



Urban Monk Approach to Optimal Heart Health

Guest: Pedram Shojai

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Mark: Welcome back to the Women's Heart Health Summit. I'm your host, Dr. Mark Menolascino, medical director of the Meno Clinic in Jackson Hole, Wyoming. Thank you for joining us. This is your chance to hear from international experts about how to achieve optimal vitality, optimal health for everyone listening, and to prevent heart disease, especially for women. And today we're joined by Dr. Pedram Shojai, who is one of the world's experts in helping you to find your best space to help you achieve vitality. I've known him for several years. He's someone I listen to when I go to conferences. He's taught me a lot. And thank you so much for joining us, Dr. Pedram.

Pedram: Hey, great to be here! I got to say I've got a little background envy here. Whatever you're standing in front of right now, I want to be there. I want to be hiking.

Mark: Well, you're invited and always welcome. And we'll hike up this ridge and ski together.

Pedram: Oh, deal!

Mark: So let me tell our viewers a little bit about you. Pedram is, again, one of these people that I've always enjoyed listening to. He's taught me. He teaches doctors. He teaches clients. He's an international lecturer, international

expert. He was a Daoist monk for four years. And he's a doctor of oriental medicine, a Chigong master. He studied Kung Fu and Tai Chi for decades.

He's someone that is really all about his work, his passion for sharing, but at his core he's a family man. His family is his number one priority, and sharing his wisdom of health is his second priority for you. He has several books. He has a podcast. I listened to it just the other day. I did one and ended up doing four. And we're going to talk a little bit about the work that you've done, how you've worked with corporations, individuals, and really how to help everyone achieve the best for themselves. Again, thank you so much, Pedram, for joining us.

Pedram: Hey, great to be here. Thanks again.

Mark: So I know you've worked with large corporations as well as individuals. Do you see a relationship how the individual transforms in a group, the way the social connectivity happens?

Pedram: Oh man, it's like saying if you sat at dinner with a number of friends and everybody ordered french fries, at what point do you say, yea, you know, it's all right. I'll get some fries today, right? And it's just this group think, the culture that we get stuck in. And, you know, you're only as good as your company's culture unless you're willing to hold that line and really stand out and be like, well, you know what guys, I'm not going to BJ's for lunch. I'm not going to go do that thing. That's fine. You guys have a good time.

And so it's hard to make the right decisions. It's hard to be the lone wolf in a culture that really kind of leans toward the lowest common denominator. And so corporate culture is the thing. You know, when I first got into companies, I was like, oh, this is going to be easy. Let's just go in there and tell them what they need to know and they're going to do it. Ah, ah, right?

It's the toxic culture that then started to kind of pull me in to being like, wow, this is really dumb group think here. What do we do about it? And then you've got to work with management. You've got to work from the top down. You've got to be like, listen, you're telling me you want me to come in here and fix the health. I'm telling you that you have a toxic environment. So we have to fix it at the mind level. We have to fix it at the social level, the group level, before people start making better decisions at the fork level.

And I've been down this road for so damn long. You don't change health until

you change culture. And that's in your household. And that's also in your country, your community, all of it.

Mark: You know, I was just going to say or ask you the question, Pedram, whether you're the CEO of a multi-national corporation, the manager of a small company, or the head of a household, you're still leading by example. And are there some parallels, whether it's the head of a household or the CEO of a multi-national, that there are certain behaviors that are healthy or typify the successful person at that job?

Pedram: It's funny. Show me how you do one thing, and I'll tell you how you do everything, right? And so people think that these heads of these multi-national corporations, they are this different kind of deal. And so I've been with Fortune 100 companies. I've been with billionaires. I've been around the block trying to help these people get their acts together.

And usually, and unfortunately, it's just a bunch of dudes, right? It's a bunch of guys sitting around, the same like eight people hanging around, having the same kind of conversations over and over again. You know, in high school they were called your buddies. Now they're called your board, or whatever it is. And it's still the same kind of echo chamber that follows people around. So if that small group isn't making good decisions, you're in trouble. And if you're like the lone woman in this echo chamber of guys, it's even harder.

