents? It was just a really unpredictable, scary time, and I was basically relegated to the couch. During those six weeks, that was an important time, because I lay there and friends came to visit, who weren't too scared off by this mysterious condition. I could walk, I just didn't have a sense of where my limbs were in space, so I looked really funny shuffling from my bedroom. My dad would help me install myself on the couch, and people came over to visit and some people brought the standard gifts, the books, the cookies, watched movies with me. And this one family friend came to visit and she gave me a gift that I didn't realize was a gift until years later. She asked me, "Palmer, why do you think you got the MS?" I mean, I was just floored, I was offended, I didn't know what she was talking about, I was shocked and I just couldn't let it go. So I lay there on that couch chewing on that question like a dog with a bone. Well, wait a minute, did I cause this to happen? How in the world would that happen?

05:26 PK: I want to take you back a little bit farther in time, because I had been adopted as a baby by very loving parents at three days old, but my dad had been a fighter pilot whose way was invariably the right way, and he yelled a lot and was opinionated and judgmental, and there was a lot of yelling in the household. I think my earliest memory that came to me while I'm lying on the couch at age 19, was this image in my mind of me, age three or four, standing in the hallway with my little dukes up, my dad is yelling at my mom calling her names because she struggled with her weight and he didn't like that. I just wasn't going to have any of that, I didn't want that at all, and I realized that I had become hypervigilant. Really, I was always on, I was always scanning the environment for safety.

06:24 PK: I endured periods of insomnia as a child, and so, I believed in that moment on the couch that chronic stress was in fact the root of the MS, and that still rings true today. Now we know so much more about the definitive connection between stress and autoimmune conditions, and we have the ACEs study, which stands for Adverse Childhood Experiences, which effectively proves that what happens in childhood doesn't stay in childhood. I had in my own experience about three ACEs, which the simplified version is, the more points you have, the greater your likelihood or risk factors for disease later in life. Now it's modifiable, but...we'll get into that part, but at this moment, I just realized that chronic stress was my biggest trigger.

07:14 DS: I think your journey is so empowering, as we walk through what you've discovered and what you learned. If you had just stuck to what the neurologist had told you, you wouldn't even think to look deeper, because that's not what science was telling any of them to tell you. I think this autoimmune conversation is so important, especially as autoimmune illnesses are on the rise, and we just have so many ways and facets to look at these. I think it's so important that you just mentioned this hypervigilant emotional state and the stress state and how this was mirrored in your physical body in your immune system being hypervigilant and on too high of an alert. And that translated into this symptomology. So, I think, it's important to see that connection.

08:33 PK: Brilliant. I'm so glad you mentioned that, because I didn't know how I intuited that at the time, but I figured that my immune system, it was kind of like lunging at windmills. If you remember Don Quixote, there's no villain really there, but he's fighting. That's the mode that I was in and my immune system I believe became a proxy for that. I'm really clear about that, but I'm also

glad that you mentioned sticking to trying to find solutions. Because over the 26 years that I suffered from relapsing-remitting MS, I saw six neurologists, each of whom told me there was nothing I could do except take medication, maybe my life would be shortened, maybe I would be in a wheelchair and that was the best they could do. On the other hand, I had my dad. Now, my dad, I already mentioned in the story, and he seems to come across as a villain of the piece, but I also want to say, he was so empowering and motivational to me, and probably my greatest teacher ever, so it's this dichotomy. When I was lying on the couch, he would say to me, "Honey, you can beat this thing, I know you can do it." He was encouraging me to do all of these experiments while the neurologists were saying in the other ear, there's nothing you can do.

09:49 PK: I really credit my dad for getting me on the path of healing, which is just such a blessing, if you think about it. My parents aren't alive anymore. I wish they were, but I know they're with me still. And so, I did a number of experiments over the years, and I just really want to simplify this, if I may?

10:12 DS: Please.

10:14 PK: Because I intuited that stress was my biggest root cause, I knew I needed to do something to relax. I started doing yoga in the late '80s, and that was so nourishing for me, just to let it go and to have the soothing voice of the instructor, and I started meditating in the early '90s. As long as I stuck to those things, those practices, I noticed a reduction in symptoms, but when I was stressed conversely, whether it was conflict at home or at school, I was really overwhelmed with exams or whatever, and later in the workforce, I

would notice almost immediately a correlation with exacerbations. So, it became a really clear cause and effect that stress reduction and anything that I could do to activate that parasympathetic response was super important. And now we know and I've learned that our stress response is immediate, and we don't need to train it. That's our survival mechanism, right? I mean, you can't fault that 3-year-old child for doing the best she could under the circumstances, but as a 30-year-old or 40, or 50 year old, those same responses don't serve us well. So we actually have to practice engaging the relaxation response.

