

EPISODE 780

7 Science-Backed Ways to Defeat Depression

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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 with me today. This is a very important conversation in one of the most pressing issues of our time. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, depression is now the leading cause of disability and absenteeism in the United States today. On this episode, we're going to be looking at, has our treatments for depression been yielding viable results? And also, we're going to look at seven science backed ways to reduce the symptoms of depression. Now, to kick things off, first of all, we're going to look at, has our conventional treatments for depression been yielding viable results?

Well, a 12 year longitudinal study published in the Archives of General Psychiatry tracked nearly 500 individuals with varying degrees of major depressive disorder, receiving conventional treatments of medication and psychotherapy. What the researchers found was that even with treatment, even with taking medications each day, nine out of 10 people remained depressed and continued to have persistent symptoms. So to reiterate, nine out of 10 test subjects did not have a resolution of their symptoms. Some of them, another percentage did have some improvement. But the majority of test subjects, again, nine out of 10, 90% continued to be depressed. Now with this data, we can assert that the one out of 10 individuals that did have a resolution of their symptoms, they are actually such an outlier that their prescribed treatment cannot be clearly attributed for their success.

It could have been any number of other confounding factors. We can't see a direct connection between their treatment and a resolution of their symptoms. Now this is an important caveat because this is not to say. That psychoactive medications and psychotherapy cannot be incredibly valuable for some people at some times. But we've got to look at, has our overall treatment of depression in our society been yielding good results? Now one of the most overlooked reasons why our conventional treatments for depression have not been yielding very good results is that there's a very constricted or restricted number of treatments for a vast array of different expressions of depression.

There isn't just one type of depression and according to double board certified psychiatrists and neuroscientists, Dr. Daniel Amen, we all have a unique brain and unique biochemistry and no two experiences of depression are alike. And unfortunately, The diagnosis and treatment of depression is based on antiquated symptom clusters based on conversations and behaviors. Practitioners don't typically include an actual analysis of the patient's hormone health. their brain health and overall metabolic health.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Dr. Amen has actually collected over 200,000 brain scans and run advanced cognitive function tests to actually analyze what's going on inside his patient's brains. And I know this because he has looked at my brain as well. And Dr. Daniel Amen stated that psychiatrists are the only medical specialists that virtually never look at the organ that they treat. He stressed that without collecting any biological data from your patients, practitioners are “throwing medication tip darts in the dark at people's brains”.

To see if something sticks which he concludes simply doesn't make any rational sense Now this is an important part of this conversation because you are unique. There is no one else on earth like you. Everybody has a very unique brain and unique biochemistry. And no two treatment protocols are going to affect people in the same way. So we've got to be able to have introspection and some tools and to be able to ask healthy, intelligent questions. We're looking at a treatment protocol for ourselves and not outsourcing ourselves to a system that is not yielding very good results. And most people simply don't know that. Now there are people that do find results, but as a society, the ways that we've been treating and even diagnosing depression has not led to admirable outcomes.

A study published in the journal psychotherapy and psychosomatics found that nearly two thirds of the patients who had been given a diagnosis of depression within the previous 12 months did not meet the criteria for clinical depression as described by the diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders, which is the virtual Bible in psychiatry. The lead author of the study stated that “The vast majority of individuals diagnosed with depression, rightly or wrongly, were given medication. It's not only that physicians are prescribing more, the population is demanding more.” And this becomes a vicious cycle because people are in pain, physical pain, mental pain, emotional pain, and they're looking for a way out. And unfortunately, the public at large has looked at depression relief in the form of medications because that's what we're largely exposed to. That's what's largely marketed to us as the treatment for the symptoms that we're experiencing. And as a society, we haven't had the opportunity to learn about all of the other far more effective and far safer options to reverse depression.

But that's all going to change today. Today, we're going to put some common sense back into the conversation about depression and overall mental health and provide some science backed ways to reduce and even reverse symptoms of depression. Now, leading into this conversation, we also need to keep in mind that mental health is physical health. They are one and the same. They're tied together. Our mental health, our brain health, our neurochemistry, our endocrine system, our nervous system. These are not operating outside of the rest of our bodies. Our metabolic health is deeply impacting our mental health. They are feeding into one another constantly.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yes, our mental health is influenced by psychological factors, such as our beliefs about ourselves, our beliefs about our sense of self worth, our beliefs about our relationships. Our sense of connection to others, our perception of our past, our present, and our future, our ability to reframe, coping skills, and so much more. Yes, psychological factors do impact our mental health. But our mental health is also. Again, according to massive amounts of peer reviewed data, our mental health is also influenced by our metabolic health. Our blood glucose and our blood glucose management can dramatically change our mood and our behavior.

Have you ever been hangry before? Our hormone levels are also deeply impacting our mental health. Levels of testosterone, cortisol, thyroid hormone, and so much more. Nutrient deficiencies can deeply impact our mood and mental health, our brain function, including our brain blood flow, brain injuries, and more. All of these factors are influencing our mental health and we have so much power to influence these things, but it starts with education. And now we're going to dive into these very specific seven science backed natural treatments. To help defeat depression, we're going to kick things off with one of the most verified forms of treatment for depression. Number one on this list is exercise. A new meta analysis published in the BMJ that included over 1,000 randomized controlled trials. All right 1,039 randomized controlled trials to be exact. And it also included nearly 130,000 people. And this meta-analysis revealed that physical activity, exercise is 1.5 times more effective at reducing mild to moderate symptoms of depression, psychological stress, and anxiety than medication or psychotherapy. Now, please hear this. This is not to negate the fact. The value of medication and psychotherapy, but the data clearly indicates over 1000 studies, how much do you want? Over 1000 studies affirming that exercise just works better.