And so it's the same thing you have with your friends, your culture, at home, at the dinner table. How you do one thing, and you start doing that for yourself, you start doing that for your family, you start doing that at the dinner table, and you take that out and let that reflect in the world.

Mark: I love how you shared with us how it's really the group that you're with. And if you want to see how your health is, look at the health of your friends, and that group that you're spending time with. And that group may be your family. What are some suggestions you have to really be that role model in their family, in their community, and maybe even in their company?

Pedram: Well I could tell you down home and personal. Like I've been off filming a lot. And I come home and it's like, okay honey. Our son has got a birthday party at the bowling alley or whatever it is. And it's very, very easy to see how quickly the health of the nation is kind of sinking to the bottom of that low common denominator.

So you show up, just a bunch of soda and colored drinks, pizza, and ice

cream, and bunch of screaming children running around everywhere. And my children aren't really fed that stuff. And so now, it's like okay, do I have to be the bad parent? Am I the bad guy to be like, okay, my kid doesn't eat that?

And so I've experimented on both sides of that. It's just like okay, here's pizza, if that's all they're serving, and some vegetable sticks. Let's make sure you have the vegetables first so you eat less of the pizza. So there are ways to kind of move around that. And I've also been the other guy that's like, oh, you know what, live a little. And then I've got to deal with a kid grinding his teeth and being a nightmare and hitting his sister for like eight hours afterwards. And the next day he's not the same guy at school.

So that was my decision as a parent to hold that line or not hold that line that led to all of these kind of health care fallouts. And look, it's one time the kid has got some behavioral issues because he's cracked out on sugar. Things go away. Do that for a week, do that for a year, do that for five years. Now you've got a kid that has childhood obesity and diabetes and Lord knows what else, and mouthful of cavities and fillings.

Mark: So Pedram, are you trying to tell me that by eating sugar and doing colored dyed foods that it changes kids' behavior?

Pedram: Oh man. The weirdest part about the culture that we live in is that the sensible people are standing on the outskirts yelling in. And the Nabisco's of the world, the Kaiser-Permanente's of the world, these big cabals that run health care and run processed food and all this are like nah, nah, nah, just look away. It's insane, it's insane. If you want your kids to survive and have a future, you have to wake up to this. And it's amazing that we have to stand here on the outskirts yelling in to a bunch of zombies that are just kind of huddled around, this group think that's just suicidal.

Mark: So Pedram, are you finding that the more you're learning about these systems and the infrastructure and the relationships of big farm, big pharma, these corporations, is it scaring you more? Is it making you more cynical? What's the answer to the more you learn, the more you know?

Pedram: The challenge that we face, and I'm an eternal optimist, so it's hard for me to even say this stuff, right? The more that you look into the business models of the systems that we are dealing with, the more they're built towards absolute failure of healthy, lifestyle, and all these things, because the money is in the illness. I was just flying next to some corporate dude, some guy that

was up at the highest levels of the insurance companies and all the top insurance companies in the world. So this guy knows.

And so we're talking about health care. He's like what do you do, whatever, whatever. He doesn't really care what I do. He wants to tell me who he is and what he's about. So I learned to listen. So I start picking apart this model of his. And I'm like okay, so wait a minute. The money is in getting these diagnosis codes. And the more of these diagnosis codes you can bundle together, the more money you get out of the government, which is the taxpayer, which means you have higher stock values, and your insurance company does better and better.

Okay, so I get that on the government side. What about on the other side. It's like, oh the employers pay for it. So if the employers pay for it, that means the end user pays for it, which means the customer pays for it. I have to spend more on this bottle of ketchup because I've got to deal with Heinz Ketchup paying higher health care costs, because this game is going up to the pyramid of extracting value out of society. I'm like you guys are really, really smart at what you're doing.

I haven't been in clinical practice for a couple of years now, so I just quote you guys. Look, I have friends that are turning around diabetes all the time. I have friends that are getting people's BMI to drop to the point where they get off all their heart medications. That to me is the health care debate.