11:30 PK: So, that was a huge, huge experiment that really, really worked. And I'll just skip over briefly to the only diet book at the time--the Swank Diet book that said low-fat vegetarian was the way to go. [chuckle]

11:45 DS: Oh, gosh.

11:46 PK: My family would eat margarine and non-fat milk, and if you can even remember ice milk, ice cream. I may be really dating myself, but it was awful, so I couldn't go any lower fat. But then I added more healthy "whole grains" and noticed a worsening of tummy troubles, and no reduction of MS symptoms, so that didn't work. I tried vegetarian, vegan, macrobiotic, you name it, anything that added more grains to my diet was not a bonus. I did eventually get worn down by an especially persistent neurologist at Stanford who insisted I go on medication or my life would be shortened. I tried an injectable for four years and I had significant reactions to it, and I didn't notice any improvement of symptoms, so at this point, the stress reduction was really doing well for me. Finally, it took until 2010 for me to put some things together. Now we had the Internet, now I'm educating myself, and I decided to

go see a nutritionist and I found a functional medicine nutritionist who ran a number of tests. I found that I had non-celiac gluten sensitivity, which now we may understand to affect up to 30% or even more of the population, and we have science...

13:02 PK: If you know Dr. Fasano's study of 2015 he talks about gluten creating a leaky gut in anyone who eats it, but we know even more now that the leaky gut or the intestinal hyperpermeability is the pathway to autoimmune conditions. I had been eating this steady stream of gluten my entire life, Cheerios for breakfast, peanut butter and jelly sandwich for lunch. There's the gluten in the moldy peanuts, and maybe pasta and pizza for dinner. This functional medicine nutritionist led me through a gut-healing protocol where I removed the gluten and the dairy and the other inflammatory stuff and within a week of removing it, I didn't have any tummy troubles after eating, no gurgling tummy, which I had thought that was normal, so I thought everybody experienced that--but no more tummy troubles. Within one month I stopped having any and all MS symptoms, ever again.

13:57 DS: Wow.

13:58 PK: But I have to add really super quickly that this story may be unique, and I'm not saying to just remove the gluten and you're done with healing with autoimmune conditions, we'll get into FIGHTS and we'll see that. But most people start with food. I had started with emotional pain and chronic stress, right? So, if I hadn't been whittling away my toxin bucket for those 26 years, I don't know that removing gluten would have had the impact it did on me. Suffice it to say, that was what I call my Eureka experiment.

14:36 DS: I'm so happy that you have been doing so well and you really have been able to share your story. I was sharing before I hopped on the call with you that my patients come in waves and I feel like I have a handful of new MS patients and it's just always great to hear these stories of hope, that people can and do recover from these illnesses after going into the conventional world. I think that fear that people are surrounded by can contribute to the stress going through the illness. I appreciate you sharing your story and I want to go over a framework. For people who might be new to some of our topics, you mentioned the test that you used to identify this non-celiac gluten sensitivity. Can you just share quickly how people can get tested for that?

15:43 PK: Absolutely. There are a couple of options. There are Cyrex Laboratories now... I don't know if it's devoted exclusively to autoimmune testing, but that is a good one. I think it's their array number three that test for a number of different types of gluten, because there's not just one. I don't know if it's Tom O'Brien that talks about 23,000 different combinations. So, the testing is still kind of primitive, but there's another one, the Vibrant Wellness Zoomer, Wheat Zoomer test can be very helpful for people. So those are two things. Maybe the best experiment that you can do is put on your own lab coat and just take those things out of your diet for 30 days. And I'll talk a little bit about the science of this autoimmune equation as we know it.

