

# **THE MODEL HEALTH SHOW**

**EPISODE 672**

## **How Your Thoughts And Emotions Impact Your Physical Health**

**With Guest Dr. Will Cole**

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**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Welcome to the Model Health Show. This is fitness and nutrition expert, Shawn Stevenson, and I'm so grateful for you tuning in with me today. Every single thought that we have creates correlating chemistry in our bodies, whether it's a thought of something advantageous, love, joy, happiness, all of these positively associated feelings, those create correlating chemistry in our bodies. And if we're talking specifically about feelings, we're talking about neurotransmitters, we're talking about specific hormones, our feelings don't just manifest from nowhere, they are based on chemistry. But we are in the driver's seat in the chemistry that we are creating. Now, the same thing holds true with things that we label as negative; Anger, sadness, frustration, guilt, all these feelings that we experience in our lives are created via chemistry. We're feeling the feelings because of the chemistry we're creating, driven by our thoughts. Now the question is, today, do these thoughts contribute to our health and/or the manifestation of disease? That's what we're diving into today on this very, very special episode. And I think that you are going to be blown away.

Now, during this episode, we do talk a little bit about how to modulate stress and become more resilient through our nutrition. And one of the things that our special guest mentions is something that has been utilized for thousands of years in the Ayurvedic system of medicine. Today, we have tons of studies now affirming its value in helping our bodies to adapt to stress, to essentially become more resilient. In fact, in a study titled *Adaptogenic and Anxiolytic Effects of Ashwagandha in Healthy Adults*, a double-blind randomized placebo-controlled clinical study, this was published in 2019. The researchers found that participants who received Ashwagandha for eight weeks had significantly reduced perceived objective stress in their lives. And objectively, using scientific method to actually monitor their cortisol levels, they found that the test subjects had significantly lowered levels of the stress hormone, cortisol, compared to those who took a placebo. This is incredible.

There are entire fields and billions being invested into this pharmaceutical model, trying to find a drug to help people to manage the effects of abnormal stress, of chronic stress, and we have something that is time-tested, again, been utilized for thousands of years as one of the top things if not the top thing in Ayurvedic medicine, and it's called Ashwagandha. Now, what's more in the study which can be overlooked, the participants who received the Ashwagandha experienced significantly improved sleep quality compared to the placebo group. It made their lives better overall, reduced stress, but also it showed up when they laid their head down in the evening, which that's just going to lead to better health outcomes and showing up better the next day. It starts to create a virtuous circle instead of a vicious circle of health benefits.

Now, Ashwagandha is actually one of the foundational ingredients and something that is a staple in my family's nutritional protocol. On a daily basis, my family is utilizing green juice from Organifi. Not only is it organic, low temperature processed, but we're getting this infusion of these superfoods, Ashwagandha, and also, it's coupled with spirulina, which spirulina is 71% protein by weight, again, been utilized for thousands of years. NASA has been studying spirulina for many years because of its nourishment in helping people who are trying to adapt to this... Maybe the most remarkable stress that humans have ever experienced, which is living in outer space. So, of course, it can help us to adapt better here on planet Earth. It's a super green algae that has some of the rarest nutrients, one of them being phycocyanin.

Now phycocyanin has been found in, again, peer-reviewed studies to contribute to something called stem cell genesis, the creation of new stem cells. Now, this is just remarkable. Again, spirulina, Ashwagandha, Chlorella, all of these super foods and others are in the Organifi green juice formula. Highly recommend checking them out. Head over to [organifi.com/model](http://organifi.com/model), you get 20% off everything that they carry, store wide. Alright? Head over there. Check them out. Get yourself some of the green juice, I think you're going to absolutely love it. Kid tested, father, Model Health Show-approved, it's [organifi.com/model](http://organifi.com/model), that's O-R-G-A-N-I-F-I.com/model for 20% off. Now, let's get to the Apple Podcast review of the week.

**ITUNES REVIEW:** Another five-star review titled "Intermittent Fasting" by the Williams Girl. "Really enjoyed the intermittent fasting episode. You and Cynthia Thurlow commented about physicians writing prescriptions because the patient won't listen. My experience is that doctors don't explain well what needs to happen and why. If they took the time, more people would listen. Thank you for exploring the topics you do. It's been an inspiration for me as I fight liver disease."

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Thank you so much for sharing your story and thank you for leaving that review over on Apple Podcast. And actually, this addresses today perfectly, we have a physician who does listen. And he's going to be sharing his insights, he's going to be sharing his experience with his patients. We're really working to shift this paradigm to create a wonderful new ecosystem of health and wellness, moving away from the model of sick care into true healthcare, into wellness. And that's what this is really all about. And looking at today, most powerfully, how our mind and how this intimate connection between our gut and our brain is impacting our health outcomes. And so, our guest today is Dr. Will Cole, and he's a leading functional medicine expert who consults with individuals around the globe.

And he actually started one of the first functional medicine telehealth centers in the world over a decade ago. He's been named one of the top 50 functional and integrative doctors in the nation. Dr. Cole provides a functional medicine approach for issues ranging from thyroid conditions, autoimmune conditions, hormone imbalances, digestive disorders, and much

more. He's also the host of the popular podcast, The Art of Being Well, and he's the New York Times best-selling author of multiple books. And now he's back here on the Model Health Show to talk about these new and powerful insights about our gut feelings, the gut-brain connection and more. Let's dive into this conversation with the one and only Dr. Will Cole. My guy, Dr. Will Cole, so good to see you.

**DR. WILL COLE:** Hey, buddy. Thank you. Nice to see you, my friend.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yeah, man, listen, every time I talk with you, it's always insightful and you're talking about a subject matter that is very, very important to me, and it should be important for all of us, but a lot of us, we don't realize that this is happening. So, I want to start off by asking you, can mental and emotional stress cause diseases and even suppress our ability to lose weight?

**DR. WILL COLE:** That's my experience with my day job, and the science is pointing to that as well. For the past 13 years, my focus, my passion is really immersing myself in this stuff for my patients, started one of the first functional medicine telehealth centers. So basically, from sunup to sundown, I'm in a room talking to people around the world, looking at labs, digging into these sort of intricate psychosomatic and psychological, physiological interplay that's playing out in people's lives, sadly. And the research is showing that as well. Research is exploring things like chronic stress and shame and trauma and how these mental, emotional, even spiritual things are literally being stored in the cells, impacting methylation, impacting genetic, epigenetic interplays and how inflammation is expressed, how the gut-brain axis is expressed, how the nervous system's hypervigilance is expressed. So, it is a massive component and often times not looked. It's certainly not looked in conventional medicine very often, but I would say it's just beginning to be talked about even in the health and wellness space, in many circles at least.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yeah, unfortunately, the mind has been taken out of medicine in a sense, and it's become so mechanistic. And in reality, the mind is essentially... It's everything. It's creating the body, and there's this very complex association with all of it. And so, I think that one of the big hallmarks is that our thoughts create chemistry in our bodies. And you really dig in, your book is called Gut Feelings, and you talk about the gut-brain connection. So, what is that exactly?