You guys are talking about the health care finance debate. And you're all teeing off on who gets all the money. Let's talk about real health care, because my wife's father died of a heart attack. That's up close and personal, dude, right? And so none of these guys are having this conversation. And so I think that they are morally bankrupt. And they're just making a great living. And they're like, oh, well that's cute. Look at my jet. And so that's where our families are falling apart.

Mark: That was probably one of those flights that you got complimentary upgraded to first class while he was in first class.

Pedram: Yea. I mean, I got to this point now in my career where, first of all, we've got enough miles. But I'm in the right rooms with these people to have their attention. And I am a guy up in first class, because yea, we make a good living making films. But then I sit next to some of these guys that are just drunk, stinking of gin, talking about the good life that they're living. I'm going man, you're a parasite. You are not doing the world any good in this position

you're in. You're in a position of power. And you're being more extraction oriented. You're just being more and more of a tic on the back of society. You've got to think about that, right? And they're winning, right? Their scoreboard is they're winning. They're making more money every year. Society falls as health diminishes.

Mark: Pedram, for you having spent years as a Daoist monk and living that life and holding that space, how do you personally deal with not letting that get inside of you? Do you have a daily practice that you're doing that helps you? And what suggestions would you have for our viewers to help them find one for themselves?

Pedram: Yea, I'm up at 5 a.m. doing Chigong every day. I'm meditating every day. If you can't build your own resilience to metabolize all of that, then just roll over and die. And so the answer to all of it is feed yourself first, help yourself first. Drink from the fountain. There are a million metaphors. You know, take the oxygen mask before you hand it off to your kids. And really build the resilience of your own body and your own system.

One of my kids came home with a cold the other day. And so we're all fighting it off. And I'm functional. I'm still trying to fight off a cold. But I'm functional. I'm not down on my back, because I do all this work to keep myself functional and healthy and ahead of that curve.

Mark: So just because you get a cold doesn't mean that you failed. And a lot of people come see me and say I never get sick. I must be super healthy. And that makes me a little nervous, because we all get exposed to things. You're supposed to have some reactivity at times. It's whether it takes you down.

Pedram: That's it. I'm on planes all the time. And you know, people say the same thing to me, where they're like, hey, you know, I don't get stressed. I'm like, well then you're not pushing hard enough. You're not doing enough on this planet to be riding that edge. Like you're a skier, I'm a skier. How do you get better at skiing? You go down steeper and more hectic things. And you get better at life. The translation of kung fu is hard work. So if I start to feel too comfortable, it means I'm not working hard enough for my kids' kids.

Mark: Well, it's really all about that, right? It's what we do today to help the next generation. What do you see in our kids? Like my daughter and her friends are foodies. They are very conscious about what's happening to our food supply. They're conscious of the dyes, this whole organic, non-GMO myth

that we're all taught. They're very conscious of it. Do you have hope for this next generation that they may do better?

Pedram: I have hope for some of them. I used to have hope for all of them. And I think that you've allowed that line to be broken, and if you're kids are just watching You Tube all day and watching what the TV tells them to do, you're screwed.

We were up at Park City a couple of weeks ago. And my kids were like, can I get some screen time? And on weekends we let them have a couple of hours. But it's like they just had a Direct TV. So they didn't have the curated content that I would have on say my Apple TV where I could let them see what's appropriate.

And all of sudden it's on the Disney channel or something. And I walk in to these commercials. And I go, watch predictably; I turn to my wife and I said, he's going to ask for that toy in the next two hours. Boom! Daddy, but I need it, I need it! And I'm like shut that thing off. Shut that thing off. They want the sugared cereal. They want this, they want that.

It's a brainwashing world. And so if you're allowing your kids to be brainwashed, you've already given them up to the system. And so you have stop the input of the media so that your kids can actually make better decisions for themselves. It is no coincidence that your kids are foodies. You're holding the line. You're a good doctor. You're doing this because you care and you're helping educate people about how to not fall into the trap of conventional health care.

