



Heart Health through Bioenergetic Transformation

Guest: Niki Gratrix

The contents of this presentation are for informational purposes only and are not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. This presentation does not provide medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health provider with any questions you may have regarding a medical condition.

Mark: Welcome to the Women's Heart Health Summit. I'm your host, Dr. Mark Menolascino of the Meno Clinic in Jackson Hole, Wyoming. This is your chance to hear from international world experts about how to achieve optimal health, optimal vitality, and prevent heart disease. We're joined today by Niki Gratrix. She's a famous world-wide counselor, lecturer, and I think you're going to really enjoy the wisdom that she shares today. Thank you so much for joining us, Niki.

Niki: Thank you so much for having me, Mark. It's a pleasure to be here.

Mark: Well, thank you. Let me tell our viewers a little bit about your diverse background and excellent accomplishments. Niki Gratrix is an awarding winning, internationally renowned transformation coach, nutritional therapist, and bioenergetic practitioner, helping people to optimize energy. Since 2004, she's completed over ten thousand consultations in over forty countries around the world, helping people to achieve and overcome their fatigue, to get their lives back, and live an abundant and fulfilling life.

Niki is passionate about using both psycho-emotional, energetic, and physical approaches for a truly comprehensive, radically holistic approach to abundant energy and health. She's known for being able to identify and articulate how the mind and body work together as one unit, helping people to connect all the dots, and moving them along in their healing journey. In 2005, she

cofounded one of the largest mind-body clinics in integrative medicine in the United Kingdom. The results with the patients and the clinic were later published as a study in 2012 in the *British Medical Journal*.

In August 2015, she hosted the largest ever free online health summit on overcoming fatigue, interviewing twenty-nine world experts on optimizing energy, with over 30,000 attendees. Niki has been the recipient of two O work visas from the U.S.A., granted only to people who can demonstrate extraordinary ability in their field. And again, Niki, so much I welcome you to our summit. Thank you so much for being here. And I think all of our viewers are really going to enjoy listening to you today.

Niki: Thank you so much. Yes, I really am happy to talk on this topic. It's so important. And thank you for doing the summit.

Mark: Well, women's health, with what we're taught as M.D.s in the U.S., we treat everybody the same. And that's one of the problems with heart disease. In your work, how do you help women to really get grounded as unique individuals? And what are some of the strategies that you use to help them be empowered as individuals?

Niki: That's a great question. And my passion is about really the impact of psychology, the mind and our emotions, and how the body and mind are really one thing. So one of the things that I help women and men to do, but most of my clients are women, is help them to identify patterns and identify how what they're thinking, feeling, and even, very important, their childhood experience can have a profound impact on health.

And that covers everything from touching on lifestyle, dietary aspects, lifestyle aspects, but also who they are in the world and how they are going about their life, like what's working and what's not working, how positive they feel on a regular basis and how stressed they are. Because if you're just focusing on the biochemistry, you're not going to get the best out of the biochemistry if the nervous system is in a chronic state of sympathetic nervous system stress all the time. You're not in a healing state.

And so I talk all the time to my clients, are you in a stressed state or in a healing state? You need to be in the healing state, obviously, to allow everything that's happening on the biochemistry, the diet, other things you're doing. To optimize that, you need to be in a healing state. And a lot of people aren't in a healing state.

Mark: Well, I know in the U.S. in medicine and really all over the world, the medical doctors are so focused on the biochemistry and the science of it, they forget the heart in it. And having someone on a team that can really address those issues, I think that's more important than all the other things we do in integrative and functional medicine, being able to address that, including what happened as a child and a long time ago. How do you help women to see how what's happened in the past affects what they're doing presently and in the future?

Niki: That's a really important question. And actually, part of it is the education process, like the pre-education process. People need to be clued up, like I might ask them quite personal questions about what's going on with their private life and so on. And they need to understand why we're doing that, and that they feel safe and they can trust to do it.

One of the things I always share, I think this is one of the most important studies ever done in medicine, was a study called the adverse childhood experience study, the AC study. And we hear a lot about mind-body medicine, but I don't think people know enough about this particular study. And it blows everything out of the water. If you think that how you feel and how you think doesn't affect your health, this is the study that really confirms that.

So just briefly, it was a study done mainstream, CDC, Kaiser-Permanent, seventeen and half thousand adults in the U.S. And they essentially looked at early life stress and correlated that with adult onset chronic complex illness in adulthood. And essentially if you had a high level of adversity in childhood, you have a dramatic increased risk of seven of the top ten causes of death. If you had a moderate level of adversity in childhood, you have a twenty year reduction in lifespan.

If you have, and we'll talk about what ACEs are, adverse childhood experiences, but if you have, for example, 8 ACEs, that's very high, you've got three times the risk of heart disease and three and a half times the risk of lung cancer in adulthood. And it was crazy, 4 ACEs is a four-hundred percent increase in depression, Alzheimer's. It was just across the board.

And what are we talking about? We're talking about things like parents separating and divorce. How common is that? I think fifty percent of the audience may have experienced that as a child. That would be things like physical or sexual or emotional abuse, witnessing domestic violence, things like incarceration of a family member, mental illness in the family, or substance abuse.

And that wasn't an exhaustive list. That was just ten categories the researchers kind of picked together, because there was other research on it. And the issue is, with that type of early life stress, it causes a neuro-endocrine-immune system reset. It changes the nervous system, so that we're in more of a chronic state of stress.