16:42 PK: I had this cognitive dissonance after healing. I mean, I stopped feeling like I was plugged into an electrical wall socket 24/7. I stopped having these really super heavy legs like lead when I woke up in the morning. If I can add, I'd like to say, because I had some before and after lab work, both MRIs, as well as a Cyrex test that can measure antibodies to your myelin basic protein and all of my antibodies are in the normal range and I have since had an

MRI that shows that my lesions have either disappeared, or faded. And the neurologist that I went back to finally said, "This really couldn't be a better story." At one point, he said, "Well, maybe your MS was benign after all." I'm not sure there is such a thing as benign MS. So, you know, or it's a "spontaneous remission,"...no, there are effects and causes. I just wanted people to know that.

17:38 DS: I love that because when people see, especially if they're battling an MS diagnosis, these brain scans, the neurologist will tell them, this is wonderful. I've seen this too in my own work, that the lesions can improve and reverse, and so it's just a new paradigm that we're all exploring with neuroplasticity and with creating new pathways and new neurons. There are no limits to the brain's ability to heal, which I love. So, you have this wonderful book Palmer, called *Beat Autoimmune: The 6 Keys to Reverse Your Condition and Reclaim Your Health*. It's a wonderful book, and you go through all of the important topics and I recommended that to our audience if they want to go deeper. We're going to look at the framework that you've created, called FIGHTS. Can you tell us what that means and what that stands for?

18:38 PK: Yes. So, as I mentioned, after healing, I didn't set out to write a book, I set out to understand how it was possible that I healed, because I had this cognitive dissonance. I mean, I was in high tech sales and marketing, so health was not my field, but I just couldn't leave well enough alone having been told for 26 years there was nothing I could do, and then there was so much I could do. I just dove into PubMed which is that huge database of biomedical research. Anyone can do it. And I found, just as a framework to present the framework, some empowering science that I didn't feel like people

had been made aware of. The first is epigenetics, and the second is an autoimmune equation. The epigenetics literally means 'on top of the gene' and it completely refutes this idea that our DNA is our destiny, in other words that we're doomed to get whatever our parents or grandparents had.

19:38 PK: In fact, it's the environment that matters most, and it's the environment that gives rise to whether or not those genes get expressed. So I thought, "Oh my goodness, well, maybe I changed things. I'll always have the genes for the MS, but those genes don't have to be switched on. We can switch them off by how we live." The second piece of exciting science I found was this autoimmune equation, it turns out, we've always known that genes and environmental factors play a role in autoimmunity, but nobody really knew how those two worlds came together to cause that to be expressed. Then along came Dr. Fasano and his team who are now at Harvard Medical School and they found the third element in the equation needed for autoimmunity to occur, and that is the intestinal hyperpermeability or the leaky gut as we know it. So, the exciting part about the equation is that if you flip the equation, you can heal the condition. I don't know anything more empowering. I didn't know why that wasn't front page news, and so, I had unknowingly followed this autoimmune equation by finding and removing my big triggers and healing my gut.

20:50 PK: If you heal and seal the line of your gut, that's really the key to this whole thing. So then I decided, oh my goodness, I need to help people figure out what they need to do. I wanted to come up with what are all the environmental factors that we control? I put them on this sheet, and then being a word person, I decided to categorize them and they turned out to spell this

word FIGHTS, which stands for food, infections, gut health, hormone balance, toxins, and stress. Stress is last, but not least, but in any way, it turns out that's kind of metaphorically perfect. It's all the root causes or it's the big ones that we can control, it doesn't include genes, but epigenetically if we follow those we can switch our genes off or on. It becomes a choice. So that's how I came up with those categories. I can take you through each one and give you maybe a little science blurb for each, would that be helpful?

21:43 DS: Yes. I love the way that you're framing the empowering possibilities of healing--that it's not just your genes, but it's this whole interaction between our environment, not only infections and stress, certainly toxicity, but how our emotional health can really play a role. I'm really happy that you're touching on all this and so, let's just go through and please, you have the stage to go through this FIGHTS framework and educate us.

22:20 PK: Alright, let's start with food, because in writing this book, I interviewed dozens of functional medicine experts, and I include in the book 12 doctors who themselves reversed autoimmune conditions, had been told that they had something incurable, but lo and behold, they cured themselves. When I interviewed them, each one of them said start with food. I asked why and they said, because it's the highest leverage category, that means they see and I see in my own coaching practice about 60% to 80%, and sometimes even 100% of symptoms can be reversed just by starting with removing those inflammatory foods. So, that's why we start there, because once you remove those foods and you start to feel better, you actually have more energy and more motivation to get to other categories. The three top foods that we see causing problems, number one, by far in a way, is gluten. It just has

the most research behind it. It seems to be the biggest baddie, and as I mentioned, that Fasano study from 2015 that says not just celiacs, which is maybe 1% to 3% of the population, not just people with non-celiac gluten sensitivity, which may be 30% of the population, but it creates a leaky gut in anyone who eats it.