It just works better for the majority of people. Now, again, there is a context here where psychotherapy can nail it for a certain individual or certain individuals or medication can absolutely nail it and help to resolve their symptoms. But for the majority of people, exercise works better. This is what should be promoted primarily. Our physicians and practitioners should be breaking out the prescription pad and prescribing exercise. Because it simply works better. According to most data, this can also be used in conjunction. This is not even again to negate the other forms of treatment But if we're not looking at what works better, we're doing a true disservice and that needs to stop. That's why this education today is so important. You need to know this and you need to share this, alright? The BMJ, this is published in the BMJ. This is one of the top tier medical journals in the world, but oftentimes, unfortunately, because of the workload, because of the patient load, practitioners are not on top of the data like this. And that's why you need to take this power into your hands for yourself and also to educate your practitioner, educate your doctor, share this information with them.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Because this can help not just you, but other patients, family, friends, community at large. We can make a real change, but this education has to get out. Now, part of being a part of this community with the Model Health Show, we don't just look at the data, we ask, why? Why does this work? What's going on behind the scenes? What's the mechanism? What's actually leading to these outcomes? What is it about exercise that reduces the symptoms of depression? Well, number one, first and foremost, our muscles are an endocrine organ. Our muscles are an endocrine organ. That means our muscles are producing hormones when we're contracting them. When we're utilizing our muscles, they're producing hormones, myokines, anabolic hormones. Our muscles are producing compounds that directly influence our mood, when we're using them. That's the key.

If we're actually utilizing our muscles, they're producing these compounds. And also exercise is one of the most well noted things in our reality that helps to reduce stress because it's triggering the release of endorphins, these kind of feel good compounds in our bodies that help to reduce pain. That's, and that's mental and physical as well, producing things like serotonin, dopamine, all of these things are tied to exercise and movement. Also, exercise is one of the most proven activities that we can engage in that increases our resilience. It's known as a remarkable hormetic stressor, which this is a stressor to the body that makes us more resilient against stress when we're allowed to heal and recover from the stress input from the exercise.

And also in our conversation with health psychologist, Kelly McGonigal, which we shared a clip from her talking about this subject matter on social media, on Instagram, and it went buck wild, it went buck wild. All right. I'm talking about hundreds of millions of views and people reposting and sharing this was, it was crazy. Even somebody that I've been trying to put my friends onto is particular musical artist, Victoria Monet. I've been trying to put, Sean T is one of my friends. I sent him one of her, uh, songs like years ago and I was like, she's next up. Cause I got that ear! You know, but she just swept up at the Grammys, but I've been listening to her and vibing out for, for a couple of years now. But Victoria Monet posted my video. Talking about the power of exercise, right? Somebody she's shared very vocally about her own struggles. Mental health and those kinds of things and, and, and how exercise is such an important part of staying mentally well for her. And, you know, that's the power of, that's the right use of things like social media and putting this information together because you never know who is going to touch.

And as a result of her sharing it. Oh my good, who knows, who knows who that was able to reach and to inspire. But Kelly McGonigal shared that exercise does in fact, not just reduces stress and increases our experience of pleasure. Exercise actually changes our brain. Exercise sensitizes our brain to more pleasure.

SHAWN STEVENSON: So what that means is exercise makes our brain more sensitive to pleasure inputs and starts to seek out and look for more pleasure. It makes the pleasurable experiences in life more pleasurable. It's a really powerful virtuous circle rather than a vicious circle virtuous circle. Versus some of the other things that we do that become a vicious circle. That our brain becomes sensitized to negativity or become sensitized to fear. Exercise on the other hand sensitizes our brain to more pleasure, really powerful stuff. But the question is, are you using it now in particular, when we're in a state of depression and we're trying to manage our way through that, that situation, that terrain. It can be the last thing on your mind wanting to get up and move around. It's, in some forms of depression, very difficult to just get up and to do anything. And what I am here to say, And what we know experientially is that, when we're looking for energy just to be able to, to, to do something, to, to exercise, I just need some energy to do it. It is where we are able to extract the energy when we're able to just get up and get some steps in just to take a walk down the block.

Sometimes that's all we can do when we are in the grips of depression. Just getting outside, getting a few steps, and just building from there because we don't just get energy. We make energy. We create energy. Again, this becomes this virtuous circle, this feedback we start to extract and just by contracting our muscles, even going for a short walk, we've got data affirming this, but then if, Hey! Maybe we could do a couple of pushups or body weight squats, or maybe we can, you know, go on a walk with a friend, or maybe we can, you know, Get crazy and throw on some roller skates, or maybe we got a rebounder at home, or, you know, maybe we enjoy playing tennis, even though we're feeling down, you know, we just go out and play a little tennis, or, or pickleball, or whatever the case might be, you know, just giving ourselves permission to do something physically active. That the energy sometimes comes from just getting up and doing the thing. And then we find in it magically it's there. And so if we can also be supportive of the people that we care about and being perceptive of a depressed state that they might be in and helping using the psychological tools that we have acquired in our own lives and patients to find the right button to push just to get them up and active, just a little bit of movement can do wonders for our mood.

And again, according to the data, exercise is in fact, 1.5 times more effective than conventional treatments for reducing the symptoms of depression. So a couple of quick objectives for the treatment and most importantly, the prevention of depression to make sure we have these inputs so that we can insulate ourselves from that depressive state every single day. And this is according to the vast amount of data that we have on this. Make sure that we're walking at least 4,000 steps a day. Ideally. Of course, there's higher amounts that are stated by different higher amounts that are relegated by different healthcare practitioners, 8,000, 10,000, 12,000 steps, but 4,000 appears to be that minimum effective dose for some really wonderful things to happen with our hormone function.

SHAWN STEVENSON: All right. So target getting in at least 4,000 steps a day. And also because our muscles are an endocrine organ and just a bank, it's a bank of Hormone, powerful hormone activity that is not released. The funds are not getting doled out unless we use our muscles. We want to use the rest of our body as well, you know, our upper body and lower body. So getting in three days, ideally that is two to even, even one day of doing some strength training is better than none. But ideally three days a week of some form of strength training. This could be bodyweight exercises. This could be, you know, lifting some weights at the gym, that kind of thing, or some, some weights that you might have at home, but just making sure that we're getting in some strength training to really get that super boost of hormone release by using and contracting our muscles. Now, also, I want to share this caveat because, There are going to be folks that hear this that think about, Hey, I work out all the time, but I'm still depressed. Or my friend, you know, they run, you know, uh, 10 miles a day, but they're still depressed. We don't want to get into this. What about ISM?

We don't want to get into negating the science and missing the point here because there's numerous perspectives that we can take on this. Number one exercise is not the end, I'll be all it's not. We can exercise right around all of the psychological issues that we need to be dealing with and we're not dealing with those things. And we're literally just running circles. And not addressing the things that we need to address. So it might be some deeper psychological things that need to be addressed, but exercise can help to create a healthier state where those are accessible. Because the question would be, okay, you exercise all the time or your friend exercise all the time. What if they didn't? How bad would it be if they didn't? Because apparently depression is not such that they're not getting up and moving their bodies. So just imagine if they didn't have that input. How bad would it be? Right? So it's just about perspective here and also not saying that everything and every formula, every flavor of things is for everybody.