So we get to adulthood, we've already got internal kind of endogenous sources of stress that were reset from childhood. And how we are in childhood affects how well we cope with stress in our adulthood. Do we have certain personality traits that are actually survival strategies from a difficult childhood that allowed us to survive in childhood, but in adulthood are actually maladaptive and are making us worse? They're no longer relevant.

So you asked about how do I help people identify if they've had early life stress. One is you can do your ACE score. And you can just go online, and we can talk about that at the end. I've got a free link on my website. You can just start to think about it, what happened to me in childhood and how did I respond? So certain survival strategies may be things like being an overachiever, never taking time out, not putting time in for relaxation, which is so common here in the U.S. and the western world.

Mark: So Niki, thank you so much for sharing with us about the ACE score. That's something we've talked about with some other speakers. And I do feel that it's so important. Do some of your clients not even know about these events that happened to them and are stuck as adults and have these health issues as an adult, even there may be an event or a situation they weren't aware of as a child?

Niki: Yes. That's a key point. It's very difficult sometimes to know if you've experience a certain type of trauma, especially emotional neglect, which is very common. It's probably at epidemic levels. And even a simple ACE questionnaire, looking at adverse childhood events, where you ask somebody did you experience emotional neglect as a child, how would you know that? How would you know to self report it if you're parents didn't respond in a particular way? How should you have known?

And you tend to only know or end up finding out by having maybe some kind of health issue and then sort of dig in and speaking and researching. And then you start to look at the signs and symptoms of somebody who may have experienced emotional neglect. And then you start to have adults together. So it's an exploration process.

Mark: I love the way you approach clients and particularly women, because women have so many facets to something like a mood disorder, whether it's depression or anxiety. It's not just a serotonin deficiency. It's all of these other systems that are out of balance. Is that how you see it as well?

Niki: It's very multi-factorial. So these days we're not just looking at a singular organ, or even a single hormone that's out of balance. I'm really talking about stress. And stress has sort of a multi-factorial impact on the body. It affects multiple systems and organs. So the brain might change. Then the nervous system goes into more of the flight/fight stress state response. The vagus nerve and the vagal tone start to kind of reduce.

And that has a ton of other impacts on the body, everything from increasing the chances of things like leaky gut, suppressing immunity at the same time. It's creating potentially excessive inflammation in the body. Really it touches everything. It down-regulates certain hormones and up-regulates the stress hormones, sometimes at the cost of the sex hormones, for example. So it's very multi-factorial.

And stress, even though everybody experiences it, it's actually having a multi-factorial impact. So a whole set of different things are going wrong in the body, with an end outcome that you might get a diagnosis of one particular thing. But everything else is going out of whack, too. I hope that makes sense.

Mark: It does, it does. Your clients are so fortunate. When they find you, they must feel like they've gone to heaven. They finally can find someone who can tie the science to the emotion, to the stress, to the history. There are very few people that can do that. Again, the fact that you can tie all these together, the more people you work with you, do you see these patterns? Are they easier for you to see because it's also tied together?

Niki: Yes. And, you know, it's very interesting. My background was working with chronic fatigue syndrome, fibromyalgia and chronic fatigue, the very extreme end of fatigue. And it was a study really in stress and how that affects the body. I got to see sort of all aspects.

I could see how a person dealt with their lives, whether they were kind of being like the achiever type, as I call it, or the give type, always putting everyone else before themselves. So pattern recognition of actually personality traits approaches, and then you would see like commonalities of health issues that they would have through a particular adaptive personality style. So that's one aspect of it.

If someone has that personality proneness, those traits, you will go into an increased level of stress in the body. And then how that manifests in illness just depends on, I guess that you could call it their genetic weak link. Does it go into being more of a brain disorder or heart disorder, or does it become a fatigue, fibromyalgia type condition? So it's kind of this mixture of stress, probably throw some toxins as well, and then with the genetic propensity.

So it's a big picture. It's keeping the big picture in mind, and helping people to connect the dots so that they don't get reductionistic. It really blows out of the water the idea that you can just fix something with a pill, you know a pill for every ill. When people really see the full context of their health existing in a social context, as well as the mental context, it kind of changes everything.

Mark: Well I feel that women especially that suffer from chronic fatigue syndrome and fibromyalgia are some of the least understood clients that show up to a doctor's office. A lot of them are dismissed. It's all in their head. They just need a better anti-depressant. So it seems like a lot of these women are dismissed when they come in with those labels to the doctor's office. And it really takes a whole person approach like you're providing.

How are you able to start to see those patterns in someone with, for example, fibromyalgia? And do you see that ten different women, or ten women with the same diagnosis of fibromyalgia may have ten different routes to get there?

Niki: Yes. So with, for example, fibromyalgia, there's a friend of mine, Dr. David Brady, who's an expert in fibromyalgia, and he's actually at the point now where he says someone does not have true classical fibromyalgia unless they've had trauma, some kind of emotional trauma, and the emotional trauma or physical trauma. And if they don't have that, they will have some other kind of functional imbalance.

But fibromyalgia very much is where the mind-body is almost symbolic. So we have this unresolved emotion that gets translated into physical pain because it hasn't been dealt with at the emotional level. So it gets shunted into the body, if you like, but expresses it as pain physically. But it's a message that something emotionally hasn't been addressed. And you can say if somebody has fibromyalgia, you've got a whole lot of information right there.