Mark: You know, it's interesting, a woman was just here today, and she's lost twenty pounds. And nothing has ever worked for her because she never did the whole program. And she said to me, Mark, what I like about you is I got success, but I don't have to be a vegetarian monk sitting in my underwear meditating. And I said, maybe you should. That might be the piece that gets you to the next level.

Pedram: Right.

Mark: I find there's a synergy when people add these lifestyle factors. When you do one, then two, then tree, it equals nine.

Pedram: Yea, and that's kind of the complexity of my thing. I was that guy. And now my last book, two books ago, was called *The Urban Monk*. Like we

would all love right now, and I started our call with this, saying, dude, that's so beautiful. Like I want to run to those mountains, right?

And the news out there makes everyone want to run for the hills, right? The air is toxic, the water is toxic, the food is toxic, the city people are toxic. It's all like, ah, I just need to get the hell away. And what happens is everyone thinks they're going to run for the hills. The cities will encroach, and eventually there are going to be no hills left.

And so how do you stand your ground and be a righteous parent right where you are? How do you cure it? Like I'm actually working out of the house today. If you look at this garden, everything in my garden is organic, heirloom seeds.

Mark: I love it, I love it.

Pedram: My kids are allowed to be barefoot and do whatever they want and eat whatever the hell they want out of the back of this yard. But on the front of the house where the street is, shoes on all the time. There's petroleum, there's poison, there are things out of my control that will break the walls and destroy the immunity and destroy the sanctity of my kids' health. And so you've got to know how to draw the line so that you can be a monk. I have a very monk-like existence right here in my backyard. But the world is what it is. So you have to control your inputs.

Mark: You know, Pedram, I've never heard someone describe their house like that, where out the front door is what's toxic in the rest of the world, but you keep this sacred space behind your sliding glass door in the back. I love that.

And now that I think about it, that's kind of how my house is. There's an area facing the main road that we don't really do much in. Then there's what I call the sanctuary. We have a sanctuary in the back. That's where the moose come and the elk come. That's where they sleep, and that's where we play. You get elk poop on your feet, but, you know, I think that may actually be good for us.

Pedram: Man, I will take Elk poop over oil spill from a car dripping on the street all day, every day.

Mark: It seems like everyone we've spoken to, toxicity has just bubbled up from the surface, whether it's a hormone disruptor, whether it's a driver of leaky gut, of other inflammation, how do you keep, besides your sanctuary, how do you keep your kids away from it? How do you keep yourself, your family? What are some of the tricks that you've learned over the years?

Pedram: Well, so, if we stay with this sanctuary motto, if you will, then what gets across the city walls is on me. So what is in that bottle of shampoo? What is the cleaner that we're using? What is the company that we're using? Like who called the spider guy to come and spray spider poison in the yard because they saw one black widow? Like how do you do that? How do you mitigate those risks and still keep things natural? And so the world out there, all the marketing messaging is designed to tell you that nature is out to get you. Nature is scary. Things need to be sterile.

Mark: Be afraid, be afraid.

Pedram: Yea. And you know, you were in my last series on the microbiome. I mean look, the microbiome is our savior. Like if you don't have healthy bacteria that are inoculating you in your body and on your skin and everything about you, the whole gestalt of that. And I was filming this, and I've been around the block. I used to have hair. And so I know better. And as I'm interviewing people for this series, in the back of my head I'm still thinking, okay that's interesting. So what probiotic should I take?

And that's not the question to ask, because whether you're taking a probiotic or a fecal transplant or an Advil, that mentality is wrong. It's how can I live more probiotically? How can I adjust my flow so that I'm more in harmony with nature, and the things that I'm in contact with, with air and water and skin and everything come from the natural world which aren't poisoning me and are enhancing my vitality?

Mark: Pedram, did you just make that up-- how do I live more probiotically? I love that.

Pedram: I made it up during the series, because I had to challenge myself to be like, wow, I know better. I'm trying to educate people against this mentality, and I still have these memes, these toxic, viral mental assaults saying, okay, but what's the shortcut? So tell me how to do that quickly so I can go back to my show. And that's how our brains have been hijacked since we were children.