23:44 PK: I just want to preface this by saying I'm not saying that everyone who eats gluten is going to get an autoimmune condition. What I am saying is, if you know you have one, I don't care which of the 150 it is, it could be MS, Lupus, rheumatoid arthritis, you name it...the list goes on and on and on. If you're still eating gluten, you're continuing probably to perpetuate the autoimmune attack, because you're keeping those junctions loose, those tight junctions have loosened up in the lining of your small intestine and protein particles are getting into the bloodstream and your immune system is just doing its job, trying to protect you, and it starts going after the gluten and ultimately it misfires, cross-fires and our own tissues get caught in the attack. We need to be vigilant about taking the bad stuff out. Gluten is number one. Number two is dairy. Cow dairy in particular seems to be very inflammatory and is linked with a lot of autoimmune conditions, including type one diabetes. It's not the lactose that seems to be the biggest problem, it's the casein, which is a protein in dairy.

24:54 PK: I've had conversations with Dr. Vasandani about it...can you do goat and sheep, and those smaller animals? He wants people to take all dairy out. I think after 30 days, if you don't react to goat and sheep, maybe you can try that, but for at least 30 days, get rid of all dairy products with the exception of ghee, which is clarified butter and actually can be quite nourishing, it doesn't have the inflammatory products. So, replace your butter with ghee for

that 30-day period. And the third food that is a big baddie is sugar and this doesn't get talked about very much in terms of autoimmunity. But it turns out that sugar in any form, whether it is fructose or sucrose or anything with an 'ose' at the end can block your immune system from working for up to five hours after eating it. That study was done, Christine, back in 1973. So, we've known this for a really long time.

25:54 PK: And so, if you're dealing with autoimmunity or think you might be because you've got mysterious symptoms, just know that it's an immune system problem, so you want to do anything you can to unblock your immune system and get it balanced. And so, those are the top three recommendations, but there are many more. The biggest question I get from clients and people is, what do I eat if I have an autoimmune condition? So I created this small e-book called 'Your Optimal Food Guide.' People are in the best position to decide that for themselves through their own experimentation. You can go to www.palmerkippola.com/gift and download that guide, and that could be very helpful to get you started on that path of figuring out your best foods.

26:44 PK: Next on the list is the gut, we don't go in the order that FIGHTS is spelled. I just want to say two things about that, gut naturally follows food and hormones and is naturally last, because it's downstream from everything else. And maybe we can balance our hormones once we deal with all of these other categories. But we have to heal and seal our gut in order to reverse and prevent autoimmune conditions. We heard about the autoimmune equation, and so, the two big stars in our gut are the microbiome and the gut lining, and it turns out that's where about 75% of our immune system resides. So, the first thing we have to do when talking about the gut is take out the bad stuff

and we've already done that. We're doing this 30-day what I call "food vacation," I've kind of rebranded the elimination diet to make it more positive sounding thing...

[chuckle]

27:38 DS: I like that.

27:38 PK: You know, take a vacation from habitual foods and try new things.

27:41 DS: Nobody wants to do the elimination diet. So, I love that, I love that reframe.

27:47 PK: So, we've got to take out the bad stuff, no doubt about it. And it's not just the bad foods which are the sad foods that we know about, but I think we're tending as a society to treat our guts like garbage disposals and just kinda shove anything down there without being mindful of what we're doing. The first place to start is with those foods, the conventional meats in particular, and the oils that we're eating that are just rancid and bad and all of that, and the animals that are eating these GMO grains which they're sprayed or are Roundup Ready, what not, when we eat that, we're not just what we eat, we're whatever we eat ate. It's really important to just be mindful of that. So, wherever you can go with organic food is really consequential. The other stuff to take out, if you don't have to take an antibiotic, don't--if you've got a life-threatening something that's super important, but just for the common cold, minimize those medications and work with your doctor on that healing gut infections. And last but not least, I want to comment about the gut--did you know that stress creates a leaky gut?