All right, because that's inappropriate. We started this off by saying we all have a unique brain, unique biochemistry, and what we need to resolve the issues that we're dealing with is going to be unique to us. We need to have more introspection, more insight, more patience and love for ourselves. And most importantly, to feel empowered in this and to know that there is a solution, there is a way out, but sometimes the way out is going within. So, that's number one on our list of the seven science backed ways to defeat depression. We're gonna move on to number two on this list, and this one might be surprising, but you're gonna see why. Number two on this list is to avoid fast food. An analysis of diet and mental health was published in the journal Public Health Nutrition, and it found that individuals who eat fast food are 51% more likely to develop depression compared to people who eat little to no fast food.

SHAWN STEVENSON: The study consisted of nearly 9,000 participants that had never been diagnosed with depression or taken antidepressants. The multi-year study tracked their diets and found that those who consistently consumed fast food and commercial baked goods were far more likely to be diagnosed with depression or take antidepressants. The scientists found a dose response relationship, meaning that the more fast food they consumed, the greater the risk of depression they experienced. Now, on top of that, an analysis that included nearly 70,000 women published in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition revealed that high glycemic ultra processed foods like those sold at most fast food establishments have a direct impact on the incidence of depression. The scientist stated, "we found a progressively higher dietary glycemic index to be associated with increasing odds of incident depression in fully adjusted models."

Progressively higher consumption of dietary added sugars was also associated with increasing odds of incident depression. Refined grain consumption was associated with increased odds of depression, while higher consumption of lactose, fiber, fruits and vegetables were significantly associated with lower odds of incident depression". Now you might be surprised that avoiding fast food would make the list of the seven science backed ways to reduce the incidence of depression. But not only is the data itself shocking when it comes to this, but it's such an ingrained part of our culture. As a matter of fact, one of the most prominent fast food chains in the world has the happy meal. The happy meal, it screams anti depression. All right. It screams happiness. And growing up as many of us have, it was deeply ingrained in our culture. I had one of my birthday parties at McDonald's. I'll never forget it! Playing in the ball pit.

Well, pause. Playing in the, you know, the little indoor playground, have my friends and family there. It was lit. And of course we were just hopped up on all of that sugar as well. And, no one said that this was supposed to be healthy, you know, but unfortunately this can get framed as something that is socially acceptable. And also again, they're screaming anti depression when you come to us. But someone said that going to McDonald's for a nutritious meal was like going to a prostitute for a hug. They just don't do that. They just don't do that. Now someone else said that, I didn't say that. Alright. But instead of acknowledging that these establishments are contributing in a huge way to the disease and dysfunction in our society today, the latest quote, even nutritionists say it's fine to eat fast food article. To Make the Rounds was just published in the *New York Post* just last week as of this recording. The article is titled, I'm a Dietitian. Here's what I eat at McDonald's to stay healthy when my Happy Meal fanatic kids drag me there. The title of this article alone reveals so much about the psychology that keeps families sick and disempowered and also depressed. Let's start with the beginning of the title. "I'm a Dietitian. Here's what I eat at McDonald's to stay healthy".

SHAWN STEVENSON: Here's what I eat at McDonald's to stay healthy is an oxymoron. McDonald's and healthy are the opposites of one another. That's like icy hot. All right. So the title is embedded with an oxymoron emphasis on the moron. And also leading off with I'm a dietician. That part of the title denotes that I know more about what's healthy and you can trust me. I'm a dietitian. I know you could trust me. And the most powerful part of this title and of this article that's making the rounds, is the blaming of her kids for taking her there. It says when my happy meal fanatic kids drag me there drag me there. Now, what does this well educated dietitian select when you actually read the article to stay healthy? When eating at McDonald's?

Well, for starters, she's getting the McCrispy chicken sandwich. Of course, it's just chicken. It's just a little factory farm chicken with some breading, right? Aha! Aha! McDonald's factory farm chicken. Isn't just tossed in some run of the mill breeding. In addition to the heart, unhealthy, rancid vegetable oils a quick peek at the ingredients on their website And you'll see that they added a little something to make it extra tasty. Some of that wholesome monosodium glutamate, Aka MSG and they're not even trying to hide it. A human study published in 2008 in the journal obesity looked at the MSG intake of 750 people between the ages of 40 and 59 and found that MSG consumption was directly correlated with higher rates of being overweight or obese. The study concluded that MSG increases the risk of being overweight independent of other factors like physical activity and total calorie intake. The study also details that animal studies indicate that MSG can induce hypothalamic lesions in the brain and leptin resistance, possibly influencing energy balance, leading to weight gain.

But it's fine. They put it in there just for the party in the mouth. That's why they're doing it. All right. This is why this makes this list. All right. It's one of those parts of our culture that it's just like, it's so ingrained in our society today that it becomes background noise. And you know, sometimes I have to grab my focus and see it because if you're not tuned into the fast food paradigm, you don't really even notice, you know, it just becomes again, part of the background in a different way. But sometimes when I, you know, maybe I'm sitting at a stoplight and I look over and I like grab my attention and focus on it, I see the lines. People are still lined up. And now this is not, by the way, again, I know that we find ourselves in different situations. And even this was well intentioned. Let me be clear. Even in this article, this is well intentioned. She's trying to say, Hey, this is the best that I can do in this situation. And here's what I would recommend for you to do. Cause my kids, you know, my kids be on one and they want me to go to McDonald's. They drag me there. Part of the problem is the culture that's created where you allow that to be a part of the paradigm for our children. That's even a viable option Because the food is addictive to the point where they want to drag one there. All right, and I know this because I'm not just a former member of the McDonald's Club. I Was the functioning, well, dysfunctioning president.

SHAWN STEVENSON: All right. I work, this is my first job. I was back there flipping burgers, making new concoctions. I leave there at the end of the day, the best part, leaving there at the end of the day and you take all the stuff home. You know, so I'm bringing all the McNuggets, all the burgers and fry all that stuff to my family. All right. And, you know, the reality is, again, it's so ingrained in my culture. I didn't know that this food wasn't really food. I didn't know that those so-called French fries were an abomination and this kind of toxic soup of substances that don't even biodegrade, right. So I would have that paradigm. I remember once I found out some of the Science around this and you know The super size me movie is a great resource to check out if you've never seen it But he actually came to speak at my university and this was during a time when I really took control of my health. I'd stopped eating fast food and I got a chance to meet him there. And me having that memory of coming across a french fry in a couch cushion that might have been there for months and the french fries still look edible.