**DR. WILL COLE:** So, your gut and brain, most of your listeners will know, but for people that are newer to this concept, the gut and brain are formed from the same fetal tissue. So, when babies are growing in their mother's womb, they're formed from that same fetal tissue. And they are inextricably linked for the rest of our life through what is known as the gut-brain axis,

so the connection between the two. We know 95% of serotonin is made in the gut, stored in the gut, 50% of dopamine is made in the gut and stored in the gut. These sort of feel-good, pleasure, happy neurotransmitters. And that's just one aspect of it. And you think about 75% of the immune systems in the gut, inflammation is a product of the immune system, so most issues with the brain have to do with inflammation. So, both from a neurotransmitter synthesis standpoint and the crosstalk between the gut microbiomes and the brain, and the metabolites they produce to do so, to the inflammatory component. There's a whole field of research known as the cytokine model of cognitive function. Cytokines are pro-inflammatory cells. How does inflammation impact how our brain works? How does inflammation impact mental health?

And that's one of... I mean, this book is born out of what I get to talk to people on an hourly basis, and I just know there's a massive sea of people that are falling through the cracks of conventional medicine, doing everything their doctor is telling them to do, and they're considered treatment resistant and they are left to be their own doctor, their own health advocate in many ways. And I think... And I'm sure you agree with this, I'm happy that we are normalizing the conversations around mental health and mental healthcare, I'm happy that we're normalizing the conversations even around autoimmunity. But in many ways, in the conventional mainstream world, it's in my opinion, incomplete conversation, because you really can't talk about mental health until you realize that mental health is physical health. And our brain is a part of our body just as much as anything else. And we like to relegate mental health as sort of this abstract "chemical imbalance," which is flimsy science anyways, but to really ignore the inflammatory component, ignore the gut-brain axis component largely, these people are left to fend for themselves.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yeah, thank you for sharing that, because mental health and brain health are really synonymous. But it seems very ethereal, it seems kind of abstract when we talk about mental health, but in reality, again, this is... All of our thoughts create chemistry, and you just mentioned something so profound, which is, so much of our mood-altering chemistry is located in our gut. And so, we have this perception, again, like all of our stuff is happening up here in our heads. And I think this is a result of obviously our senses being up here, but the gut has been called the second brain, the enteric nervous system. You just mentioned serotonin and dopamine, and there's so much more. Melatonin is a huge hub happening in your gut, you have these enterochromaffin cells. And so, what we're putting into our gut inherently is going to affect our mood, our perception, our mental health. And so, this brings me to the question, what made you title this book 'Gut Feelings'? Is this like a double entendre?

**DR. WILL COLE:** It is, it is. So, a large part of my job with my patients is education and empowering people, give them agency over their health. So, I have a lot of time to think about communication and how it's going to land with the... Whether it's the health aficionado that's

mostly my patients, like the super savvy, erudite person that listens to your podcast, that reads all the books, that's immersed in the scientific literature, but to sort of meet people where they're at. Those people, and then the person that's like, "Okay, I'm confused, and I don't know what to believe, 'cause Dr. Google is sort of this endless vortex of conflicting information." So, Gut Feelings has different layers from my standpoint as the writer. It has ancient origins, that term, Gut feelings, gut instinct, the butterflies in my stomach. Somehow, our ancestors knew that the gut was the seat of the soul, and now science is catching up with antiquity. Now we have all this PubMed and research to know the mechanisms of how the gut plays a role in how our brain works, and in many other aspects of our health. But I also wanted to have a conversation about this duality between mental health and physical health and how it's really ultimately the same when you look at these mechanisms.

But we're looking at both gut and feelings, the physiological and the psychological, and how it's bi-directional. And the physiological stuff that I measure on my patients' labs, like underlying gut problems, things like SIBO, intestinal permeability. I see a lot of people that have these wild histamine intolerances and mast cell activation issues and mold toxicity and chronic Lyme disease. Those things that we can quantify on labs impact how our brain works, it will impact inflammation levels in the body, which will really drive anxiety and depression and brain fog and fatigue. But then conversely, the feeling stuff, the mental, emotional, spiritual stuff like chronic stress and trauma and shame will also raise inflammation levels just as much as the physiological stuff, in some people, even more so. So, it has to be a both/and conversation when you're talking about mental health issues and talking about autoimmunity. And those are my people, those are the people that I see dealing with these both/and issues, the gut, and the feelings, but then they're really not given tools to deal with either side in the conventional model.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yeah. Oh man, this is so important. I really hope that people today, they have a true shift in their perception, because... And we're really going to dig into this more and more and more in this episode, but I said this earlier, your thoughts create chemistry in your body. And to acknowledge the fact that we can think our way, essentially, feel our way into sickness, we have these general ideas about that, like if somebody's really angry, maybe they have high blood pressure or that kind of thing. Truly, right now, we can think our way out... We can both have our heart rate accelerate. We can both alter our blood pressure to the degree, like the white coat phenomenon, we have to account for that. Just somebody going in to get their blood pressure done in that kind of clinical setting can alter their blood pressure in negative or positive ways, depending on their perception. And so, all these things are happening every single microsecond. And so, to give language to it, to label it, to call it out, gut feelings is so important, man. I'm excited about this. And in the book, you talk about how... And just to open this door for everybody, why is food foundational in this gut-brain communication?

**DR. WILL COLE:** Well, it's the entry point. Hopefully, we're all eating, right? So, I think it's a way for people to realize they will influence how their neurotransmitters are expressed. How will their brain be firing; how will their brain be functioning? Will it be well-balanced, will it be communicating properly with the rest of the body or not? And every food we eat either feeds inflammation or fights it, some in negligible ways. You're not going to notice it, don't stress about it. But there are significant players when it comes to your breakfast, lunch and dinner and your snacks that will do one or the other for you. So yeah, we have to start there. We have to start there. The food's a central part of the book, but then again, what I call these metaphysical meals, these things that I want people to start shifting their perspective on like, what are the thoughts they're feeding themselves?

That's a meal, but that's less prescriptive and more nebulous, because it's easy for me to say all the clinical nutrition stuff in the book and show the science and have these foods most likely to mess up your mood and raise inflammation or trigger an autoimmune issue, these foods are going to nourish a microbiome and calm things down. It's a lot more to unpack. It's a bigger, complex topic to talk about what thoughts are we feeding our body, but it's the truth. We have to start re-training our brain and retraining our habits to start to be supportive of the parasympathetic, the resting, the digesting, the hormone balance, with these "metaphysical meals." So, things like meditation, things like breath work, things like somatic experiences can start to shift the nervous system in a more of a resting, digesting, hormone-balanced way, which is to me just as influential as the foods that we eat. So again, to be a both/and approach is important.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yeah, one of my favorite quotes from the book is, "Thoughts and emotions are like nutrients for your head, heart and soul. And unfortunately, many of us have been feeding ourselves junk food for a long, long time." So, this is speaking to the junk thoughts that we might habitually be feeding ourselves. My friend, Daniel Amen, calls them ANTs, Automatic Negative Thoughts. And we get into these negative loops. And my argument, would you say like my old self, hearing this message from you would be like, "This doesn't make sense." We're talking about your thoughts affecting your biology, your metabolism, because how is this influencing your health outcomes if your thoughts don't have any calories, you know what I mean? It just... Because it's apparently something not tangible, which even that, that's the thing about today, you just mentioned we have solid science on this. Your thoughts, they have a physical substance, the creation, truly. But I think that our mission today is to get people past that veil and appreciate the fact that we can think ourselves into better health, but we have to address the underlying milieu, the underlying mess that we find ourselves.