And then you start to look at people's history. And you start to ask them about that and encourage them in a gentle safe way to explore their own history. Start with doing something like an ACE score. But there other things people can do.

I work a lot with the system called the Enneagram Personality Typing System. It's used by a lot of psychologists. It's just a way of identifying certain traits. It's not about categories. It's about identifying.

Mark: Can you tell us more about that, Niki? Tell us more about that. That's fascinating.

Niki: Yes. This system of nine personality types, this was coming from chronic fatigue research. But like a type 1 is the perfectionist. And they create a lot of stress, internal stress, because they kind of have a semi-conscious drive or map driving their behavior that they're not always aware of. But if they do everything right, they'll be okay.

And underneath that, it usually comes from a childhood experience. It's feeling as if you weren't validated and you got a lot of criticism, and you were kind of on the borderline of too much criticism, a quite harsh upbringing. You can then start to identify as being bad or defective. So the way you overcome that is I've got to do everything perfectly, and then I'll be okay, right? So it's a lack of self love ultimately. So it's quite deep stuff, deep patterns.

Mark: I've got a lot of people that identify with that that are listening right now.

Niki: Yes. And that leads to both beliefs and behaviors that are destructive to health or that can be destructive to health. And there's a balance. But there's this going too far, and then it's becoming destructive. So it might be, again, putting huge amounts of pressure on yourself constantly, not having time to take out to do things that stimulate the healthy healing state of the vagus nerve, for example. And we're Spartan, we're driven by fear. When we're driven by fear, we're in survival frame, fearing we're going to get mauled any moment. So that's type 1. It's the perfectionist type.

Another very common one, and this is a big one. A lot of women fall into this one, the giver type. And the givers are usually empathic. They care about other people. But they tend to put everybody else first before their own needs. And you see a lot of therapists like this, too. And in childhood, the interesting experience is often there was a degree of neglect. And they learned how to get love by giving it first. So if I give love, I notice I might get something back.

But again, there was a degree of neglect there, like we didn't experience unconditional love. So then there becomes an attachment to that, where we

must look after everybody else. And it's almost a cliché, but that core feeling of knowing you can't help other people if you don't help yourself first. If you don't have energy, if you don't have health, and you never look after yourself, you don't make time for yourself and prioritize and schedule in self care, then you're going to end up ill. And people will suffer because of that.

So it's that balance between enough self care. So I see a lot of that in chronic fatigue and fibromyalgia, a lot of giver types. It's completely different from the perfectionist or the type 3, the achiever type. That's a very common one we see as well. That's people who are driven by human doings. I call them human doings.

Well a lot of us relate to this, too. Maybe if we get enough self worth from external achievements and our belief systems and wellbeing is reliant on these external achievements, again, that can create a lot of pressure, never stopping. We're emotionally dependent. If we stop, we are right in fear again that we're unlovable. But it's a self worth issue, the type 3, self worth.

Again, childhood experience, they were rewarded doing and achieving. So it's status oriented. So those types of things lead to health issues through behavior and internal beliefs. Like ultimately if we don't love ourselves as we are, then the body knows this and will start to manifest a physical expression of illness. We're out of balance, so the body is out of balance.

Mark: And Niki, a lot of the clients you see, do they have different pieces of each of these subtypes. And does a different type manifest at different times in their lives as well?

Niki: That's a really good question. Yes, everybody has got a little bit of some of that in them. And so people might relate to all of the above.

Mark: I think I do.

Niki: There's often one that is kind of underlying. It takes some intuition to get it. But very much what you say is true. Under certain circumstances, people will experience this. And under certain circumstances we might be, shall we say, triggered. And we just realize that we behaved like maybe a ten-year-old in response to something. We're like what happened there? I seem to be hijacked and my adulthood left me.

So we sort of do have these sub-personalities that come into play to help us deal with different life situations. And you can totally have somebody who can

be a total achiever type in their workplace. And then they could be a completely submissive, loving, caring person in the family environment. And how we respond to stress and the levels of stress are going to be different at different times. So, yea, it's not a fixed thing.

Mark: And do you feel, Niki, that the pressures on women--they've always been difficult--but there's so much pressure on women today to be the perfect friend, the perfect mom, the perfect partner, the perfect worker, and their needs really come last for a lot of women. How do you help teach them to put themselves first?

Niki: Yea, you know, it actually takes courage. It takes courage to acknowledge if your life isn't working properly, and you have health issues that might require these lifestyle changes. You know, sometimes it's not always easy. A health crisis can often cause us to start looking at everything, diet, lifestyle, what we're doing in our life. Who we're going hanging out with is very important as well.

And then when we start to make changes, it can be disruptive. It's like creative destruction in our lives so that we can get rid of things that aren't supporting us. But that can cause disruption. There may be partners or there may be people that have gotten used to us being a certain way. And then we're like, I'm going to change this, because I need to feel better and I need to have better health.

And some people aren't always supportive, because then the spotlight comes on them. And then they are kind of looking at themselves as well. So it's understanding that it takes courage and to let go of the illusion. Like everyone else's life is usually pretty screwed up as well, so let them kind of deal with their stuff. And I always talk to clients about, you know, once you're exuding a certain amount of health and joy, and you've had to make some difficult choices and decisions and changes, once you're living that, other people are going to look at you and be like how is she doing that.

It has to be realistic as well. Like if you're going to be a high-flying, like top class lawyer in a law firm, those people work serious hours, and they work nonstop, that's a personal decision, where a woman if she chooses to do that. My personal opinion is that a woman doesn't have to choose that.