Mark: I love that. And that really encourages me to think a lot about myself, my family, and my clients. How do I help them live a more probiotically, more vitamin D fulfilling life, more nutrient enriched life, less toxicity life, really those choices you make on a day to day basis?

For women particularly, what are some of the things you see that are most

difficult for women in our culture? There are super moms. There are CEOs in a male dominated world in many cases. And having worked with so many companies, any suggestions or ideas that you have for them to be healthier, to help protect them more?

Pedram: Man, where do you start, right? I mean let's start with the apology. You go to a male dominated medical field, where some doctor is man-splaining to you what you're supposed to be feeling, and why what you're feeling doesn't make any sense, and why the pills he has been giving you, you just need to shut up and keep taking, although you don't feel better. And it's just like from the very start, it's just like forget about your intuition, forget about your motherly instincts, just shut up and listen.

And after how many years of that do you get to the point where you're like, dude, I'm going to take matters into my own hands. It turns out when I don't eat soy or dairy or whatever, I don't get the tummy ache. And so it's been this entire kind of upheaval in this kind of paternalistic, male dominant thinking.

And if you look at what allopathy came from, the traditional western medicine, a lot of those gains were in surgical medicine that came on the battlefield. A lot of the gains were in sanitation, frankly. Public hygiene and sanitation were a lot of them. You know, we're talking about antibiotics, surgery, and things that happened on the battlefield to keep dudes alive and get them out there to kill other dudes again. And so you take that model and you kind of put that and juxtapose that on chronic illness, on families, it's the wrong lens to be looking through.

So first thing I would say to, I'm assuming pretty much every listener here for the summit is a female listener, is trust your instincts. And trust your gut, and really understand that you are now coming out of this male dominated ideology that has run health care and run the world frankly into the ground. So maybe there is a more feminine way of looking at how health and environment and parenting and all these things are intimately woven and interconnected, if you will. And there needs to be a more holistic way to live probiotically.

And you know, yes, I mean there are great male doctors out there that are working with women patients all the time that are part of this other thing. So I don't want to create like this gender war. But it's the mentality. Functional medicine has a very kind of feminine, if you will, mentality of saying, okay, what's up? What's going on? What's ailing you? Versus shut up and sit down. You're blood pressure says you're fine. It doesn't make sense.

Mark: Well, when I was in medical school, it was eleven seconds before the doctor interrupted the patient. We're up to seventeen, someone told me now. Seventeen seconds is all you get. And people ask me, "Mark, isn't integrative and functional medicine so hard to do?" And it kind of surprised me. I said, "Well, listening is not that hard." And I think that's one of the first things we do. And as you mentioned, I always say the woman's intuition is the smartest person in the room. And if you don't listen to it, we're all going to get into big trouble.

Pedram: The problem with the woman's intuition is it comes from a timeless space. And who the hell has time in the western medical model to stop and think, let alone breathe, let alone ask, right? It's like hurry up, get in, get out. I've got money to make. And that's just the train that everyone's on. And so that model is just fundamentally flawed, because you've got to stop and just think for a second and listen and hear and have empathy. And that's not just built into the business of medicine.

Mark: Well, you know, you have insight into this like no one else I know, Pedram. What do you see as the solution for that? There are doctors like me that spend an hour with new people, thirty minutes in a followup. But that can't happen for everyone. How do we do this on a bigger level? How do we reach more people to reverse this chronic illness tsunami coming our way?

Pedram: That's a great question. And in all candor, if I had *the* answer, I'd probably get off this call and go start up a trillion dollar industry right now.

Mark: You've had lots of the answers.

Pedram: Yea, yea, exactly. I'd likely get shot in the process. There are so many mouths that are getting fed off of this trillion dollar inefficiency in the health care model. But let's just pull out our canvas. Let's just say you have your clinic, where you are doing good work and it takes an hour to sit down. And so you've got to charge five-hundred bucks or a thousand bucks. Your time needs to be paid for in that capacity.