29:03 DS: Makes sense, right?

29:05 PK: Yeah, it really does. I mean, we've got that vagal nerve just as the highway between, I don't know how much farther down below the gut it goes, but it's connected to our brain, and when we are stressed out, it creates these really loose junctions in the gut. So we really need to be mindful of our stress and practice relaxation. All of these categories, you'll see, they interconnect, they're all connected. You can't really separate them out, right?

29:34 DS: Yes, and of course, that's why you're able to heal without just sticking to a conventional paradigm. I mean, that's what functional medicine and naturopathic medicine is, right? The body is not these separate compartments. We're highly interconnected. I know everyone who's listening, probably figured that out [chuckle] but it's important. Yes, it's an important point to continue to reiterate that every system in the body is interconnected.

30:02 PK: Right, some of the most basic things are worth repeating. So just a couple of final things on the gut, and I'll move on a little bit faster. People over 40 tend not to have enough stomach acid and sometimes can really be helped by adding digestive enzymes, and probiotics are foundational. If you don't want to take probiotics, fermented foods can offer a really great amount of probiotic bacteria. It's super helpful to find a really good one and rotate them once a month or so, right? And then, probiotics means "for life" and what do probiotics eat? Well, they eat prebiotics, which come before the probiotics, so prebiotics are actually fiber, it's a fancy word for fiber. So, we, in the United States, I think we eat something like 10 to 15 grams of fiber per

day. I think the American Medical Association recommends that we get about 30 grams. Our ancestors ate between 100 and 150 grams of fiber per day.

31:04 DS: Wow.

31:04 PK: So, I think it's interesting and helpful to know that if you don't eat fiber, your probiotics, your good gut bugs need to eat something, and they start eating you, that is the mucus lining of your gut, and you don't want them to do that. It's a very protective coating, so you want to be eating fiber and I recommend in the book, try to aim for 40 or 50 grams a day. You might miss it, but if you aim for it, if you have the intention, then you're on the right path. And you can do that from colorful vegetables and prebiotic powders like Inulin and Acacia and Jerusalem artichoke and green banana powder even, so you can add that to smoothies or you'll find a way to get that in, you can add them like that.

31:53 DS: Do you find that people have to go a little slow with those if their gut is a little compromised just because of all the action that can start happening?

31:57 PK: Yes.

32:00 DS: When you introduce probiotics if you have a compromised gut?

32:04 PK: Absolutely. Thank you so much for saying that. Caution, proceed with caution...

32:09 DS: I just don't want to get an email after this, because scoops of probiotics in the smoothie, it can just create a lot of happy bacteria. So, just go slowly. Yes.

32:19 PK: Yes. They will be having a party. [chuckle] No, go slowly and then, as you're ready, ramp up to that level, absolutely. So glad you said that. Thank you for the disclaimer. The next thing I just want to touch on is toxins, because they are such a big driver of this autoimmune pandemic. Because we've been talking about food, Dr. Pizzorno who wrote 'The Toxin Solution,' claims that about 70% of our toxic load comes from the food we're eating. I've already spoken to the pesticides and herbicides found in conventional animal products. So again, here's how the categories kind of overlap--there was a study that was done on children that were eating conventional meats and fruits, and vegetables, and they went all organic and over a few days of eating organic food they reduced their toxic body burden by 50%. So again, really consequential. And if people need help, I'm sure they know they can go to the Environmental Working Group and look up the Clean 15 or the Dirty Dozen charts, they change yearly. That's a great way to start cleaning up the environment of what you're putting into your gut.

33:31 PK: Another big, big category in toxins is the air we breathe, and it turns out that 90% of the pollution we face is indoors, that our indoor air can be up to hundred times more polluted than our outdoor air. So, it can be as simple as opening your windows, if you can afford it, get a HEPA Air filter, get house plants and as an environmental expert shares, ban the broom, because that's just circulating those toxins and mobile particles, and so forth, use a HEPA vacuum cleaner. Super important. But these little things, it sounds so simple and so basic, but they really add up. If you just can make

those simple changes, open your window, get some house plants, and use a HEPA vacuum, you're lowering the body burden, and I think that's huge. The last thing I'll say about toxins is that we find a lot of people are slathering on these body care products with the phthalates and the parabens and things like fragrance, which is a catchall for parabens and so forth. I recommend to people if you don't recognize the ingredients, don't use it, and better still, if you can't pronounce them or if you wouldn't eat them, don't put them on your body, because your skin is your biggest organ, it's going to just absorb it right in.