She might not want to do that. She might want to do something completely different. And it allows her to spend more time self nurturing and being there

for her family more. And that's not a failure. That's a conscious decision to acknowledge what makes her happy or not.

So I think there's a movement going on around women about that. You know, it's great that we were given these equal opportunities, but the outcome isn't necessarily going to be equal. It's good that we have equal opportunities. But one woman will choose to be in a very sort of pressured, competitive male-type of environment. And she will do that her whole life and she'll be happy, and that's her thing.

But for the rest of us, we might not choose that. And really that's finding out who you are and have the courage to be that, even when other people might not agree with you. And then let those people go if they don't support you. You need to be around supportive people. So, yea, I think that's how I'm kind of helping women to kind of let go of an external idea about who they should be and listen to what makes them happy and start to tune in to what makes them happy.

Mark: I love your messaging. I love the way you think and the way your words are so empowering. I think for all our viewers, I hope they're really taking this to heart, the idea that you can be whatever you want to be. There may be some challenges. But you don't have to be what other people want you to be. I have a lot of clients that they are empathic. And I tell them wouldn't it just be better if you didn't care? Life would be so much easier. There wouldn't be so much pain.

Niki: Yes.

Mark: But they do care. And it is a burden for a lot of people. What are some of the strategies they can do to help them to buffer that, besides understanding their past and accepting their present and their own goals? How do you help women to come to terms and to have strategies to empower them with this?

Niki: Yea. So especially with the empathy types, boundaries are really important. First of all, know what you need. Start to tune in and identify and connect with your needs. We have to start to spend time alone and scheduling that time in. Usually it will require scheduling. That's very important. It just doesn't happen otherwise.

You have to cultivate this. You have to cultivate positive emotions and kind of cultivate time alone. Otherwise, it really won't happen. Everybody else will just take over your time with their demands and so on. So scheduling in time

alone, even like writing lists of what do you enjoy doing that you haven't been doing that you know you would love to do and to be doing on a regular basis. That might be things that help health that you enjoy, but also things that feed your soul, feed the heart.

So once you've got that, you will then start to know who you are. Then you've got a boundary you can articulate. And that's very important as well, articulation, the communication. I call it non-violent communication. So don't expect other people to kind of mind read that that's what you need. How were they supposed to know if you didn't even know yourself, because you never spent time alone to find out what you needed.

So then communicate in a non-judgmental way, like these are my needs. Like once a week, I'm going to disappear for two hours on a Sunday morning. I want the family to be taken care of, just so the whole family can support that. So knowing what you need, knowing the boundaries, and articulating them are part of that.

When I say tuning in, like noticing what feeds you and what drains you. And that can be people. It can be certain foods. It can be just certain activities. Being in crowds sometimes is very relevant to an empathetic type. Because they're so sensitive, it's kind of knowing what does and doesn't feed them. With empaths, by the way, I call them the orchid children, because they're sensitive, but a lot of them think it's a weakness. Since I'm sensitive, that's a weakness and it's a burden. And it's not at all. It's actually a great gift.

And there's empirical science research showing that there are kids that are orchids, versus kids that are dandelions. And dandelions can like sort of grow anywhere in tough environments. Orchids aren't quite the same. They're more sensitive, and they need the kind of greenhouse care. But when they get the greenhouse care, they outperform the dandelions.

Mark: I love that. I love that.

Niki: Yea. So I always talk about orchid children. So if you're an empath or a sensitive type and you seem to react to everything, other people, chemicals, food, it's actually probably because you have this exquisitely attuned nervous system that is going to give you a gift of something you can give back to society, that dandelions actually don't have.

And that's empirically proven in children who got the greenhouse care. It's like you've got a Ferrari. Other people have Land Rovers. And you can't drive off roads with a Ferrari, right? But the Land Rovers can't go 200 miles per hour

down a straight road, right? So always just know your make and model. Know who you are. And then you can minimize the risk and optimize what you have.

Mark: I hear a lot of acceptance in what you're saying, about all of us really finding out who we are, what we are, how we got here, and then having acceptance for our strengths and our weaknesses. And let them all play together to be manifested as best as possible. I love how you think, Niki. That's a very empowering thought for people.

Niki: Yea. And I hope through the acceptance of the identification, the acknowledgement and the acceptance, paradoxically you need that for change. Like if you're resisting, you can see something and you can't see having it done on yourself without resisting it, because you're trying to push it away and you hate that part of you. It's a bit like what you resist persists.

So it's kind of like a degree of emotional mastery, kind of just going with the flow with things that you do. So if you see something go, okay. And then the compassion piece, because usually the stuff that you don't like, it has usually come from an adaptive strategy from childhood that allowed you to survive. So it's not your fault. It was an environmental failure.

I find that such a huge piece. It's almost like so many people actually suffer from self-love deficit disorder. That's the cause of most chronic complex illness. That's my view, my belief. I think self-love deficit disorder is a huge piece. And love is medicine. And I could quote science studies that would totally back that up completely.

Mark: You're quoting Bernie Siegel's title of his book, *Love as Medicine*. And you've said a couple of metaphors here. You kind of snuck them in quickly. And I want to share them with everyone. The self-love deficit disorder, I think that that's just an amazing thought process, how we don't appreciate our good.