But what if we were to layer on a CSA, a food delivery thing? You had cooking courses. What if part of your model was to keep people healthy out there doing something, having a subscription model, where you're paying twenty to thirty dollars a month for your doctor to kind of be a disseminator of information? And when you come in it costs this or whatever?

And so layering all these variables that have to do with your healthcare back

into the healthcare and kind of rolling it into something where there's an integrated delivery system, where the doctor is just getting paid to be smart and read books and give advice that's worth giving. And then the apps in the box and all those things are kind of checking on things.

And so one of the things, where are your stool samples coming? If your toilet has a smart chip into it, and this is where the AI is coming. Analyze your poop. And so based on what your microbiome is telling me today, this is what you should be eating. And your inflammatory markers are up from this, that, and the other. So you might want to mitigate your spinach intake for a bit and like have some hydrochloric acid, so the proteins aren't getting through.

And you know, that's all almost there. So then the doctor gets to be your friend. You have all that information. So you help guide them along. You have health coaches that are working with your clinic that are doing a little more of the handholding. And so I see all that starting to happen on a big stage.

The problem is everyone tries to do it within an individual clinic within an individual zip code. I don't think we're there yet. I think the model is starting to demonstrate its efficacy across multiple clinics and across multiple examples. And in the next ten years or so, we're going to have very good evidence about how to do this right.

Mark: You know, what I see happening in other clinics, as well as my own, is my entire staff has training as a health coach. So no matter who's here or where they are in the journey, someone is pulling them aside and saying, how is it going? What did you have for breakfast today? What's stressing you out? Are you getting any exercise? Are you hanging out with your friends? And then we find those people need each other? And then they start doing things together, and all of a sudden we have these small groups that evolve out of that space.

And I think of this idea of socialization in the community. And our friend, Mark Hyman, did this with the Saddleback Church in California, where they got these small groups that were doing Bible study together for health study. And they had a dramatic change in the health of the entire congregation.

Pedram: Oh, on that note, if I were to open up another clinic, and I used to run multiple clinics with multiple specialties and all that back in the day. And so now, if I had the patience really to open up another clinic and do it, I would have a chief compliance officer built in that would be in charge of kind of an army, if you will, of health coaches that are deployed within not just a clinical

environment, but within the community. That's all about accountability and pods of accountability and networking.

I mean that's what the internet is good for. But the internet is only good for it if you've met the people. I don't like this, oh, we have an online community. That's so cute. Like who is that guy, right? And so once you have that, then you can use the tools and the apps and all these things to really leverage the sangha, as we would call it in the Buddhist community.

You need the community. I need to know that I'm not the crazy person saying, like I'm sorry, is there gluten in that? But like the people all around me are holding that line with me and for me. They would be like, don't eat that gluten. Are you stupid? Your test says you're gluten sensitive. Why would you do that? That's suicidal. Like that's just killing your brain.

And so if I have enough people around me that help me and support me and hold me and bolster me up, then all of a sudden it's not hard to make these health care decisions. And all the other people are the idiots, right? You're not the weirdo.

And so that's where we have to turn that corner, because most of America is shaming everyone into making stupid decisions, because that's what we do. That's insane, and we're circling the drain around that. So how do you fix that? That happens through culture. It happens through coaching. It happens through community.

Mark: That makes such a great point of how it can make this whole thing easier, if in your family people support each other, in your community, your best friends. That way when you go to your friend's house for dinner, they've made good choices for themselves, for their family, and now that you're there for dinner, as well.

So it's not a battle at their dinner table about what you should and shouldn't eat. They are already in that movement in that space to serve a meal that's healthy for them, their family, and for you.

Pedram: Yea. I think the hippies ruined it a little bit by forcing everyone to eat sawdust, right? But, you know, I have all these holiday recipes that we do that are delicious and like full of ferments and probiotics. And it's like, oh, this is a dry farm wine, and this is why it's better. And this is a kombucha that does this. Everyone is like, wow, this is the best meal I've ever had. It doesn't have to be punishment, right?