34:52 PK: And water is super, super important, and ideally, spring water is best. You can find a spring by visiting findaspring.org, where you can do a search and find if there is a local spring, and you can take these glass jars. My husband and I do this and go to a local spring and cart the water home. Or if you can do a whole house water filter, that's fantastic, and don't forget water filters on your shower. Those are super important basic things that make a big difference.

35:26 DS: That's a great point. We're so good about educating people on water filters, but we forget the shower filter. I'm really passionate about the skin care piece and the personal care product piece, because of some of the other work I do. I think that's such another important place to look, in order to avoid exposure.

35:51 PK: Yes, so simple things you can do. And then we jump to infections. I love this quote that it's not the bug, it's the terrain. So we've had this kill, kill, kill, strategy of just going after something and eradicating it, and it's really a violent kind of metaphor. It doesn't necessarily work that way. It's really about

improving the terrain of your body, so that your body is not a hospitable place for infections. I've heard it said that up to 99% of the microbes in us are actually beneficial, so we don't want to be employing this kill, kill, kill strategy, we really want to understand this, and we can get tested. I think it's a really helpful thing to understand what's going on in your gut, for example, with a few tests, like GI effects or GI map which can identify whether there are pathogens in there like parasites and Candida bacterial imbalances and so forth. But to really go about it in a way where you're employing herbs and as much natural stuff as you possibly can is best. Again, we just don't want to go after everything with this big guns approach of antibiotics. I'm sure that resonates with what you do in your practice.

37:09 DS: Yes, I think it's so important. I always like to say too, Palmer and I know you understand this too, is that we're not meant to be these sterile bodies, we're a thriving ecosystem and we want to have the right combination of bugs. That is all about getting the immune system to be the one in charge rather than the bugs. I think it's just a different way to look at, oh, you have an infection, you take medication, and then the bug is gone. It's a lot more complex, especially when we're more dealing with more persistent and stealthy pathogens.

37:53 PK: Absolutely, I'm so glad you said that about the immune system, because one of the big tenets that I recommend under infections is to un-burden your immune system. And how do you do that? Well, the first thing is to remove the sugar and the starchy carbs that are really going to cause your immune system not to be operating at full capacity. Another thing that you can do is to move, you know, move more, and get good sleep. All of these things

are really helpful for your immune system. In my case, I later found after healing, and so forth, I had some other health issues, when you beat autoimmune you're not done, like, life continues to happen. I had a year where I had multiple colds and I couldn't figure out why and I went and had a cone beam x-ray and found that I had four cavitations in my wisdom teeth area. So I just want to shine a light for a moment on oral health, because it has been so pivotal in my own experience and work with clients that are not healing, which is why I have this advanced considerations chapter in the book for people to really look at this and go to an expert who can run this cone beam, which is a special 3D kind of x-ray looking at your mouth, because you may not even feel like you have an infection.

39:11 PK: I didn't feel like I had an infection, but after I had the surgery I felt better... I had two surgeries. They do one side at a time. I healed very well, I stopped having colds. I knew almost immediately that that had been burdening my immune system for a while. So, that's just another really good thing that you can check--your oral health.

39:33 DS: That's a big part of our work at Sophia. It's just an often overlooked block for people's healing and so, I agree. I think there's so much that people can do if you're in that percentage where you're still struggling, and then definitely work with people who know how to identify these things and deal with them safely and strategically.

39:56 PK: Absolutely. So, let's jump into stress, because this is a huge category, and it's also a vicious cycle when it comes to chronic disease as you know. There is research that shows that most people have signs of significant stress that proceeds an autoimmune attack, but the autoimmunity itself is

stressful. So people stay stuck in this loop. I just want to say something really simple about this is, whatever you do that works for you to activate that parasympathetic rest and digest, tend and befriend whatever you want to call it, that's what you'll do, that's what will work for you. So, for some people that might be meditation. One of the simplest strategies to address stress right away is to become a belly breather, and just notice when you take a deep breath in, are your shoulders moving, is your chest puffing out? And if that's the case, you're actually activating your sympathetic stress response, you don't want to be getting your shoulders and your chest involved with breathing. You want your belly to go out like a balloon. And we've been, especially women have been trained to pull your tummy in, look really slender. But the point is, you want to be breathing, all the way you want to engage your diaphragm, you want to be bringing the breath all the way down and you want to pay more attention to your out breath.