**DR. WILL COLE:** Yeah, I agree with you fully. And I think for many people, at least that I've seen over the years, when they start feeding themselves these healthy metaphysical meals, these

nourishing thoughts and habits that will start to cultivate more of a parasympathetic state, they tend to want to go towards the foods that love them back too. Because it's kind of like, they have a more of a self-respect, and it's not that they're trying to die and shame themselves into wellness, it's like, no, they start to love feeling great more than they thought they wanted that food that didn't love them back. And that's sort of the paradigm shift. But look, for some people, the entry point for them to start reclaiming their health is the food. And then at some point, I see that bandwidth increase, that resilience increases because they may be cleaned up their diet, they've worked on healing their gut and know, "Okay, this meditation stuff, this breathwork stuff, this somatic stuff, I can handle it now." So again, to deal with both the gut and the feelings and meet yourself where you're at, it's okay, but at some point, in your journey most people are going to have to deal with both sides of this coin, the physiological and the mental, emotional, spiritual.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yeah. Oh, man, it all ties together. You said earlier that there is skyrocketing rates of people experiencing this treatment-resistant dysfunction or disease, right?

**DR. WILL COLE:** Yeah.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** And with that also having a greater manifestation of more like... It's labeled as idiopathic. We don't know what caused it, there is no cause, it just happened, right?

**DR. WILL COLE:** Yeah.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Which abandons basic tenets of science, by the way. But the thing is, every single thing in our universe, there's a causative agent. We have this cause-and-effect phenomenon. But now that we're seeing the way that we've been looking at things not working to this degree, now it's time to address something that not only does this work and you've seen this with your patients on a daily basis, but it might be the most important thing. And so, my question is, let's talk about some of the top psychological disruptors to this gut-brain connection.

**DR. WILL COLE:** Yeah. As you were talking, I was even thinking about the placebo effect and people think, "Oh, it's placebo effect." That shows you right there mind over matter, how your thoughts influence physiology and even the nocebo effect of the negative thoughts and these reports, I'm sure you read over the years where people are told that they have a terminal illness on a report, and one report that comes to mind is the man ended up dying weeks later only to find after he passed away, he never had the illness. That's in conventional journals, both the placebo and the nocebo effect really, I think showing what I'm talking about here and how you said it, the thought it actually influences our physiology. And so, the biggest... The way that I



put it in the book, chronic stress is the ultimate junk food, but it is this insidious thing because the human species wouldn't be here without some resilience. And I think in some ways, we kind of lack the resilience that our ancestors had but there's a difference between being able to handle life with acute stress, having some grit, and what research has referred to as this evolutionary mismatch.

This epigenetic genetic mismatch, where our genes really haven't changed in 10,000 years but yet, so much of our life when you're talking about how we are doing our life on many levels. And stress is a part of that, it's not the only component of it. But our relationship with technology, the relationship with life, our relationship with the planet, this sort of hustle culture that's at play, this seeing burn-out as this badge of honor, it's a massive issue because it's increasing that chasm between our DNA which hasn't changed in 10,000 plus years and the world around us. So yes, it's chronic stress. And there's a term that I talk about with my patients, and I talk about it in the book, what I call shameflammation. It's this term to describe that mental, emotional, spiritual stuff and people shame around health, around their life, around food and how it's manifesting in their life.

So, I want... Part of the book and I really wanted to tackle the topic of what's labeled as diet culture and more pointedly that toxic diet culture and this polar opposite of "anti-diet culture." And really just giving a functional medicine perspective on both sides. And so, because I see all of that stuff really creating a massive problem of orthorexia, a disorder, eating your own healthy food specifically within the health and wellness space, with the best of intentions oftentimes. But they're sort of like obsessing about healthy things, stressing about healthy foods isn't good for your health.

So, they've learned nothing else in this conversation, but it's a massive problem, especially... I mean, not to generalize, but the people that I see, especially amongst women, where they're trying the best that they can. But here's the double-edged sword is that, as you know, many of these people are having food sensitivities and food reactions, that's even more confusing. Because then they becoming fearful of food because they don't want to have that flare-up again. So that storm of confusion and disillusionment, that what I call shameflammation, it's contributing to their health problems and it's hard to break the cycle. But the tools that I have found to be the most effective of breaking that cycle of shameflammation, I put in the book, because it's important. It's important now more than ever, in my opinion.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yeah. And I want to dig more into this because I think this is one of the biggest leverage points that you address in the book, this concept you've created with shameflammation and I think we need to provide a little bit of context for this as well. Because you're tying in two very powerful things in our biology and in our universe period, shame, and inflammation. And researchers at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine, and we'll throw the

study out for everybody, they uncovered essentially that hypothalamic inflammation is a big contributor to obesity and metabolic dysfunction. So, this inflammation in the brain, specifically in the hypothalamus, so this kind of master gland, it's like regulating our body temperature, how our bodies are processing the calories we consume, a vast variety of things and synchronizing the chronobiology, all this other stuff. Now, here's the thing, inflammation in this particular gland is causing downstream things that happen with insulin resistance and propensity towards growing more body fat. And here's what they found; this is the other part. Having excessive body fat and insulin resistance was creating more inflammation in the brain.

But if we could tie this together, so we know mechanically, we're eating things that are contributing to inflammation in the brain, there's a two-way street here that I want to ask you about. Because there's going to be a mindset that drives us to eat those particular foods that are hurting us. And also, outwardly, our thoughts can create inflammation in our brain, specifically this regulatory part of our brain, we could think ourselves into, literally, we can overheat our bodies, for example. And even that's another thing the hypothalamus is involved in, giving a hand with our cardiovascular system, the list goes on and on. So, there's two parts to this. Number one, with shameflammation, let's talk about how this applies to diet and the foods that we're choosing to eat, and the outer picture of inflammation in the body.

**DR. WILL COLE:** Well, again, and that's the chicken and the egg conversation.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yeah. Yes.

**DR. WILL COLE:** What came first? And I think of countless of cases where for one, it's going to be more the mental, emotional stuff that's going to impact more of the physiological. And then for other people, they don't really have a lot of trauma and shame or chronic stress in their life, and they'll say things like, "I don't have anything to worry about." And we measure things at what's called like an ACE score, an Adverse Childhood Experience score, which research shows the higher the ACE score, things that happen in our childhood, like physical abuse growing up, sexual abuse growing up, alcohol, drug abuse growing up. The more your ACE score is higher, it's more and more likely to have these metabolic issues like type 2 diabetes, and autoimmune issues, and hypervigilant nervous systems. Some people have very low ACE scores and even beyond their childhood, their life is pretty good, but they have this underlying gut problems, these metabolic issues that's then impacting their mood. For most people, it's going to be a bit of both.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Right.