You know, I've heard someone talk about the carrot and the stick. When we lie in bed, why do we think about the one thing that went wrong that day versus cherishing the ten great things that we did that day? And it's the carrot and stick that evolutionarily we know that there will be another carrot tomorrow, that we can always get the carrot and get the reward. But if the stick gets us today, we don't get a second shot.

And so do you see that a lot in clients, where they're almost hardwired to

ruminate on their lack of success, rather than to really champion and empower them with their success?

Niki: Absolutely. You know, it's an epidemic of being in I call that survival brain, like in fear all the time and assuming the worst and the kind of pessimism and so on. It's kind of as if we stop worrying, something is going to go wrong. So we have to keep worrying, because somehow that makes us safe. That's not rationale at all. It's a mental hijacker, I call it. It's kind of the emotions hijacking the rationale brain.

But you know, it is a tough life. Life is difficult. It can be. It's not an inherently safe place. And it is something that takes courage. You can have like naïve courage. That's when we're young and nothing has gone wrong yet. And we can sort of seem fearless. And then we'll take some knocks. You might have the loss of a job, the loss of a loved one, a divorce, a health crisis. And then to come back from that and get back into life and trust again, now that's true courage and strength, because it's not based on naivety. It takes wisdom.

So I always say I think life is not a safe place to come into. There's crazy stuff going on internationally and politically and everything at the moment. So learning to cultivate that, it really is you're kind of going against mass consciousness. You're going against the grain. It's all the more why it's important to have this structured focus in time on cultivating positive states, cultivating time to actually stop, slow down, and do something that just really feels good. Make sure you do one thing a day that you love to do.

You know, time in nature, I mean this amazing picture that's right behind you, there are so many science papers about the power of nature to calm the nervous system down. It increases endorphins. It reduces depression. The sunlight and the earth, these are huge supports that are free. They'll help you just balance out. Sometimes the most that we need to do is just go for a walk outside. And it's such an underestimated support for us, and it's right there.

So thinks like time in nature, and things you like to do, like walking on the beach, time with pets, positive social relations. Gratitude journaling is a way to cultivate getting to that positive state, because our default is to do what you said and go to the negative. Get up in the morning and do five things that you love to do. Like put some essential oils on. They lift the mood. Put some bright lights on. Do some yoga stretches. Do maybe some intentions for the day and some gratitude journaling. That's great. That will set you up for the day. That's sort of the things I get my clients to do.

Mark: You have so many great pearls for people. And I hope they're writing all these down. You're talking about really the self care and also resilience. And if may ask you more about both of those. Allowing ourselves, the doing of good things for ourselves, and like you said, just go for a walk, just do some exercise, ideally with your dog. Dogs get more people healthy than I do. Or do it with your friend, your lover, your family member, just socialness. I think we don't really appreciate how healthy good social relationships really are. Do you think that, too?

Niki: Yes. It's gigantic. There's an amazing study about the quality of your social relations is a greater indicator of survival rates than how much you exercise, your BMI, things like cholesterol, and whether you smoke fifteen cigarettes a day. That was a 300,000 person meta-study about the impact of social relations. So it's actually one of the most important aspects of mind-body medicine.

It's one of the most robust science findings that if you are isolated or there are conflictual social relations, basically right there you're going to switch down your immune system. It's going to suppress parts of the immune system. You're going to create inflammation in other areas. This total connection that's going on between the brain, the nervous system, and the immune system, and it's totally about this one thing. It's bi-directional. And your cells are listening to you, truly.

Suddenly you sort of get aware that I've got a backache, I'm a getting pains, and so on. And it's like often people weren't connected to that argument you had with that person. Maybe you're feeling trapped. That's a classic cause of back pain, for example. So I'm talking slightly shallowly there. But social relations, if you are in a health crisis, for example, I mentioned it or touched on it before, it can be one of the biggest reasons why people don't recover, other people. I call it OP, other people.

Some people would rather be ill than tell their emotional truth to a partner or family environment. And then you've got cultural aspects coming into that as well. As humans, we don't exist in a vacuum. We have this social context. And it has a profound impact on our wellbeing.

Mark: You're so right. And again, I just love the way you connect the dots. You do it in such an elegant, beautiful way that's empowering. The concept you mentioned earlier of resilience, there are lot of great studies on resilience. And is it something that you either have or you don't, or is something that you can build if you don't have it? What are your thoughts on that?

Niki: I think you can definitely build resilience. It's interesting that if you have a certain amount of stress in your life, it's a bit like vaccines. You can't learn until you build some resilience. So you don't want no stress. You want a little bit of stress. That's why we don't overprotect our kids either, because it gives them life lessons to build strength.

Mark: Yes. Here's a really interesting thing. The quality of your social relations with your key caregivers actually trumps PTSD type trauma. It means if you have really great social relations with your parents, and then a one-off discrete traumatic event happens, like an assault or a rape or something very negative like that, a one-off discrete issue, you're much, much less likely to develop PTSD, post-traumatic stress disorder, if you have really like people who are there for you. You feel seen, you feel loved.

So we call that developmental relational health. And when that goes wrong, when we have relational trauma, there isn't the seeing. You don't feel connected. There isn't the social connection with key caregivers. That means you're more likely to have less resilience to traumatic events in adulthood. That's what I was trying to get to there.

So a lot of resilience is built from having social relations. It's not that bad things happen. They do. Bad things happen. But if you have learned to sort of almost absorb the love from the parents because you can see and feel it and it's an emotional attunement, then you're going to be much more resilient in adulthood.