41:19 PK: So some of the simplest strategies for stress reduction, are simple and free and right under your nose. Sometimes with clients, I have them set chimes, not shrill alarms, but a very gentle chime as a reminder throughout the day to practice, maybe five breaths or five different breath-holding practices that can be very, very helpful. And there are other things, there's a myriad of things that one can do, and I offer a number of strategies in the book. Some of the most basic things are the ones that work. They sound cliché, but get outside, walk barefoot, get some sun, move a little. For those who haven't tried tapping, otherwise known as emotional freedom technique, I have personally found and clients I work with have found that to be an especially useful self-help and self-soothing technique. There are videos online that you can find and use to just practice along with people who can guide you through this. I had to deliver the eulogy for my mother and I was really stressed, and I

did some EFT tapping before that and it made a ton of difference. So, I just want to encourage people to try things. That's one of the biggest takeaways that I can just offer is, you have to try what works for you. Because what works for me may not be the same thing that will work for you, right?

42:46 DS: Absolutely, and I'm grateful you mentioned tapping. We do that at the office and we actually had a guest practitioner this past week, Julie Schiffman, she has her own website and she has a lot of videos actually on her website of walking people through tapping. She worked with Dr. Mercola in his office.

43:04 PK: Yes.

43:05 DS: It was really fun, because we do a lot of this work, Palmer, at our office. It was really fun to have her here this week, just to see the feedback and see the shifts in patients that happen pretty immediately when you do this work. I think that there are so many tools for stress reduction, and it just has to be part of your lifestyle, and even though it might take time to really make it a habit, it's foundational.

43:38 PK: Absolutely, positively. I do know of Julie Schiffman, and I've watched her videos, she's fantastic. Brad Yates is another one, for people who resonate with a male, he would be somebody that I would recommend, just following his free online videos. And shall I go through hormones quickly, last?

43:55 DS: Yes, please.

43:55 PK: Okay. So, this is naturally last because if you do this other stuff, and you take the bad stuff out and you put the good stuff in and you do it for a long enough period of time, sometimes your hormones can get back into balance. I'll just give some simple strategies that I think sometimes are overlooked. The easiest thing that you can do is related to vitamin D which is a pro-hormone. I don't know if everybody listening knows that vitamin D is actually a pro-hormone instead of a vitamin, but that is one of the most basic things. It is low in people with autoimmune conditions, particularly in MS. So, I recommend people get their vitamin D levels up to about 80 and try to keep it there. It's just one of the most preventative things. You have vitamin D receptors in so many cells in your body. I don't know if it's every cell, but so many cells, it has so many functions, and it helps to boost your immune system. That's something that you can ask your doctor, to run a vitamin D test a couple of times a year. And make sure you stay in a safe zone, but whatever you do, get it up out of the teens, and 20s, and 30s and 40s and see if you can get it to a good functional level. I don't know what your thoughts are on vitamin D.

45:09 DS: Yes, we're in between 80 and 100, honestly, these days. But you want to, of course, make sure your calcium is within normal range. We find that many of our patients feel better in that level.

45:23 PK: I'm so glad you said that, I really am, because I have a patient, a client actually, who called me and said her doctor actually yelled at her because her vitamin D was 60 and he felt like it was too high.

45:38 DS: I know, I think it just depends where you go to medical school and it's one of those vitamins that they create a lot of fear about, understandably

with the fat soluble vitamins. But I think the research is there, and patients feel better and I just am all about monitoring calcium when the vitamin D goes higher and it's rarely elevated. I've only seen it once or twice. And so yes, I think it's a great tool.

46:07 PK: Great, wonderful. So that's probably the easiest hormone that you can work with on your own. Another thing you can do on your own, is get some morning sun. This is one of the greatest ways. Get outside with no contacts or glasses on at your earliest convenience, don't necessarily stare at the sun, but just allow the sun to come into your eyes, so you're not wearing sunglasses and it's actually activating your retina and helping to restore your circadian rhythm and melatonin production. I think that is one of the easiest, and most simple things that people can do. Even if you can't walk, you just go sit outside for a little bit, and that's really helpful with stress. That's going to help also, not only raise your melatonin, but it might actually help to lower your cortisol a little bit. Another big problem with people with autoimmunity is that they have high insulin and high insulin is the pathway to pre-diabetes, and diabetes and obesity are risk factors, not only for autoimmunity, but for Alzheimer's. So, we need to lower our insulin and we do that both by reducing or eliminating sugar and starchy foods and lowering our carb levels, but also, when we lower our toxin exposure.