**DR. WILL COLE:** But it is this thing that you have to break and that's the science and art for my job finding out how do we break that cycle because it's that big negative feedback loop of the

thoughts and emotions impacting physiology and the physiology impacting your thoughts and emotions. What's going to resonate with that person for them to stay consistent with it enough to get their head above that proverbial water so they can start feeling better, and then they can do more stuff as they gain resilience and increase their bandwidth. I don't know if that answered your question or not, but it's complicated, it's complex. Everybody's story is different, but typically, you're going to have pieces of the puzzle that deal with both the gut and the feelings.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yeah, that was perfect. That was an absolutely perfect answer because it's a difficult question, right?

**DR. WILL COLE:** Yeah.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Because it's this feedback loop, it can become a vicious circle essentially going in multi-directions. But you had the audacity, you just said art when talking about health. The science and art, and that's really what it's all about. With a great practitioner, they understand that the person in front of them is unique. And it is a journey, it's a story to deconstruct, it's an investigation, it's kind of like the very best crime documentary and love story at the same time. It truly is an art and science, and this is what we evolved with when talking about practitioners in medicine even going back to Hippocrates. But again, it's been more and more sanitized. It becomes this tunnel vision what we're looking at in treating a patient. It's just so mechanistically focused.

**DR. WILL COLE:** Yeah. It's true. And there's a reason why another word for functional medicine is systems medicine. And I, in many ways, act as a quarterback for my patients where we bring the best of all worlds in. It does... Patient needs a psychiatrist, we're going to integrate that in. If they need a trauma specialist, we're going to bring that in. If they need a gastroenterologist, we're going to bring that in. We need that interplay between fields of healthcare. 'Cause people are falling through the cracks when these doctors have these siloed perspectives and treat the body as separate systems and compartmentalize them. It has to... We have to have this cohesive approach to serve people because the body is interconnected, and we have to start seeing it that way.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Can you talk a little bit about the autonomic nervous system?

**DR. WILL COLE:** Yeah. So, it's a massive part of how we feel in our life. It's one of those things that people take for granted, but we would not be here without it. There's three main branches. There's the sympathetic, the parasympathetic, and then the enteric nervous system. The parasympathetic is the weakest part. Most of our culture to varying degrees have... They're in that sympathetic hypertone, that overactivation of the sympathetic. Fight, flight, inflamed,

dysregulated response because sympathetic is so overactive for a number of reasons. Underlying gut problems, environmental toxins, chronic stress, shame, trauma, all play into that overactivation of the sympathetic aspect of the autonomic nervous system. The parasympathetic is weak in many ways, and that shows up in what research has referred to as poor vagal tone. The vagus nerve is the largest cranial nerve in the body, and it's the main governor regulator of the parasympathetic aspect. And it's also... It very much has to do with why we're seeing this vast majority of gut health problems because it's ultimately a nervous system problem for many people.

And a lot of my job is to improve vagal tone through these gut action items and feeling action items within their protocols. That's what the autonomic nervous system is. But like mostly everything within health, it exists on the spectrum. So, the end stage of that hyperactivation of the sympathetic aspect of the autonomic nervous system is what is labeled in conventional medicine as dysautonomia. There is a vast group of people that would not be able to be diagnosed as dysautonomic, meaning this sort of end stage of a dysregulated nervous system, but they're somewhere on that spectrum of feeling wired and tired, anxious, and exhausted, background anxiety, having digestive problems, having things like background anxiety, brain fog fatigue, that is a dysregulated autonomic nervous system. And it's something that people don't have to settle for. But how many people do we know that just feel like that's their lot in life. They're just... That's how they are. They feel like they're broken, and they're distressed, but they're really living with a system that is healable and overcomable and reversible, optimizable. And that's what breaks my heart. It's like these... Life is so short, even for the people that live the longest, life is so short. And people settle for these states that are not actually who they are.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yeah. And to deal with that today, we often turn to things to get a temporary relief essentially. And you point out that this could be exacerbating a problem. So, let's talk about how something like alcohol influences this gut feeling phenomenon.

**DR. WILL COLE:** I'm glad you brought that up. 'Cause let's piss some people off by the alcohol. I lose friends every time I post about the research around alcohol, 'cause they're like, "Man, that's the one thing that they keep in." And in many ways, it's so glamorized and normalized even within the wellness world. It's like the organic stuff, it's the low sugar stuff. Look, there are better for you versions for these and I'm not demonizing someone who have the choice and do it if they have a healthy relationship with. But the state that it still has within the wellness community, I always find to be interesting. But it is a neurotoxin, there's no way around it. And that's why low alcohol, low sugar wine is pragmatically probably the least... If I had to recommend a patient to have in small amounts, it's because it's the low alcohol, it's the least amount of the neurotoxin. It's not a health food in any way, shape, or form. But it's going to impact brain volume, which you know very well. Even small amounts. People just drink a few

drinks a week in small amounts occasionally have less brain volume, which is associated with things like anxiety, depression, brain fog, fatigue.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Just to be clear, you're saying it shrinks your brain?

**DR. WILL COLE:** It shrinks your brain. Shrinks your brain. Nobody wants a shrunken brain; I don't want at least. Maybe somebody out there does.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** It's like very Beetlejuice.

**DR. WILL COLE:** Yes. That's a good one. Yeah. They don't want the shrunken brains and it also increases intestinal permeability or leaky gut syndrome. Again, that gut-brain axis, the autonomic nervous system is being negatively impacted by even small amounts of alcohol. So, I'm not some puritanical teetotaler, people want to drink, I just want them to know and have an educated, mindful decision, and then take some activated charcoal and glutathione afterwards if they're going to have it.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** I was just at my son's basketball game, and one of the parents, well, she's a really cool person, and she's listening to the show. And she saw the episode that I did, it was like a master class on the impacts of alcohol. She was like, "Yep. I'm skipping that one." She told me, she loves every episode, she's like, but she saw the thing that's a trigger for her, like, "I don't want to know. This is something I enjoy. I don't know. I'mma ostrich on this one. My head is in the dirt." And that's a thing oftentimes. And I've seen this over the years. "Just don't tell me, I don't want to know, I don't want to know." When... The very best way to go about this in a way that is truly empowering is to be aware of the thing so that you can consciously choose it.

And I think that there's a danger in being unaware of the influences of things that are... And the thing is also we do know that it's not good for you. You just said it's like, let's not put in the category of a health food at least. Because as you said, in our circle in particular in the health space, it's this framing, it's this, it's that, it's still a very, very toxic substance. This is one of those things where we evolved to be able to use alcohol to run metabolic systems. It's a macro nutrient. But we never evolved the capacity to store it because it's so toxic. Your body will stop using all other macronutrients. It's called fat sparing; it'll stop using your stored body fat. If alcohol is on the scene, it has to use it because it is slowly killing you.

**DR. WILL COLE:** Has to get rid of it, yeah.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** But we developed the capacity to use alcohol from eating, and we're talking millions of years ago, human ancestors, fruits that had gone bad, things that have fallen

to the jungle floor, the forest floor, and to be able to make the most of it. Today, we don't have to do that. We don't have to do that. But also, within that, you just mentioned lower percentage of alcohol being found in something like wine through this process of ethanol creation, versus humans at some point, they were like, "You know what? We need more alcohol in this alcohol," so then they came up with distillation to increase that percentage of alcohol, making it more and more toxic, just smaller amounts really can mess you up or get you into the state that you're looking for. But we're looking at what are the long-term effects of this thing? And you just mentioned even low to moderate alcohol consumption is now proven to reduce the size of your brain, to lead to all manner of metabolic dysfunction, we just got to stop putting it into the category of a health food, but also, we're not trying to be... What is the term? Puritans and...