And then what you do, every time you host a party like that and you inspire people through the culinary arts and flavor and being a foodie, and being a healthy foodie and all these things, then it inspires people to be like, wow, that didn't suck at all. That was actually the best meal I've ever had. And I feel okay. And I'm not on the toilet for three hours after Thanksgiving. And so you do these things, and then you inspire and teach and you go out. So I think cooking is also a big part of that.

Mark: You know, I saw your podcast. You interviewed Dr. Rangan Chatterjee in England who did "Doctor in the House" and went and lived with families and taught them how to cook and how to eat and how to exercise. He basically taught them how to live, how to have a life that was fulfilling and sustaining. And he saw amazing changes.

And one of his friends is Dr. Rupy with "The Doctor's Kitchen," who is now teaching doctors in England how to use food as medicine. And I really think that is the key, starting to bring it at all levels, in the family, in the neighborhood, in the community, in the teaching. Are we anywhere close to that yet, Pedram?

Pedram: You know, the problem is in England you have the NHS, the National Healthcare System. And what they do is it's their own money. And so they're like man, this sucks. The costs are going up. What do we do, what do we do? And so the doctor is ultimately accountable for maintaining health care costs and keeping them down as well as part of that system. In America, it's just wild, wild West. Let's just eat off this carcass until it's dead. That's not sustainable.

And so a good physician actually wants the results in their patients. And that's why Rangan's story is so good. He's like, okay, well I gave you my advice and you didn't listen to it, idiot. You're a noncompliant patient. That doesn't help anything. So he's going to roll up his sleeves. He goes to the house. He's like, wow, no one ever taught these people how to cook. Look at this pantry.

And so it was like, wow, this poor individual who is in charge of the health of their family never got the critical life skills to know how to even have a kitchen be functional. They don't know what spoons are supposed to look like, like serving spoons versus normal spoons. He was like, okay, either I'm going to stand up here on this podium and talk down to people, or I'm going to get down in the dirt and get with the people I'm trying to help and actually show them how to cook their way out of this.

And that's what we've got to do as doctors. That's what we've got to do in this culture. It's just like, look, whatever it takes. These are our brethren, right? These are our brothers, our sisters, our neighbors. These are the kids that my kids go to school with. And so what happened to community, caring for your community and being your brother's keeper? And so I think every doctor needs to learn from that example and just get their hands in the dirt where people are suffering and help them.

Mark: And I'm an eternal optimist. I do think people want this. And we have a very aware community. Food is a big passion with so many people. We have a natural food store, a grocery store. And we do grocery store tours. And I love how we'll start. We only do groups of five, because it gets kind of crazy. But all of a sudden there are eight, ten, twelve, fifteen. There are twenty-five people walking with us row to row, sharing ideas beyond what I have to say, and that organic growth.

I know with all the companies you worked with that you had tricks and tools and programs to inspire that. What are some things that you could share with us that our viewers could take into their community or into their church groups or into their walking groups, mommy groups? I love these mommy groups, because all these moms get together and share ideas and inspire each other. That may be the future for America and the world, the mommies.

Pedram: So here's the good news. The solution is way closer than you think. And if you're waiting for someone to change the world or host the potluck that you get to go to to be inspired by, you've missed it. If you're listening to this right now, your next job is to go get some healthy cookbook and host a dinner where you then bring people in and be like look, I'm learning how to do this for my family. Let's do this together, and let's workshop this.

But if you're not the one that's willing to host it and say, look, that's really uncomfortable for me. I don't know what I'm doing. But I'm going to like sit there on the bleeding edge of this.

And I'm going to learn, and I'm going to go through the discomfort and invite my closest friends to come in here and do this. And what we learn from here, we're going to then kind of expand out, share out, and everyone does it. That's how it starts. It starts in your own house, in your own kitchen. If you're waiting for someone to invite you to one of those parties, they would have already. That's the problem, it's you. You've got to do it.