There's no part, the bacteria didn't want no parts of it. Nothing's, nothing's touching it. Nothing's breaking it down. All right. That kind of stuff isn't even real food. And yes, this can be an innovation in our culture to where we have access to some of these things sometimes, but they're marketing directly to our children. They're putting compounds in the food to make us addicted to those foods to make us crave those foods and that's why we'll find ourselves routinely getting the hooks put into us and We keep finding ourselves at these establishments. Now, what if these weren't a part of our very, very minimal exposure in our culture? But that's not the case that we're dealing with. It's the marketing, right? The sheer number of these places, the taste of the food, all of these things are inducing addiction. And so we need to be aware of this and to come into the game. When my daughter was born and I was again, part of this whole paradigm, one of the early foods, my mom used to babysit a lot of kids too.

We get to McDonald's, we put a French fry in the baby head, just watch him mush on it with no teeth, mushing. All right, we're setting them up, right? This exposure is inappropriate. And so making sure that we are coming into this with education and keeping these fast food establishments at an arm's length because they are not in this for the health of your family. But also if we can trust ourselves to minimally interact with these things on occasion, so be it. But that's usually not the case for most people. If you have that management, and those who you know who might be battling with some mental health challenges find themselves consistently at these establishments, this is the time to do it. It's literally feeding the problem. Now with that being said, instead of regularly eating fast food, let's focus on this instead, which leads to number three on our list of these seven science backed ways to defeat depression. Number three is to anti depress your gut. With real food now, why does our gut health matter when it comes to our mental health?

SHAWN STEVENSON: Well, a huge array of hormones and neurotransmitters are produced within our guts. The human gut is also known as the enteric nervous system and it gets the nickname the quote second brain. There's so much hormonal activity, so many neurotransmitters that are being produced and stored. And there's this really powerful microbiome gut brain connection that we'll talk about more. But enteroendocrine cells and enterochromaffin cells produce a whole host of hormones and neurotransmitters like serotonin, melatonin, and many other hormones. Plus, The trillions of microbes found within the human gut produce a vast array of compounds, like hormones and neurotransmitters, that affect human behavior as well.

For example, A fascinating study published in the journal Trends in Microbiology in 2023 stated, "microbes within the gut can produce, degrade, and modify sex steroids, both estrogens and androgens, in quantities that are biologically significant and affect host physiology". Our gut microbes are, in fact, impacting our mental health. Our gut microbes are in fact impacting our mood all of that chemistry all of these entities trillions of organisms. They all have their own intentions. All right, and they're producing this chemistry there. It's supposed to be we evolved having this symbiotic relationship, but sometimes when things become askew, when we experience something like gut dysbiosis, you know, or SIBO, something that is dramatically increased in the last few years, we can find that we start to

We have a different temperament or disposition. We start to crave different things. And overall just the way that we feel starts to change over time. And a lot of this, according to the latest data, has a lot to do with what's going on in our gut. It is the vast multifaceted crosstalk that influences our mood and behavior. It is not one isolated thing like serotonin. This is very important to understand this. A massive meta analysis titled, The Serotonin Theory of Depression, A Systematic Umbrella Review of the Evidence. Published in the peer reviewed journal, Molecular Psychiatry in 2022. Sought to review the prevailing hypothesis that depression is a quote chemical imbalance. Largely tied to low serotonin metabolism of serotonin or other factors related to the theory that SSRIs, selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors, will effectively reduce depression. The scientists reviewed studies on serotonin levels in different populations, studies on genes related to serotonin, studies on receptor site activity related to serotonin, and so much more.

This was a huge, huge meta analysis. This data set included years of research, and the scientists stated, " The main areas of serotonin research provide no consistent evidence of there being an association between serotonin and depression. And no support for the hypothesis that depression is caused by lowered serotonin activity or concentrations". They went on to state, "this review suggests that the huge research effort based on the serotonin hypothesis has not produced convincing evidence of a biochemical basis to depression.

SHAWN STEVENSON: This is consistent with research on many other biological markers. We suggest it is time to acknowledge that the serotonin theory of depression is not empirically substantiated". This is the primary. Hundreds of billions of dollars have been made with prescribing SSRIs to target serotonin and the commercials and the marketing saying you have a chemical imbalance. That's the cause of your depression. And yet, when the data is analyzed, it does not hold up. We've just accepted it to be true. And this isn't the only or the first peer reviewed paper to debunk the serotonin theory of depression. This has been around for decades. It's been known for decades, but only now after so much dysfunction and demand for change Is this being acknowledged? Now, just to be clear, yes, serotonin does influence our mood and behavior, but not in isolation from the trillions of other biochemical reactions going on within our bodies and the abundance of other hormones, neurotransmitters, and energy exchanges, happening within our bodies every single microsecond.

This is highlighted in a 2020 study titled gut hormones and microbiota, gut brain crosstalk. There is an elaborate, remarkable, beyond our understanding. Communication happens with our microbiome, with our gut flora, with our brain, with our enteric nervous system, with all the cells in our bodies. We're just scratching the surface in our understanding. But What we've done is we're coming in with a blunt instrument based on a hypothesis. Its serotonin is the issue. Boom. Let's hit you with something to, to make that serotonin pop a little bit more. Let's see if that helps. And not only for the vast majority of people, not to say that it hasn't helped some, and not to negate the effect of the placebo effect, but for the vast majority of people. Not only did it not resolve their symptoms of depression, it has left them struggling for answers, struggling to find a resolution.