I was going to say, on the one hand, we have something very interesting, which we can talk about. Post-traumatic growth is something completely different. And that's very interesting. We can touch on that, too.

Mark: Please, tell me more about that.

Niki: Well, post-traumatic growth is where an incident happens, and it absolutely flattens you. There is no resilience. You didn't have resilience. It brought you to our knees. And that can be a total call to transformation. So it can be a totally transformative experience. So there's one thing, which is resilience. And that resilience means if bad things happen, we kind of bounce back, and we kind of cope with it, and we move on. But a lot of us get smacked and we get kind of brought to our knees.

But we can experience post-traumatic growth, meaning we take that experience that kind of knocked us to our knees and kind of devastated us

and we can use that in a very empowering way to transform ourselves, our life. Maybe it's something that we go out and do well to adapt to it. So it's just good for people to know that both of those things are possible.

Like you can have resilience and you can build resilience and build that in. But also, even if something knocks you back, there's this thing called post-traumatic stress. And there are people actually observing that and how it happens. There's actually a great book by, I believe it's Matthew Sanford, and he's a yoga instructor, a paraplegic yoga instructor. And his book is great. It's the essence of that post-traumatic growth. So I think that there's an amazing lady called Andrea Nakayama. She runs a functional medicine nutrition.

Mark: I love her.

Niki: Yes. And she talks about the death of her husband who died of brain cancer. And he was very young, and they just had a young child. And she's an epitome of what you can do with post-traumatic growth, with something devastating. She took all of that and now she trains thousands of practitioners to prevent things like brain trauma. That's what I mean about post-traumatic growth.

Mark: Niki, what a great story of that. And for everyone viewing, what I would like to ask if I may is you were talking about your nurture to overcome your nature. And you can build in these resiliency techniques that if you do have something traumatic happen, you may actually grow from it. So part of it is your nature. Some people are wired that that's going to happen, or they're going to allow it to.

But there are things that you can do. As a parent, what are the things that I can do for my child to help them to build that resilience, to build a nurturing base to help if something were to happen that they would have more likelihood to move into the post-traumatic growth, rather than the PTSD? Does that make sense?

Niki: Yes. So the most important thing is this bonding and attachment with children. So it's an amazing thing. Only fifty percent of kids actually emotionally bond with mom. It's crazy. It's huge. So most people are actually growing up with attachment trauma, which is part of this developmental trauma, which means it's all relational.

And there are things called mirror neurons, where if you have empathy within you, and you express that to your child, then their neurons will match yours.

So your child is more likely to build empathy if you have it and you interact together with that. So we have these mirror neurons.

When a mother is not empathic, maybe she's whatever. She might be with a young baby and kind of depressed and not in a connective state, then that's when the issues start. So really I would say it's being emotionally attuned to your children, like being able to connect with them as best you can, because not all kids want to kind of express their emotions to you exactly. It depends what stage they're at.

But kids being seen emotionally validated, emotionally seen and understood, so even when bad things happen, they feel safe and connected. Bad things are going to happen. That's life. It's a tough life. But it's the social support that will trump things like developing PTSD in response to bad things happening. And that speaks to the self love deficit again.

You know kids need to be seen. They need to be encouraged. They need to be validated. Touch and physical connection is very important as well. How often do we ask our kids how are you feeling today? I never got asked that as a child. I ask people how many times were you asked how you felt? So asking our kids how are you feeling today, try that one, and actually if they feel safe and connected.

It's when we don't bond in that way, emotional attunement, that's when the self love deficit disorder develops in the child. And now she or he is not resilient. And now when things go wrong, which they will at one stage or another, you know, when you have a bankruptcy, do you feel like a shameful failure, which is going to lead to things like PTSD? Or do you kind of have a bit more optimistic view, kind of like, oh, it's not all my fault. These things happen, which they do. And you can bounce back and you get on with life.

And what's the difference between someone who collapses and someone who doesn't? It's the internal resilience. Shame is the opposite of self love. It's one of the worst things that comes from childhood experience, like this lack of connection. And then it's called shaming. It's personality identity, identifying with being a bad person, rather than I did a bad thing. And it's incredibly common. So I hope that makes sense.

Mark: It does. And I think there's an epidemic of shame and shaming that goes on in our culture. I think I see a lot of kids. And one of my favorite people, David Blyweiss, a physician, he taught me with his daughter he would say, well how does that make you feel? And she would tell him.

So he was always asking the feeling. Rather than trying to fix the problem, he was just asking her to open up about how she was feeling about it, and never gave her the answer or the fix for her. And we talk about not shoulding on people, telling them they should do this or they should do that, but asking how they feel about it and how can we help that feeling, rather than fixing that.

Niki: Exactly that. So sometimes that's more important. Sometimes that is the fix, just having somebody there to emotionally express and be seen and heard. And they feel understood and to be seen. And that's one dimension of love. You can't love somebody if the other person doesn't feel seen or understood. You can say it. You can go and buy things for them to try to make up for that. But there's always going to be emptiness there. It's kind of a form of emotional intelligence, and I don't think we're a very emotionally intelligent society right now.

Mark: So Niki, how come life doesn't come with an owner's manual or a user's manual? We all need someone like you to help us figure all this out. Is it really that complicated, or do we make it so complicated?