47:24 PK: I think Dr. Pizzorno also found that with a lot of his patients with diabetes, it wasn't just about the carbs they were eating, it was about their toxin exposure. So again, this is another case where these different categories are affecting each other, so that's how your insulin can come down. We talked about stress already. And when you reduce stress and actively practice these relaxation techniques, your cortisol gets back into a normal rhythm, which is

fantastic. The last thing I'll say about hormones is that one of the greatest things that you could do for yourself, is to boost your oxytocin levels. And we can do that simply by asking for and getting more hugs. It's a great way of connecting with people and getting the care you need. Talking with good friends and seeing good friends and being in community and laughing, all of those things can help to really, really activate this love hormone called oxytocin.

48:26 DS: I love that. My daughter is 14 months and I'm experiencing oxytocin first-hand, and she loves to share it too...I laugh when she's around friends or even my patients or my co-workers that she's just giving out oxytocin, you know, right now.

[chuckle]

48:45 PK: Oh, I love it, I love it. We don't need a nasal spray, we need to borrow your daughter.

48:47 DS: Yes. [laughter] I know.

48:50 PK: I love it, I love it.

48:51 DS: She's part of the treatment plan, you know?

48:53 PK: But you know seriously, when older people are in hospitals or nursing homes or whatever, and they bring in pets to visit, my mom had this and they brought in visiting dogs... I mean, you can see the smile on their faces. You can see the warmth and the love and their eyes light up, because it

doesn't have to be a person, it could be your pet. There's actually science about staring into a pet's eyes, it actually really helps to boost your oxytocin levels, and also in the dog or the cat, it goes both ways.

49:27 DS: Absolutely, absolutely, so important. Well, Palmer, goodness, we could talk all day, but this is so comprehensive. And even with these big, large topics you were able to really break them down. Again, your book for anyone who's listening, is a way for people to go deeper to understand each category and how they can really implement and investigate some of these solutions. I think you did a fabulous job in writing this book, and I'm sure this was a labor of love. I have not written a book yet and I just can't imagine the undertaking, but yours really hits everything that we really want to go through when people come to Sophia Health Institute. So, thank you for doing this. I'm definitely going to put this book in the waiting room as well, so people can have this as a guide. Palmer, how can people find out more about you and your work and your book?

50:28 PK: So, about the book, since you're on that topic, it has its own little page. If you go to beatautoimmunebook.com, you can learn more about it. See the reviews there and then it'll take you to different places like Amazon, which is having a 30% off sale right now, it's a paperback and available on Kindle. It will be eventually available as an audio version as well. And then when you come back to that book page, you can download three free bonuses. It's a great way of getting more things to help you on your healing journey. People can find out about me at palmerkippola.com, that's where I blog, I share healing stories, and I run a private Facebook group called Transcend Autoimmune for anyone who is seeking to heal and thrive actively. So, come

on over there and check it out, if that is appealing to you, and you want community and more support.

51:21 DS: Great, I'm so glad you're doing that. That's such an accessible way to connect with people, so thank you.

51:27 PK: Absolutely.

51:28 DS: Well, thank you so much for being on the podcast, Palmer, this was so fun for me to get to know you more and your work more and I just really enjoyed it, so thank you.

51:36 PK: Oh, it's just absolutely been an honor and a pleasure and I'm thrilled, thank you so much for having me.

51:42 DS: Thank you for listening to The Spectrum of Health podcast. I hope you enjoyed my conversation today with Palmer Kippola. Check out her book, Beat Autoimmune. I think it's a fantastic wealth of knowledge and you can go deeper with our conversation with her book, and if you are enjoying these podcasts, please, if you would love to leave us a review, I'd be so grateful, and if you have anyone you want me to interview or you would like me to consider, please email us at info@drchristineschaffner.com. I really appreciate your support and this has been just so much fun for me to get to do these and I hope they are of service to you, so thank you.