And part of this resolution is taking care of the aspects of human health, of the aspects of our body that is deeply impacting our mood, which we know today is largely influenced by what's happening in our gut. It's largely influenced by the health of our microbiome. Now the most important method of improving the health of our gut, improving the health of our microbiome is removing the things that mess them up. Remove the cause of the problems. All right, remove the cause of the blockades and, and the damage and the fires being set up in our gut, removing all those things. That's why removing fast food is one of the most important implements here. All right. Yes, that will do wonders in of itself. The body has a way of sorting things out, if we get out of the way. Now to add onto that, what are some things that we can do? To antidepress our gut by adding certain things in again, number one, remove the cause. But number two, it's understanding this relationship between prebiotics, probiotics, and postbiotics. So a lot of the science and kind of prevailing knowledge and something that I've been in this field for 21 years, talking with people working as a nutritionist, you know, well over, you know, a decade, 15 years ago about the importance of taking a probiotic.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Alright, I was having everybody like you need a probiotic. We got to take care of the gut health, but really missing the point because the prebiotics We can take all the probiotics that we want, but they're not going to populate and really affect change in our gut terrain without the prebiotics, without the food, or the substrate for the probiotics to proliferate. So just like us if we don't have food around we're gonna be out here searching for something in place to stay, you know, like shout out to The Walking Dead. They just once they run out of they got to go and you know get out here and navigate these walkers and try and find some food. And so if our gut is in a friendly environment for the friendly bacteria that we want to have, Then they're just not gonna hang around. And so now here's the key prebiotics, so these are the prebiotic compounds To help to support the probiotics that then these friendly flora can produce Postbiotics. The powerful compounds the nutrients that they produce in us for us. All right We already talked about the production of certain hormones and the influence that they have on our hormones and neurotransmitters Produced by our gut bacteria, but they can't do all this stuff if we don't start with step one. So, where do we get prebiotics?

This is so important. Listen. Just about every real food that you can think of, all right? Minimally processed, unprocessed real food functions for some form of bacteria as a prebiotic, all right? Just about every food that you can imagine, some form of bacteria is utilizing that as a substrate. This is how we're able to break certain things down. So the more diversity that we have in our diets, the more prebiotic inputs that we're going to have. And diversity is the key. The vast majority of data is showing that a healthy microbiome is a diverse microbiome. And the diversity comes from when we're eating a food, we're eating that food's microbiome. When we're eating a strawberry, we're eating that strawberry's microbiome. When we're eating an avocado, we're eating that avocado's microbiome. All right. So getting a diversity of these inputs is really going to help to create the foundation for good gut health and an anti-depressed gut. Now, there are certain foods.

They come packaged up with all of this stuff already, the prebiotic and the probiotics, and they're gaining so much traction, even though pretty much every culture, every culture has cultured foods. The word's there! Every culture has cultured foods. For thousands of years. And fortunately, I worked at a university for many years, and People would come in. I got to work at, and I was working at the university gym, work with people from all over the world. And I, when I became aware of this, I started asking people about fermented foods in their culture. And there were so many different ones, like some stuff. I was really surprised that as well, you know, it could be a fermented bread from Ethiopia. It could have been kimchi, which I had not had yet. It could have been, you know, fermented shark, right? There's all these different types of fermented foods, yogurts, and, and, and kefirs and things like that. But, Just looking at some of the data that we have now, kimchi.

SHAWN STEVENSON: For example, a peer reviewed study published in the journal nutrition research found that eating kimchi leads to a significant decrease in body fat, hip to waist ratio and fasting blood sugar for study participants versus those who merely ate the unfermented form of that cabbage dish. So I have all the ingredients of kimchi, but it's not fermented. You don't get these results. There's something beneficial here with the prebiotics. The probiotics and the postbiotics that eating a food like kimchi inspires within our bodies. So again, the objective here, eat a diversity of real foods, get those inputs to lay the foundation. Add in a fermented food, at least, at least twice a week, you could do that. Little serving some kimchi, little serving some yogurt. You know, maybe a little sip of some kombucha, a glass of kombucha one day, you know, just get these different little pickle. All right, little pickle. All right, but make sure they're real pickles because Some pickles are not really pickles.

They're not actually, you know, it should be brine. All right water, salt, cucumbers fermented but sometimes companies. They basically force the pickle into basically making it twerk into a pickle by using vinegar. All right, so it's like I don't know unethically twerking to become a pickle. And that's not a real pickle. All right. I don't know why I use that analogy, but it is what it is. Maybe it's because the Freak Nick documentary just came out. I don't know. All right. There's some aunties and uncles out there. They're doing, they're, they're showing up in the video. Nevermind. Shout out to Hulu and the Freak Nick. Interesting story. So that's the objective diversity of food inputs. And also what are some nutrients that we know are science back to support an antidepressant state? Well, one of the most important nutrients for our cognitive function in relationship to depression and just optimal function is omega 3 fatty acids, DHA and EPA.

A meta analysis published in Translational Psychiatry found that omega 3s found in fatty fish have a beneficial effect on individuals with major depressive disorders. And according to NYU neuroscientist, Dr. Lisa Mosconi, the best natural source of DHA and EPA omega threes is going to be found in not just the fish, but the fish eggs. So caviar, fish roe, now instantly that can get a little fancy on us. And I, and I understand that, but these things, that's why they're so expensive, but there is a wonderful ability today to get these things in a cost effective way. And it is upwards of three times, according to Lisa Mosconi, again, neuroscientists was looking at this stuff three times more DHA per gram. In wild caught fish roe than in the best fish sources, so it's just much more efficient and effective.

Now, the main thing to keep in mind with any kind of supplement is the quality sourcing, and especially when it comes to fish roe, freshness. And the fish roe that I utilize is from Paleo Valley's wild caught fish roe. It's made from 100% wild caught fish from fish runs in pristine waters, sourced from sustainable minded fishermen who are committed to preserving fish runs for future generations.

SHAWN STEVENSON: And their wild caught fish roe is gently freeze dried to keep the full range of nutrients and omegas intact and undamaged. It's also rich in choline, selenium, vitamin E, C, D, and phospholipids. These are all supportive of good mental health. It's 100% pure with no fillers or binding agents. And thankfully, they've hooked us up. If you go to paleovalley.com/model, they're going to give you 15% off, applied automatically at checkout for their wild caught fish roe. And just store wide and it's amazing. I absolutely love paleo valley. I love what they stand for. I love their sourcing. I love how much integrity and intention they put into their products and also They're avoiding so many different nefarious things that are found in a lot of supplements. They're making sure that they're doing things, right? So definitely pop over there. Check them out paleovalley.com/model. That's paleovalley.com/model. Now, another helpful source of nutrition to support a healthy mood, metabolic health and reduce inflammation is turmeric. All right, looking into our spice cabinet.