Mark: Well, I will call that a call to action for the thousands of people

listening. Do that. Make yourself the example of change. Host a potluck and try it. Get a good internet recipe. Go to your bookstore and find a good cookbook on good recipes. And do that for your community, for your neighborhood. Do a neighborhood potluck. Do a church group potluck. Do a mommy group potluck, and be that change. That's a great, great life lesson for them.

Pedram, I know you're just full of all of these lessons. Are there other ones that you would like to share that would really be great to hear, like when I come to see you at one of the conferences you're speaking at and share with you?

Pedram: Yea, I mean, look. We always forget. As physicians, you've got to heal yourself. As moms, you never get a chance to do anything for yourself. It's always like, everyone first, and then maybe I get a massage once a month that didn't last long enough, right? And so what if we were looking at this whole thing backwards.

And what if you had to reverse engineer your operating system to really get up and build and assemble self care around your day first? And so you get up and it's like what have I done for myself? What about the stretching? What about the yoga? And I'm not talking about a ninety minute yoga class. Let's get real.

But what about the ten minutes of stretching and breathing exercises that I can do? And if the kids are up, I get them to do it with me, right? And so like for me, my kids just know in the morning I'm doing Chigong. And they can do whatever they want. They can do it with me. But I'm not going to like run off and like do anything with them, because this is daddy's time. And I've built that kind of bastion of stability.

If someone's puking or peeing on themselves, you take a moment out to handle it. But you teach them that this is daddy's time, and daddy needs to take care of himself, right? My wife comes down and she does her workout while I do my Chigong. And they understand that, and they respect that, because we're holding that line for ourselves.

And they understand that they then have to have this same kind of personal power to do that for themselves. How are they going to learn to take care of themselves if their parents don't? And I think that's what's happened in this generational gap. It's that we're so busy trying to like bleed everything into our

kids and they see us falling apart. And they're like, no, idiot. Like look at you. It doesn't make sense.

Mark: I'm not doing that.

Pedram: I'm not doing that. Look at my mom. She's falling apart. And so what is that lesson? What does mom need to do for herself now? What do we need to do as dads for ourselves? And I've had a long week. I've got a lot of filming I'm doing. And there's all this stuff. It's like I have to press pause so that my kids see that I honor myself in a way that then teaches them how to do that for themselves.

Mark: Pedram, I thank you so much for joining us today. You're full of such great wisdom. You've done so much teaching in writing and your podcasts. For those viewing, how do they find you?

Pedram: At theurbanmonk.com. It's where I hang out. It's where my books are. I'm also the founder of well.org. We do a lot of films. I just did one on the microbiome. We've got a number of films coming. Yea, the urbanmonk.com, or well.org, or My Neighborhood, that's where you can find me.

Mark: I love the film work that you've done. Could you share with us some of the films you've done in the past and tell us a little bit about them, please?

Pedram: I'd be happy to. My first film was called "Vitality." And it was when I was tired of repeating myself as a doctor. It was about what is vitalism and how do you build vitality in the body instead of constantly just wait to play whack-a-mole with disease and symptoms. And then that kind of led the inquiry into what is it that we are doing in our environment that might be making us sick, which was a film called "Origins."

And it was followed by a film saying if we vote with our dollars, if we kept doing that, what would the world look like if we were to make better decisions, better consumer decisions? And so that went into a film called "Prosperity." And so they're out in the world, at PBS and Netflix and all that. And they're at various stages of their distribution arcs.

And then I recently finished one called "Interconnected." It's all about the microbiome and what that means for our health. And it's a ten part docu-series, which was very profound and very impactful. And we're working on six more films right now and series. And so I like film because it helps me scale message and help more people.

And I just got to remember to like come home and breathe and be the dad I'm supposed to be. You can't talk about work/life balance. You've got to live it, right? So that's always the edge that we all have to live on.

Mark: Well, you've always been admired by me for how you walk the walk and talk the talk. And that's really the chore of all of us pushing in this field of medicine. Dr. Pedram Shojai, thank you so much for joining us. I always appreciate spending time with you.

Pedram: Yea, thank you for doing this.