**DR. WILL COLE:** Yeah, we're not trying to shame anybody.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yeah. We don't need more shameflammation.

**DR. WILL COLE:** Yeah, we don't wanna shameflammation, but then they're stressing about the stuff, I don't want them to do that. But I still want people, like you said, to make educated decisions for themselves and know what it's about. Because I do see people that they eat perfect foods, they're super clean, they're going to the gym, they're doing all the wellness stuff, but they're regularly having the alcohol a few times a week or on the weekends. And then they wonder, "Why is my anxiety still here? Why is my brain fog fatigue still here? Why can't I lose the weight? Why is my digestion still off?" It's one of those dark areas that I find people just don't want to go to, but when they go there, sometimes it's as simple as that that moves them past that plateau.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yeah, absolutely, absolutely. I've seen this really interesting thing of... Kind of like a new level of clarity, is one of the things that people have shared with me. And they're just like, "You feel like this all the time?" Just because it's one of those things where we are suppressing feelings, but then there's a point at which certain processes in the body and the brain kind of go offline, then we experience a purging of other feelings, but maybe... Even as I'm saying maybe, I'm meaning very likely, not in a healthy way, where we're actually consciously processing the things that we're holding on to, which brings me to one of the things you talk about is trauma, obviously, and the things that we've been through in our lives, but it's deeper than that. You talk about inter-generational trauma. Let's talk about that.

**DR. WILL COLE:** Yeah. So, as I mentioned, one of the things that we quantify for any new telehealth patient is what's called an ACE score, the Adverse Childhood Experience score, and we ask things beyond that, like what was their relationships like? What was their life like? What's their work dynamic like? So, both past and current life situation stuff will get a

cumulative idea, will give you a cumulative idea of what your trauma looks like, and then put that into context with, is it playing a role in your health today? And we know that people that have these higher trauma scores, again, are more likely to have these hypervigilant nervous systems, inflammatory states, and more prone to have metabolic issues and autoimmune issues. So that's that.

But for many people, and research is now showing this, this field of intergenerational trauma or trans-generational trauma is things not just that happen to us in this life, but our ancestors' life, so back to two, three generations and beyond back. Most of the research is done on a few generations, but I have no doubt it's more than that. And the two geopolitical historical things that have been looked at is the Ukrainian man-made famine in the early 20th century, done by Russia. Joseph Stalin basically was killing, and mass genocide of the Ukrainian people. Nothing new under the sun, the Ukrainian people wanted independence and that was their move against the Ukrainian people.

And researchers looked at their descendants two, three generations down and found these methylation SNPs, these genetic variants that had to do with how your body handled neurotransmitter function and inflammation and detoxification pathways, and found that they had the same variants passed on through generations, and it was expressing sort of like a genetic heirloom donated in the form of anxiety or an autoimmune issue or a metabolic issue, what happened to great-grandma. And similarly, researchers are looking at descendants of Holocaust survivors as well. So, this can be sobering because it's like, "Hey, people feel like they're screwed. I have enough trauma in my life, now I have to worry about my great-great-grandmother's trauma?"

But as I say in the book and I'm telling my patients all the time, just as trauma can be inherited, literally stored in your cells, so can healing. And I see people breaking the chains of dysfunction, the chains of disease, the chains of hurt and pain all the time, and heal not only themselves, they heal their children and their children's children and generations that they'll never get to meet, by having agency over their health today. And some people are dealt horrible cards in their life, we can't change that, but we can change what we do with it, and that... It's heavy stuff, but there's so much redemption when it comes to... There's a old proverb that's like, "Out of the most... The heaviest darkness has the biggest propensity for light." And I see that in my patient's lives all the time.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yeah, thank you so much for sharing that. Because again, it could be another thing where we get more shameflammation worrying about the historical stuff or our ancestors and whatnot. And it's so fascinating today, but the thing is, even as I'm about to say this, I'm very much well aware, and I think we are just on a very simple basis that our genes are getting passed on, but we always put that in a disempowering way in our culture, but our genes

are getting read a certain way as well. It's not just the gene itself, there are epigenetic influences on how genes are getting read and how they're displaying in the cascade and then we're passing that data on, because truly it's like a handing off of a baton to see our offspring be more adapted to a world and to be able to survive and keep the species going. So, we're passing on that data, like, "This is what's going on right now. Pass this data on so that you could survive better in this climate." And so, there's some great examples that you just shared. There's another one, it's a mouse model, and this was... It's so cool.

I did a guest lecture a couple of times for the Neuroscience Department at NYU, and Wendy Suzuki is there, and she shared this data with me early on, and we'll put the study up for everybody, but what they were doing was essentially exposing these mice to abnormal stressors, and they were seeing that the stress adaptations that were leading to the dysfunction were then passed on to the offspring, like literally, next generation, next generation, even the generation after that was still carrying those genetic alterations. But now here's the thing. So they're carrying on this distress trauma genetic expression, but they found that even after multiple generations of trauma expression, by exposing that next generation of mice to a nourishing environment, to more safety, and what she said was kind of like a Disneyland for the mice to be able to be in a place that has plenty of activity and nourishment, all the things, that genetic trauma alteration changed to more of a positive, healthy expression and then that got passed on to the generations after.

So again, we can logically detect that this is happening for us as a species, it's how we got here. But we have to take it in our own hands today to start to create a nourishing environment internally and externally, around us. But we're talking today about internally, and gut feelings. So, let's dig more into this, and I want to talk about... Man, this is a tough one, toxic diet culture. So, how does your Gut Feelings plan, in your book, how does it address this kind of strange, toxic diet culture that we have today?

**DR. WILL COLE:** Well, I'd love to get your thoughts on this too. But this is sort of an important part of the book. It's basically a chapter of the book, of tackling this, 'cause it's so intertwined to this topic of gut feelings, when I mentioned the orthorexia and the complex nature of what's going on here when you're talking about inflammation, anxiety and depression, the people that I see here. And I don't think anybody is going to argue with the fact that there's toxicity within "diet culture." Shaming people and have this... Basically, "Eat less, workout more, and starve yourself." The classic 20th century thing that's still going on today and marketed to people. But then there's this rebound response of what's known as anti-diet culture, and just like with most things, it's sort of like, the response is the complete polar opposite. And those people, and I have a very raw conversation in the book, just tend to ignore basic nutrition logic. And they're confusing my people, they're confusing the people that are struggling with



autoimmune issues, they're confusing the people that have anxiety and depression and metabolic issues.