Turmeric has also been found to improve insulin sensitivity, reduce blood fats and directly act upon our fat cells. Plus Research published in the Journal of Ethnopharmacology points to turmeric's potential in reducing severity of both anxiety and depression. And so again, adding a little bit more turmeric to your dishes. And of course, if you're popping over to PaleoValley, they have a wonderful turmeric complex as well with some bio potentiators if you want to take it in supplement form. So it's just really cool stuff. But most importantly, Eat a wide variety of real, minimally processed foods. You can leave some room for the McDonald's of the world. You can leave some room for, shout out to, “Coming to America”, the McDowell's. But if you really want to make sure that your soul glows, you want to make sure that you are working to add in real food on a regular basis, anti depress your gut, take care of your gut health. And moving on to number four on our list of seven science backed ways to revert and treat depression. Number four is to improve your sleep quality. An analysis published in the international journal of molecular science titled depression and sleep states that impaired sleep is both a risk factor for depression and a symptom of depression.

Interestingly, the researchers note that poor REM sleep, rapid eye movement, sleep and depression go hand in hand. Yet they state that “most antidepressants suppress REM sleep both in healthy volunteers and Depressed patients”. Now again, this is looking at that vicious circle is just feeding into the problem. But interestingly, listen to this. there is some data showing that short term stints of sleep deprivation can actually improve symptoms of depression due to the buildup of adenosine in the body. But it's short term So we're talking about like a day, for example. And the research has noted that being deprived of sleep can quickly lead to other health problems and eventually exacerbate Mental health issues. So keep in mind. I'm not advocating to deprive yourself of sleep to improve symptoms of depression. It's a very short stint of, of benefit here.

SHAWN STEVENSON: But it's something I want to acknowledge just in case anybody's researching, they find it, you know, Hey, when they look at sleep and depression, they find there is a bunch of publications of this particular study or versions of it that say, Hey, a little bit of sleep deprivation actually improve symptoms of depression. Short term, for a minute. Now the question remains, what comes first, depression or sleep deprivation? Because they go both ways. Well, a very recent study revealed what likely comes first. This 2022 study titled sleep's role in the development and resolution of adolescent depression. The researchers detailed the close connection between sleep deprivation and depression in young people and stated, "although sleep problems have been thought to be a symptom of adolescent depression. Emerging evidence suggests that sleep difficulties arise before depression does".

Now, in addition to analyzing the clinical trial data, the researchers cite the very obvious impact of sleep deprivation that can happen to all of us. Tiredness, impaired concentration, low energy, reduced positive mood, fatigue, and how all of these things we often overlook as critical biological feedback that can bleed over into depression. So when we're sleep deprived, we start to just manifest these symptoms that are very, very similar and also kind of crossover and transition into symptoms of depression. So with this being said, being able to make this a priority, if we're talking about, Reducing symptoms of depression and most importantly preventing depression.

We want to make sure that we're putting a priority on our sleep and we've Done master classes on this subject matter. We'll put for you in the show notes If sleep has been an issue for you. Definitely check out some of the episodes that we have for you in the show notes. And also I have an international best selling book. It's right here. It's called "Sleep Smarter". It's translated now. I just got another it came out Eight years ago, I believe now. And I just got another foreign, uh, publication, a translation offer, literally this week. It is a... I'm so grateful to be able to say this because coming from where I come from, I had no idea that this book would make such the impact that it did.

And, I'm very grateful for that, but it's very practical. It's fun to read. And it's all science backed like these strategies are not things that you have to turn your world upside down to do But it's an incredible resource and a great resource to share with people that you care about as well. So "Sleep Smarter" is available everywhere that books are sold and also there are several foreign publications everywhere from France to Slovenia to Japan. There's different translations out there as well. But just a couple of quick inputs specifically that help to address depression as well and improve sleep quality. One thing that I want you to focus on doing is making sure that you're getting plenty of sunlight, getting healthy natural light inputs. Our circadian rhythms are deeply tied to light exposure.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Light exposure is a huge influence on our circadian clocks within all of our cells. Our biological clocks, the circadian clocks themselves, are functional genes and proteins that also influence and control other genes and proteins. This is one of the primary things influencing what chemistry is getting produced and our mood is based on our connection, our association with sunlight. Research published in the journal *Innovations in Clinical Neuroscience* revealed that exposure to sunlight during the earlier part of the day can significantly reduce cortisol levels at the end of the day. Compared to being exposed to dim light during the day. And this has been found to improve sleep quality.

All right. So improving sleep quality, also improving mood. When we think about having, this is another saying in our culture, a sunny disposition, all right. The sun evokes joy, light, possibility, hope, good energy, right? Yes. It can burn you. All right. But this is something that we've had a great connection with. For, you know, since the beginning of time, since the beginning of human history, we would not be here if not for that massive star shining on us. And so when we're hiding out from it and not getting that input, you know, via our optical receptors, our vision, and also on our skin, we're missing out on that first domino that activates so many positive things with our mental health. All right. So make sure to prioritize getting better sleep. Now we're moving on to number five here on our list of seven science backed natural treatments to reduce symptoms of depression. Number five is to reduce inflammation. An incredible meta analysis titled *Inflammation and Depression* was published in the journal *Brain Behavior and Immunity*.

The analysis highlights the emerging psychoneuroimmunology based understanding of depression. It's important to note that it is our immune system that creates and regulates inflammation in our bodies based on perceived injuries or threats like toxins or pathogens. One section of the meta analysis cites numerous studies revealing how a dysregulated or hyperactive immune system can trigger symptoms of depression. For instance, an exposure to endotoxins and the corresponding inflammation can incite depression factually. Now this got me thinking about the very common experience that you can probably relate to, which is, have you ever noticed that when we get sick, we tend to feel more down. We tend to feel more down. Now just let that simmer for a minute. All right, when we get sick, we tend to feel more down and more low mood. We generally experience a low mood along with the respective physical symptoms. And coming out of a cold or coming out of a flu is when we tend to feel significantly more positive disposition, like, all right, I'm back, I'm at, like, we feel so much better when we get better. It's as if those depressive symptoms are part of the process of healing, heightening immune system activity and inflammation. The connection between inflammation and depression is also so intertwined that several studies in this analysis show that taking an anti-inflammatory medication can actually reduce symptoms of depression.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Again, the study authors note that the depression inflammation relationship is bidirectional. The study highlights that depression itself can also cause inflammation. But inflammation is definitely a powerful controller of our mood and mental health and inflammation can trigger acute and chronic symptoms of depression. Now the catch here is that though we all might experience the symptoms of low mood, unhappiness and even depression when we succumb to an infectious illness or injury, when our body is in a heightened state of inflammation, it is the chronic. Low to moderate systemic inflammation and overall immune system dysfunction Experienced by millions of people today is most linked to long term depression. Now this meta analysis notes that the primary contributor to our epidemics of inflammation. That are impacting our bodies, our brains and our nervous systems is stress. Stress is the primary contributor to our inflammation epidemics leading into our epidemics of depression.