Niki: I think these are pretty crazy making times. But I think there's some enduring kind of wisdom that's never going to go away. If you just stay connected to that, you kind of stay grounded through all the craziness. So yea, there are enduring values, things that actually do work, leading a relatively simple life, looking at some of our stretches of like what are all the things that we're trying to do to un-love. Why don't we just give it to ourselves without going through all that first?

Mark: I love that.

Niki: Yea, there's a simplicity. And I think, boy, do we need that, going back to a little bit more of the simple principles. With the overwhelming stuff we have with all the computers, the Wi-Fi, the EMF stuff, the chemicals in the environment, the more we go back to nature, go back to a little bit slower, slightly simpler life, the more we can do that. And it doesn't have to be boring. It's actually going to uplift and feed. The body needs that for health as much as we need it for emotional health as well.

So I think embodying some of that is very simple actually. But we sort of make it complex because we've forgotten how to do it. We've forgotten how to relax.

Mark: You mentioned toxicity, whether it be chemical, emotional, EMF,

electronic. Do you feel like that's a catalyst to all of this? Is it another layer to it? How does that interact with this emotionality?

Niki: You know, I think it's one of these contributing factors. So you've got the emotional stuff, which is the stress coming in. If you kind of throw in some exposure to toxins, which the more stressed we are from our emotional stuff, we reduce resilience to things like toxins in the environment and everything really. So it's like another load on the boat. So how many loads on the boat do you have? Eventually it's going to sink.

So how much emotional stuff from childhood? How much stress have you just got right now in your life because you don't really schedule in time to slow down? How much chemical exposure is also coming in, including EMF as well as chemicals and Wi-Fi and stuff?

How much lack of sunlight are you getting? How much no time in nature? Circadian rhythm management, the timing you're going to bed, making sure you're not getting blue light at night. That's just turning out to be disastrous. That's one way to take care of your kids, like no blue light once it gets dark. And get the bright light the first thing in the morning.

It's kind of evolutionary. From an evolution perspective, that's how we evolved, to have these simple things. Like we had campfire at night--that's orange light--none of these screens or blue screens. And then we woke up with the sun. So just going back to some of the basics. And you'll start to feel amazing when you start to live some of that stuff and just integrate it in.

And yes, we don't want to get stressed about the chemical thing either. So just be aware of how powerful the mind is. If you think something is going to have a terrible impact on us, it will increase it. So sort of bring in awareness and just rationale decision making around these things. Just don't get into stress and fear about it. Just make decisions to go, okay, I'm going to get a water filter. I'm going to use an air filter. I'm going to try and avoid GMO where I can. Just make decisions slowly and integrate them into your life.

And then there's this synergistic effect when all of this starts to build together. You've got circadian rhythm. You're stimulating the vagus nerve every day. You've got a great diet. You just start to feel amazing. So it's well worth it just one step at a time. But yea, very much think multi-factorially. So I don't just say it's all about mind and downplaying whole things like diet and toxicity. That's important to address, too.

Mark: Well I love your messaging about don't beat yourself if you're not perfect.

Niki: Yea. You just have to be good enough, as a parent, as a person in life.

Mark: Just be good enough. I don't think we hear that enough.

Niki: Yea, like we're all super achievers in the U.S. And yea, it's causing a lot of stress in people. And actually it's not helpful. And then putting these external standards and then constantly we're falling short on the inside of them. And so, yeah, becoming aware, that's another pattern. it's another way to be in self-love deficit.

Mark: Self-love deficit. Again, you have these terms that I've not heard before that really sum up. It's a lot of wisdom in our words, Niki. It really is. I love it.

Niki: Oh, thank you.

Mark: I also love your comment about the campfire. I've heard a lot of people talk about blue light and different lights. But this idea of going to sleep to the glow of the orange campfire and waking up to the natural light of the sun, I think for me, I always thought it was maybe just sleeping on the ground, camping. But I always feel better the day after I camp, because I'm lying on the ground. But it may be a lot to do with the way that my body likes that light. It likes the orange glow at night.

Niki: Absolutely. There are earth frequencies. You may have heard of something called the Schumann resonance. There is actually a magnetic field around the Earth. It's essential for health, essential for the physical health of the body. So most people have noticed when they're walking on the beach barefoot, they sort of feel really good. And they get springy, kind of. That's being connected to the earth like that. It's a huge recharge. It's an energetic recharge. And it's extremely healing.

Mark: How about this concept of earthing, about grounding like you're talking about? Is that really what you're talking about?

Niki: It's actually two separate things. One is the theory about actually getting negative electrons, which they say is kind of like antioxidants in the body. And the Earth is a big source of these negative electrons. And then you have the earth frequencies, which is more just the magnetic field. And we can block

those as well by being in a train or a car. It will block those fields, or always having shoes. So the frequencies are very important as well.

It was actually NASA that did some of the research on this. Of course, the astronauts weren't connected to the Earth, but they were getting weaker and sicker. So this sort of pulse electromagnetic frequency is a type of therapy. And there are tons of science papers on that. But it's not surprising, because it's basically something in nature that is essential for health, which are Earth frequencies. And we're not joking here about what just being in nature can do for your health and to keep you in balance.

And we drastically have underestimated sunlight. And we've been told that it's bad and we're going to get cancer. And like that's not what the data are. The science isn't showing that anymore. It's completely showing that it's helpful in so many ways. So it actually charges us. Sunlight charges our cells. It causes the water in our body, and we're seventy percent water, it actually causes it to become structured. So we have structured water because of sunlight.