People that have insulin resistance are now confused because of this anti... What I would call toxic anti-diet culture, because they're telling them things like, "There's no such thing as a bad food," and "Eat intuitively," and people are bound by these insatiable cravings and hangriness, and they're mistaking their hangriness for their intuition. And they message me on Instagram, and they say, "I can't even say this publicly, 'cause I'm a part of this "intuitive eating," this "body positivity movement, but I know these foods don't love me back." And this toxic tribalism, really, that's what's going on, are leaving a lot of just every day, normal people really confused, because they know toxic diet culture isn't good, shaming your body into wellness is the antithesis of sustainable wellness. But then the opposite, there's just some basic facts that some foods are going to mess up your blood sugar, some foods are going to mess up your digestion and raise inflammation levels, and avoiding those foods isn't restriction. It is not toxic diet culture, it's self-respect. And it's really empowering people to be their own N-of-1 experiment.

What does your body love and what does your body hate? And the analogy that I put in the book is like a toxic relationship. Continuing to eat foods that don't love you back, it's like staying in a toxic relationship and wondering why you're still miserable. But avoiding those foods isn't restrictive, it's ultimately you knowing, "Hey, I love feeling great more than I want something that's going to dim my light," and that's the paradigm shift that I want people to have, or what I call in the book, "food peace." It's this third way that I think is a middle ground of not diet culture or anti-diet culture. It's using the latest science and clinical nutrition facts that we have about foods and focusing on the things that love us back. And so, it's going to probably piss some people off in the anti-diet culture, but I think it's an important point. And they probably are going at this as with most things, what they say, "The road to hell is paved with good intentions." I really feel like they're hurting people that are confused too, that have because of social media, a loud microphone to talk about through their hurt. But ultimately, I think they're adding to more confusion out there, more food confusion.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yeah. Wow, you just... Man, it's so powerful, so powerful. Got a quick break coming up, we'll be right back. The human brain is the most powerful pharmacy in the universe, and I'm saying that because every single thought that we think creates correlating chemistry in our bodies, and that biochemistry is designed uniquely for you. It's beyond bio-identical hormones or bio-identical neurotransmitters. These are designed specifically for your own receptor sites. So, what you're making within your own body based on your thoughts, your perception of reality is of the utmost importance. And obviously, thoughts of stress and anxiety and worry and fear, these are going to create cascades and make us feel a certain way, the same with more positive and affirmative feelings and thoughts, of joy, of love, of

connection. But all of our emotions matter. Now, the thing is, if we're talking about health and longevity, we want to make sure that we're stacking conditions to have more positive, affirmative thoughts and buffer us from the stressful thoughts that we are inevitably going to have. Now, our sleep hygiene, our movement practices and also our nutrition are of the utmost importance in helping to modulate these things. And when it comes to managing stress, there is one particular storied tea that has been utilized for thousands of years, that stands head and shoulders above the rest.

A study published in Biomedical Research from test subjects with a variety of health complaints including anxiety and poor sleep quality were given Lion's Mane medicinal mushroom or a placebo for four weeks to monitor their metabolic and psychological impact. The participants who utilized Lion's Mane had significantly reduced levels of anxiety and irritation than those in the placebo group. The researchers stated, "Our results show that Lion's Mane intake has the possibility to reduce depression and anxiety." Not only that, scientists at the University of Malaya discovered that compounds in Lion's Mane are able to significantly improve the activity of the nerve growth factor in the brain. Nerve growth factor is essential in the regulation of growth, maintenance, proliferation, and survival of various brain cells. If we want to have a healthy brain and protect our brain cells, which we don't have the regenerative activity of brain cells like we do other cells in our bodies, we've got to take care of our brain cells, this is one of the few things ever discovered that has that protective capacity.

For me and my family, we want to make sure that the medicinal mushrooms that we're utilizing; Lion's Mane, Chaga, Rishi and the like are all done via a dual extraction to make sure that we're getting these bioactive compounds in a more full fashion. So, via a hot water extract and an alcohol extract. There's one company that's doing that and infusing these incredible medicinal mushrooms into things like organic coffee, organic hot coco, and I'm talking about the folks at Four Sigmatic. Go to [foursigmatic.com/model](https://foursigmatic.com/model), you get 10% off, store wide, of all of their incredible medicinal mushroom, elixirs, cocos and their organic coffee blends as well.

Today, I actually had the Lion's Mane and Chaga organic coffee blend. And this is one of those things, of course, it puts you on 10, but it helps you to modulate and manage your energy. It's not one of those things where you get this jolt of energy and then it leaves you lagging later on. It's very steady, mild-mannered behavior and also helping to really activate the cognitive function that we're looking at when we're talking about things like Lion's Mane medicinal mushroom. You get 10% off store-wide, plus more. They've got some incredible packages that you've got to check out in the specials over at [foursigmatic.com/model](https://foursigmatic.com/model). Go to [F-O-U-R-S-I-G-M-A-T-I-C.com/model](https://F-O-U-R-S-I-G-M-A-T-I-C.com/model) for 10% off store wide and more. And now, back to the show.

The thing about social media, it's wonderful because everybody has a voice, and it's absolutely terrifying because everybody has a voice. But that's the thing, it's just... Even as I say that it's

polar opposites, but everything... Most things are going to exist somewhere in the middle. And you just said something so profound, which is, we tend to swing right to the other side of the pendulum, so we're experiencing... We are literally the sickest society in the history of humanity today. Highest rates of obesity, cancer, heart disease, depression. Everything is at epidemic proportions. We are f\*cked up. And instead of addressing that, we swing all the way over here; Body positivity, everything is just fine. Now, the reality is, it's in the middle here for a lot of things, which is, we don't want to hate our way into better health, but if you're unhealthy, you're a ticking time bomb for pain and suffering. And to just say, "Everything is fine how I am," and I'm experiencing a state of obesity and high blood pressure and inflammation and all these different things. I'm insulin-resistant right now, I'm not Type-2 diabetic, I haven't been diagnosed yet.

So, I'm straight, whatever it is. In reality, it's not just hurting us as well, because this is supposed to be a movement about compassion. We're going to inherently be hurting those who care for us. We're inherently going to be hurting our communities and society at large, because we're going to be restricted in giving our gifts and expressing joy and happiness and all the things. We can have those temporary ideas we tell ourselves, but in reality, we can have both. You don't have to be this, what society deems to be this picture perfect, aesthetic body. We're so beautiful and dynamic and diverse, let's celebrate that. But let's also celebrate health and how to care for that because there are very specific rules to this reality like we live... We're operating in this... There's gravity.

**DR. WILL COLE:** There's gravity.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** As much as I might want to not be with about it, if I step off the building, I'm going to fall.

**DR. WILL COLE:** Right.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** And it's just, it is. And so, we know that, for example, real food is a hallmark to creating real healthy cells, but the majority of our diet is ultra-processed foods today.

**DR. WILL COLE:** Yeah. No, it's true. And like you said it, it should be a both/and thing, like loving yourself today doesn't necessarily mean you have to accept where you're at today. And it's the back cover of this book, you can't heal a body you hate, but ultimately it has to be born out of self-love and self-respect. And even if we all ate the same way and ate the "perfect diet" which doesn't even exist, even if we did all the same good things, we still would all look different, and that's okay. Just to echo what you've said, we're still going to all look different and that is. That's

true authentic body positivity, but there's nothing positive about metabolic disorder. And ultimately, I want to love people to that higher place.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** This is a good segue into why mindfulness is so important to our wellness practices. Let's talk about that.