The study also notes that sedentary behavior, poor diet, smoking, and sleep deprivation are major contributors to stress and associated depression as well. But chronic mental stress can drive inflammation in our bodies. We need to know the power of our minds, the power of our thoughts. And to be able to have healthful ways to manage stress in our lives. So number one here to reduce inflammation in our bodies and thus reduce the risk, the increased risk for depression. We want to make sure that we're removing the common culprits that lead to more inflammation in the body. So ultra processed foods have a sedentary behavior, abnormal amounts of unprocessed or unresolved stress and worry and having healthy ways for expression and healthy relationships. But also one of the things that I want to recommend for everybody to do is to support immunomodulation.

All right. We don't want our immune system to not be active when it needs to, but we don't want it to be overactive. So supporting an appropriate immune response and one of the most science backed categories of nutrition to support immunomodulation is medicinal mushrooms. I'm not talking about psychedelic mushrooms. All right. I'm not talking about getting high and I'm not talking about culinary mushrooms either. I'm talking about medicinal mushrooms, science backed medicinal mushrooms. And specifically in regards to reducing the incidence of depression, let's look at lion's mane mushroom in a randomized placebo controlled trial, publish in biomedical research, test subjects with a variety of health complaints, including depression, and poor sleep quality were given Lion's mane or placebos for four weeks. After compiling the data at the end of the study, the researchers stated, " our results show that Lion's mane intake has the possibility to reduce depression and anxiety". Now I've been utilizing Lion's mane for years, a dual extracted alcohol extracted and hot water extracted lion's mane. That can come in the form of tea or blended with an organic coffee. Now this is where it can get fun. All right, but also keep in mind Is coffee one of the things can is there any data on this?

SHAWN STEVENSON: Reducing the risk of depression Well a meta analysis of seven studies titled coffee and caffeine consumption and depression Found that one cup of coffee per day led to an 8% lower risk of depression and two cups per day led to a 16% lower risk of depression. Overall, the scientists found that there's a dose dependent relationship between coffee consumption and reducing the risk of depression. Now, I know a lot of people's ears are perking up like, yes, I do tend to feel much happier disposition when I'm having my coffee. All right. So, but of course the quality is the key here because there are other people that are hearing this, like no coffee is, is a villain. All right.

Coffee is the Nikola yogic. All right. It's the Joker of this whole scenario is out here winning NBA championships without really looking like they know how to play. All right. Shout out to, shout out to the Denver Nuggets. All right. No disrespect. He does his thing. He does his thing. No doubt. It works. But some people feel that way, but you've got to keep this in context because, you know, a lot of the problems associated with coffee are the quality of the coffee itself and the additives, the things that are added to the coffee. Because those who are advocate of these plant inputs would understand that literally I'm for thousands of years humans have been utilizing Long live cultures, healthy cultures have been utilizing coffee for a vast array of health benefits.

And it's one of the foods and beverages that's most associated with longevity. Plus regularly drinking coffee has been shown to help prevent cognitive decline and reduce the risk of developing Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease. This attribute reference in the journal practical neurology is yet another reason why smart coffee consumption makes the list of neuro nutritious beverages. Where do you get this blend? What did I drink today? I drank the Lion's Mane coffee from Four Sigmatic. Go to foursigmatic.com/model. That's F O U R S I G M A T I C.com/model. You're going to get 10% off storewide. They have instant coffee. They have ground coffee and just do your homework on them. If you haven't had the Four Sigmatic coffee yet, just, just check them out because you're going to be blown away. You're really going to be impressed at their level of integrity and they're just amazing, truly amazing. I've been utilizing Four Sigmatic, whether it's their mushroom elixirs, if I'm not doing the coffee. They have hot Cocos as well. And of course, their organic coffee blends are phenomenal, phenomenal. So check them out for Sigmatic com/ model.

Now moving on to number six on our list of seven science back ways to reduce the risk of depression. Number six starts with a question. What's a new social behavior that's coincided with the explosion of anxiety and depression in recent years? Number six on this list is to limit social media. Now, depending on which data set you look at, the average person is spending three to five hours on their phone each day and checks their phone over 100 times a day. And this happens so fast. That's the thing.

SHAWN STEVENSON: This wasn't around. I know what time, like when my, My youngest son was a baby. There was none of this stuff. You know, I was just with him, you know, my wife was just with him. We're just with each other. Like this stuff had not become such a dominant part of our culture. Now, why does this relate to depression? Well, a study published in the American Journal of Epidemiology that assessed over 5,000 test subjects found that overall, regular use of social media had a negative impact on an individual's well being.

While research published in the Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology found that using social media less often than you normally would leads to significant decreases in both depression and loneliness. Now, why would social media contribute so heavily to our epidemic levels of depression? Well, it really boils down to the impact that it has on our brains, our nervous systems and our endocrine systems. We have mood and behavior regulating hormones and neurotransmitters that we've developed Over hundreds of thousands of years of evolution that are controlled by our social behavior. For instance, dopamine drives us to seek rewarding relationships and experiences. Oxytocin promotes bonding between people and is released when you have close connections with others.

I could go on and on detailing the various hormones influencing our moods and behaviors, but the bottom line is there is a whole chemical cascade being set off within our bodies when interacting. With people passively or actively on social media versus now that's a new thing versus the very limited number of social interactions that we evolved having smartphones have provided us with a virtually unlimited supply of social stimuli, both positive and negative. The sheer amount of access that we have can drive depression due to the overwhelm of our nervous system that it was never designed to handle. We evolved Caring about the perspective of our tribe. All right, so a few dozen people maybe up to over 100, maybe 200 people but today depending on the number of quote followers that you have we can be concerned about the opinions of thousands of people. Hundreds of thousands of people, even millions of people that might have access to us that can send data back and forth.

And this is something that we are simply not evolved to handle. Not, not, not to say that we can't evolve there, but we're not, we're not Neo yet. All right. And when we jack into that matrix, it's all, we don't have Morpheus training us, nothing. We're just out here trying to figure it out. And it is so much for our brains and our nervous systems to handle. And also that feedback loop. That we intrinsically get tied into because of the "likes." And they're designed to psychologically influence your perceived importance They're designed to influence your sense of self value and we tend to have a negativity bias And so when we don't get that positive feedback Or maybe we get a bunch of positive feedback and we get a little bit of negative feedback.