Maybe we're slightly photosynthesizing. So it's another source of energy. We just think about food, proteins, carbs, things like this. And actually sunlight is not only charging you. It's way more than just vitamin D that you're getting from sunlight. Yea, the more people can get sunlight, it's a mood lifter, incredibly healing as well. So it's been so obvious. But we don't do it.

Mark: Well there are so many simple things, that we sometimes make health so complicated. And we break it down to so many pieces. I know several of my clients come in stressed because they feel like they have to do everything right. Or if they're not doing something for their kids, that they're missing something. And it's hard to be a parent. It's hard to be a woman or a man, as a doctor, as a professional, or really whatever your life chooses. It's really having some self acceptance. Is that what I'm hearing you say?

Niki: Yea, self acceptance. And you made a really important point. So we just talked about lots of things. People have got a lot of practical things that they can do. And we haven't just talked theoretically, have we? But then there's the risk of going to overwhelm. I've got all these things to do.

So really with self care and self love, it's just starting to change your lifestyle to make it supportive, to understand how to create health in the body. It's the idea of we kind of do these things out of spontaneous self care. It becomes something you get up and you love to do. And you want to do it because it makes you feel better.

And it might be a little inertia to begin with. You know, you might need a bit of a push to begin with. But the idea should be that one of the best ones is like go to bed at night. If you've got a health issue, go to bed at 9:30. Get the blue blocking glasses. They're only ten bucks on Amazon. Go for campfire light. Just do that. That's one thing, and that can be life changing for people.

So then you get a feel for it. I call it like the more people can get a quick win, get a quick win. Then they go wow, I can't believe how good I feel. I'm more productive. I'm less groggy. I can focus. So just something simple like that.

And so the idea is we should--I try not to use the word should--but we want to do things that arise out of spontaneous self care. So when we get into should, we're missing the whole point of it. Kind of all we've done is just used a survival strategy, which is just must have to, a list of to do lists and all that. So we want to kind of move away from that.

And that's more being driven by more of a sensual experience of life, whereas we've gone very mental. We get very intellectual. And when we do that, that's also the disconnect, because the mind can get incredibly disconnected from our physical body's needs and our emotions. So it kind of is actually learning to live your life from more of a sensual feeling based connected pace, connected to self and other people. That's how to create health, if you do that, if you're actually doing it.

So yea, it takes time to do it, and no rush. What's the rush? From people listening to the summit, they're probably going to get a ton of different things to do. Come back and integrate one thing a week. Come back and do one thing a week, or maybe three things that you picked up from this next one kind of thing. And then eventually it all starts to build. There's no rush.

You can't fail at it. Eventually you'll just navigate and find out the perfect things that you need to do that are personalized to you. And there's no one fix thing that works great for everybody. And we need to do different things. And they enjoy different things as well.

And then once people start doing it, they start to feel like why didn't I do this before? Why didn't I do these things before? And you're like well, welcome to the club. It's possible to feel great every day.

Mark: Well, Niki, it's interesting, because my daughter, Juliette and their friends, we were talking. They're all applying to colleges. And I said well, I have twenty-seven years of education. And they just looked at me like they couldn't

believe it. But I must tell you, Niki, I think I've learned more about life in the last hour talking to you than I have in those twenty-seven years of school.

Niki: Wow!

Mark: You have so much wisdom, and it's the wisdom of experience. And you've shared so many great ideas with our viewers. And I just give a very heartfelt thank you. It's a lot of wisdom that you have. And it's a pleasure to have this discussion with you. And I really feel that this is the kind of talk that we all need to have with someone like yourself. You really have a lot of wisdom to share with people.

What are you excited about? What are you learning for yourself now? What's next for Niki Gratrix?

Niki: Well, so I am in the process. I'm actually writing a course. And it's like a thirty minute lesson once a week for six months. And it's covering all of the things we've talked about. And it will actually be available. You can stay in touch through my website and just sign up for my free newsletter. And I've got a free e-book that people can just download on my website as well on overcoming emotional trauma from childhood.

Mark: Please share your website with everybody. How do they find you?

Niki: Yes, it's nikigratrix.com. And so there's this course I'm creating. I'm excited about that, because I can't fit everything into a consultation. So you just find this. Like I need everything. I want people to be more engaged to do things. So I do include a lot of science, just to say look, here's twenty papers showing what the benefits of sun are. And then we hit some simple practical to do's kind of thing. So I don't have time to include all of that in a consultation. So I'm kind of excited that that will be coming out next year.

And I'm probably going to launch a podcast next year that will kind of link with that, too, with the guests. And we're covering it completely multi-factorial, so we'll do mind and body and social and the environment impacts. So yea, I'm just busy, busy writing right now.

Mark: Well, I'm excited about your course. It's something I would take myself. And I encourage everybody to take a look at your website. I think again, the wisdom that you have, if you could put it into something that everyone can access, that's the beauty of our new electronic media. You can't do it one to one. You can really share it like we're doing it in our discussion today.

Niki: Yes, that's so important. Like if you were to spend all of the time just with me one to one, or any practitioner, it would cost thousands of dollars. So the course and things like these summits are great ways to make it affordable to a wide range of people. So it's a huge service you're doing as well with what you're doing here, too.

Mark: Well, Niki Gratrix, thank you so much. You're full of great wisdom. And I greatly appreciate your time today. Thank you very much.

Niki: Thank you very much, Mark. It was wonderful. Thank you.