**DR. WILL COLE:** It's true. And that's one of those metaphysical meals. Basically, in the book, I put together a protocol of basically 42 of my top things and every day they can explore which ones resonate with them 'cause they're not going to do all 42, all the time. But these are the ones that research is the most exciting to me and what I've seen clinically on the ground to be the most effective. So, every day, there's got to be a gut action item and a feeling action item. And on the feeling side of things, things like mindfulness, really getting granular on what types of meditation are shown to be supportive of nourishing the autonomic nervous system, of strengthening that vehicle tone and bringing down the hyper-vigilance and in turn, that inflammation. So, we talk about body scans and box breathing and mindfulness meditation and breath work, like holotropic breathwork and even beginner types of breath work to really be supportive of the parasympathetic. All the way to talk about somatic experiences like dancing and drumming, and people, even yoga and Tai Chi are considered somatic. All of these things are what I call in the book, acts of stillness, supportives of the parasympathetic.

And then, some people say meditation is not for them, typically those are the people that need meditation the most, but there's other entry points of meditation. Even forest bathing, which I know you know about, but Shinrin Yoku is how it's... It's a Japanese term that literally translates in English as forest bathing, and it sounds like another weird thing that we do in wellness, like we're taking a bath tub out in the middle of the forest and getting naked in a bath, but it's not. It's using nature as a meditation; it's using nature as a medicine and a meditation. And maybe sitting in the lotus position isn't where you're at right now, maybe you're so dysregulated that that's uncomfortable for you. So, start off with forest bathing or one of these other practices, one of these other feeling action items that I talk about in the book, but they're all essential, these are metaphysical meals. They should be treated like you treat your breakfast, lunch, and dinner, because it's a practice, just like anything else. And none of us are good at it, which is why it's a practice, so you stay consistent with it, just like you'd go to the gym and go to the gym one time and say the gym didn't work for me. No, it's going to take time and get some weeks and months and years under your belt to start to see the fruition of these parasympathetic practices like meditation and different schools of it.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yeah, yeah, these are all things that our genes expect us to do when you just mention forest bathing, these nature inputs. It's so weird, even as I say this stuff, and it's just, it's like nature is out there, we're different, we're separate from it, but we just made it up.

We can pretend. We're kind of like less hairy beavers, we just... Beavers build dams. We build buildings, we're just making stuff and this stuff is from nature too.

**DR. WILL COLE:** Yeah. I think that should be the title of this episode, "Less hairy beavers. How to be a less hairy beaver."

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** But then, there's also another less hairy... Never mind, that's a whole other book.

**DR. WILL COLE:** It's book five.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Double entendres, man. Less hairy beavers. All right, so now with this being said, these are things that our genes expect us to have these exposures. This is why we experientially when we are around a body of water, near the ocean, the lakes, rivers, that kind of thing, something happens, there's a shift that autonomic nervous system has a tendency to shift over to that kind of parasympathetic vibe, and the same thing holds true with being in a park or just trees, all these things. These are signals of safety that our cells are getting. And if we're not getting those exposures, our genes are craving something that they're not getting, like it expects this thing, so what's going to happen? We're going to manifest dysfunction, and it would normally guide us to those things through our evolution, but today we can suppress. You can drink, you can watch.

**DR. WILL COLE:** Distract ourselves.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** We got all, we've got... We're living in the greatest time of distraction, and so you're getting us back to what matters most and this internal regulation. So, would this mindfulness fit under that umbrella of metaphysical meals you talk about?

**DR. WILL COLE:** Yeah, absolutely. And I have a metaphysical meal plan in the book of how to like, traditionally the end of the meal is maybe that cup of tea or coffee, to really use these meditative breathwork, somatic practices to regulate your nervous system that just five, 15 minutes a day can do a lot to start to retrain the nervous system to be more at a parasympathetic state. So yeah, I think it's funny. I'm excited that the researchers in Japan and South Korea are looking at things like forest bathing as a way to modulate the nervous system and inflammation levels in a positive way, but ultimately our ancestors would just call it life. They wouldn't have a term for it, it's just like... But we're decreasing that chasm between genetics and epigenetics by going and doing these things.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** We're so weird, we are so weird.

**DR. WILL COLE:** We need the double-blind placebo-controlled trial to just show that's what our ancestors would have known all the time.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yeah. The thing is too, we have this information, it's been passed down generation to generation. But then we're just like, "You know what, f\*ck that. Give me some Flintstones Vitamins. That's how you... That's the key to health."

**DR. WILL COLE:** Yeah. "I want that quick dopamine hit of that FOMO inducing content on social media." It's designer, it's designed to be that way.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Let's talk a little bit about, in this vein with our nutrition, you mentioned earlier about the fact that we are in many ways... So again, I'm struggling, you have me thinking so chicken or the egg. When you said it earlier, I was like, "Man, which thing comes first?" But in some ways, we are more resilient than our ancestors because of all of these crazy environmental stressors that we are still living through and we're still making it. We are incredibly resilient species but in other ways, we are far less resilient, like it's this strange paradigm that we're existing in right now. And so, I think right now, more than ever, it's important for us to stack conditions to proactively build our resilience, it's not just finding a way to activate that parasympathetic but to find ways that we are more resilient against when the sympathetic system is active and in control and we can come back to baseline faster, right?

**DR. WILL COLE:** Yeah.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Let's talk about a nutritional way to do this is. Let's talk about adaptogens.

**DR. WILL COLE:** Yeah, it's an amazing way. It's an amazing gut action item in the book of we've used clinically for the past 13 plus years, and the world has used, and every part of the world has their own indigenous adaptogens for thousands and thousands of years, every society you can think of traditionally around the world. But they have... Adaptogens are a plant group that have some things in common, that they are safe for humans to consume, and they have a modulating effect to be supportive of the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis. And actually, as you were telling me about that study of how the hypothalamus inflammation, and I'm thinking in the downstream effect of that, a hypothalamic-pituitary-thyroid axis, adrenal axis, ovarian axis, testicular axis. What happens in the brain isn't staying in the brain. That's impacting when people think hormones "are their issue," it's oftentimes a brain-based problem that's causing the hormonal imbalance in the first place. And not just a brain-based issue, but a brain-inflammatory-based issue.

So, what these adaptogens tend to do is they have a balancing effect, boarding the brain to communicate with the rest of the endocrine system, the hormonal communication lines. And many of them have been shown to have an anti-inflammatory effect as well, which I'm assuming, I would assume it's part of their protective benefits. So, things like Ashwagandha is probably the most well-researched known, it's been used in Ayurvedic medicine for a long time. Tulsi or Holy Basil is another one that's used in Ayurvedic medicine a long time, but you look at all different types of ginsengs, like Siberian ginseng's been used for a long time. And even medicinal mushrooms can have some adaptogenic qualities as well, like Lion's Mane and Chaga. So these are things that I put throughout the book to show people, these are things you can cook with, the things you can make little elixirs with very easily, and some of them have exotic names, but they're, because of the time we live in, the benefits of this mad world we live in is that these things are typically widely available and accessible to people in different forms.

You don't need all the adaptogens, but they're a tool within the toolbox that you can play around with. And I wouldn't call them foundational, I think we need to get the core of the food right to work on gut health. I think we need to get the core of this trauma work and the stress work, but I feel like adaptogens, some things like adaptogens are like the cherry on top. They're things that people that have got the foundational things under and they're looking for added tools in a toolbox to modulate their nervous system in a positive way. So, I've seen them be game changers for people that when they are using them like this.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yeah, and you were dropping some gems and it's just... It's like a subtle thing there because... And you've seen this as well. We'll find out about an adaptogen, we'll find out about maca, and then we're the eating Doritos and Dunkin Donuts for breakfast. That's such a weird combination but we're eating that and coffee and not the good stuff, the Dunkin Donuts with sugar and all the things, and then we're taking maca and they're just like, "Man, I'm not really getting any results with that, what's going on?"

**DR. WILL COLE:** It's going to be hard to maca your way out of that.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yeah. So, it's very simple, you just said it, foundational pieces based on what are the big movers? It's your diet. It's the foods that you're eating. And then you add things like that on top of really focusing on having a majority real food diet, and then you add in some Tulsi or some Ashwagandha and things like that, now we're starting to really refine things and build up resilience. It's very difficult to be resilient when we're eating Burger King, cycling Burger King to Wendy's, to McDonald's. That was my trilogy by my house. When I get tired of McDonald's, just hop over for a flame grilled...

**DR. WILL COLE:** Yeah, mix things up.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Version or Wendy's, they got the square patty for whatever reason.

**DR. WILL COLE:** Yeah, squared around patty.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** So, if you're doing that, it's very difficult to be reaching the level of resilience and passing on that data. And this is also speaking to something that was passed on with our ancestors, and again, we can lose track of these things. With the awareness that they had, that they're making choices for future generations. I don't think we've been more self-centered than we are today, but under the guise, like the superficial compassion. You care about things in the planet and causes and all these things, but the choices that we're making for ourselves right now, like the food that we're eating, for example, is deeply impacting the next generation. So being able to take full accountability and so just to tie everything together. And this has been so fascinating. With Gut Feelings, we've talked about the nutrition component, we talked about the metaphysical meals, is there anything else that you want to point people to that you talk about in the book?

**DR. WILL COLE:** Well, I think we covered the major tenets of it. What I wanted to do in the book is really infuse a grace and a lightness back into wellness, 'cause I feel like sometimes, again, I biohack with the rest of them. But I think context around these things matter, because we can have amazing tools within nutrition, we can have amazing tools within wellness and exercise and biohacking, but they become a shell of themselves when we lose the why of why we're doing this, and we can get lost in the weeds. We can start off with the best of intentions, like I say, but end up in hell, because you're like I... You're doubt now stressing and shaming yourself with tools that are meant to bring life to you, so it's checking ourselves. I think it's checking the health world, because I've been in it for a long time, even before I've been in professionally, I was the weird kid in Western Pennsylvania, 15 years old when I had my job at Finish Line. I'd use my paycheck to go get the random super food that I read about in the '90s before there was the internet and all that stuff.

But it's... Look, I've been in this community for a long time, and I think we need to check ourselves because I think that there's a lot of people within our community that have lost their way, that they are... They have this supplement graveyard and they're taking this crap ton of supplements; they're eating five foods because they're afraid of all the others, and they are just obsessed, they're shaming their way into wellness, which is going to be unsustainable. Or the shame is going to be such a detriment to any good outcome or it's going to be... For most people, it's going to be unsustainable. Something's got to give. So that's the other aspect beyond the research around shame and trauma and all that stuff, which is tied into this and how these things impact my patients with autoimmunity and mental health issues, it's really... The book is a call to action, I think for the wellness aficionados out there of like, what are you



doing? 'Cause they're are my people, again, they're the people I'm seeing, and they're spiraling with all this paralysis of analysis. And they're like, I don't know how great their health is when they're coming at all this stuff with that energy.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yeah, and I appreciate you for that because we've really got to address this because you just said, it's well-intentioned. We're trying to figure this stuff out, and we want to empower the folks who are stepping up and say, "You know what, I want to feel good, I want to be healthy. I want to model this behavior for my children, but now I've ventured into a place where there's so much shame and guilt around the decisions that I'm making. Or when things aren't working, I'm punishing myself, or I'm trying to live this picture-perfect life in this very, very abnormal world. And I'm separating myself annoyingly from people that could be very helpful or bring joy to my life and all these things," and you're really getting to the heart of this. And I know that there's so much more to unpack here, obviously, and I want people to make sure they pick up a copy ASAP. Gut Feelings, available everywhere books are sold. Can you let everybody know where the best place to pick up your book would be and also where they can follow you?

**DR. WILL COLE:** Thanks, man. Everything is at [drwillcole.com](http://drwillcole.com), it's D-R W-I-L-L C-O-L-E.com. But the links to all the places you can get Gut Feelings are there. But Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Target, independent bookstores, you, and I both know in the book world supporting local independent bookstores is important. If you have one locally, support them. And my podcast, which you were a guest on and hopefully you'll come back, it's called The Art of Being Well. Everything's at [drwillcole.com](http://drwillcole.com), though.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Wonderful, and this has been such a joy. I've got good gut feelings, hanging out with you, man.

**DR. WILL COLE:** Guardian angels, man.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Let's go. My guy, Dr. Will Cole, everybody. Truly, our minds are the most powerful pharmacy in the universe, and I say that very intentionally because the chemicals that we're creating are specially designed for us. They fit directly into our receptor sites. They're not like foreign pharmacological agents, where there's going to be a patchwork job and picking and choosing and seeing if things match. And of course, this manifestation of what we refer to as side effects, which are really direct effects of utilizing things that are really abnormal or unnatural for our bodies. Now, being that our minds are the most powerful pharmacy in the known universe, wouldn't it be to our best advantage today more than ever, to learn how to use our minds for our betterment rather than what's the social norm today, which is to be disempowered. And to not be told that you have the ability to influence your health by influencing how you're thinking, how you're perceiving the world around you, how

you're perceiving yourself, this is the most important work, and it impacts every single thing about us and about how we're showing up in the world.

So, I really hope that you got a lot of value out of this episode. If you did, please share it up with your friends and family, you can send this directly from the podcast app you're listening on, and of course you could take a screenshot and tag me and tag Dr. Cole as well. I'm @ShawnModel on Instagram and tag Dr. Will Cole as well on Instagram. Let him know what you thought about this episode. Share the love. And of course, I'm on Twitter as well. If you want to share over on Twitter, I'm @ShawnModel on Twitter, and I'm @TheModelHealthShow on Facebook. All right, so again, thank you so much for you're hanging out with me today, and listen, we've got some incredible master classes and epic world class guests coming your way very, very soon, so make sure to stay tuned. Take care, have an amazing day and I'll talk with you soon.

And for more after the show, make sure to head over to [themodelhealthshow.com](http://themodelhealthshow.com). That's where you can find all of the show notes, you could find transcriptions, videos for each episode, and if you got a comment, you can leave me a comment there as well. And please make sure to head over to iTunes and leave us a rating to let everybody know that the show is awesome, and I appreciate that so much, and take care. I promise to keep giving you more powerful, empowering, great content to help you transform your life. Thanks for tuning in.