SHAWN STEVENSON: We tend to focus on that and it affects our mental health and our well being And this is how we evolve we evolve looking for problems And looking for danger as a part of evolving, as a part of keeping our species going, as a part of being safe. And so what I want to articulate is that being concerned about an incredibly large, abnormal amount of people is not healthy. It's not good for our brains. It's not good for our nervous system. And also the comparison that is inherent with social media as well. And understanding that what you see on social media, the vast majority of it is the highlight reels of people's perceived lives. All right. Because even the highlight reel could be super fake. All right. But it's a highlight reel. It's not the real reel.

And as a matter of fact, the call Instagram reels is trying to trick you. Now, not to say that there can't be value that is shared on these platforms. And that's one of the things I've been conflicted about, and I'm going to keep it 1000 with you. Now, social media, of course, is a great tool for connection with the right use of it, but I've been conflicted with it myself. You know, on a platform like Instagram, I have like half a million followers, "followers." I don't even like that term. But Being able to understand that yes, this is a place to share empowerment and education and hopefully inspire people to go and live life and to, to fill their own cup and to do good for themselves and others.

But at the same time, A lot of people aren't coming there for that. And it's very addictive to come there and to get pulled into this internet black hole. And so I've been conflicted because also it's reducing people's attention span, their ability to, to have focus and pay attention. And also just depleting them of the nutrients that they really need to feel good. And so if you've noticed, if you've been following me for a while, I post a couple of times a week, you know, I don't spend a lot of time there. And, but I also don't want to deprive people of it. and to be selfish with the gift of empowerment and education. And so I am sharing that there, but. I also relegate the time that I'm spending on it because I don't like the way that it makes me feel. But it took a while for me to just pay attention, look within, like, I don't like spending much time on these platforms. And so being able to take this offline as much as possible, cultivate healthy connections in the real world. Of course, you could use social media and wonderful, like, I have wonderful relationships that started with social media.

But also keeping it in context because our brains and nervous systems need something else. The rampant use of social media can bleed into our increased incidence of sedentary behavior as well. So it just starts to compound different issues. And so the solutions, number one, free yourself from notifications and alerts that are unnecessary. You don't need to get an alert from Instagram. You don't need to get Twitter or X alerts or whatever it is. You don't need to get alerts for a lot of the things that people have constant chimes and dings and like Pavlov's dog type vibes. Just like the bell goes off and we run to our phones. So free yourself from unnecessary notifications.

SHAWN STEVENSON: And also now Apple, because of them knowing, and I'm pretty sure they're looking at future lawsuits and they're like, so they start to put on, like we could put on the do not disturb and all these different settings, but turning off unnecessary notifications is one step in the right direction. Also, if at all possible, keep your phone away from you whenever you can. All right. If it's within arm's reach, you're going to pick that bad boy up. All right. It's called a just check. If it's around, you've spent so much time, you have a relationship. All right. Your phone is your boot. Okay. And understanding that just being in proximity, you seeing it, your brain sees it. It knows it's there and it knows all the goodies that it can access. And so, especially when I'm working, when I'm doing deep work, like preparing for this, this is a lot of hours, a lot of hours, a lot of work to create these masterclasses. I keep my phone going. On the bookshelf across the room away from me.

All right, because I don't want it even close to me. And so keep it out of arm's reach whenever possible. Also give yourself some phone free time. Ideally, first thing in the morning, which a lot of us, if we're struggling with our mental health, picking your phone up first thing and going into social media or our DMS or email and all that stuff. It's putting ourselves at a disadvantage to start the day. We don't have any agency over our own day. We're jumping right to the concerns and creations of other people. Give ourselves some phone free time first thing in the morning in particular, and hopefully maybe a little bit before bed as well. And lastly, be proactive about real world social connections and more phone free experiences.

A recent peer reviewed study was conducted by researchers at the University of Washington that analyzed over 500 participants daily feelings of loneliness, depressed mood, social interactions, and perceived responsiveness in those interactions. The study, titled, The Effect of Social Interaction Quantity on Depressed Mood and Loneliness, Found that social interaction, quantity and perceived responsiveness. So the quality of the social interactions were strongly associated with a reduction in depressed mood and loneliness. We know this, we know this matters.

Good relationships, people that we can count on, healthy social support, healthy social interactions. Of course, this does not mean that one cannot be depressed when around others. But we know this matters for the vast majority of people. We're going to feel better. We're going to have an insulation against depressive symptoms when we have healthy social Relationships, social support around us. But give ourselves that gift. Be a gift as well be a gift for others. Let's move away a little bit more from the social media and actually be social in the real world. Well, now we're at our final one on this list of seven science backed ways to reduce the risk of depression. And number seven is something that has a mountain of evidence that's being published. Like almost every week, there's a new paper coming out about how powerful this is. And number seven is meditation.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Researchers at Harvard University published new research affirming that meditation can dramatically reduce symptoms of depression and even change the physical makeup of the brains of depressed patients. Another recent study published in the journal of clinical psychiatry took patients with major depressive disorder who were inadequately responsive or unresponsive to antidepressant drugs and randomly assigned them into either a breathing meditation group Or a weightless group. The scientists utilized several depression scale tests to observe the patient's mental health before and after the eight week meditation study. After compiling the data, from the eight week study, patients with major depressive disorder had significant reduction in depression symptoms versus the control group.

What's more, the researchers specifically noted this to be a promising Non drug treatment for depression and quote no adverse events were reported unquote Meditation appears to be a force multiplier Because it improves several aspects of health that influence depression for example Meditation has a remarkable impact on inflammation. According to a recent report published in the journal frontiers in immunology, meditation can actually shift your genetic expression and down regulate genes associated with inflammation. Other research cited in peer reviewed medical journals like psychosomatic medicine and OBM integrative and complementary medicine, show that a meditation practice can enhance the function of your natural killer cells, your B lymphocytes, your T cells, and other vital aspects of the immune system. Now, meditation also reduces the incidence of depression by improving sleep quality. The American Academy of Sleep Medicine published research showing that meditation is an effective treatment for insomnia.

The study showed that over a two month period, sleep latency, total sleep time, Total wake time, wake after sleep onset, sleep efficiency, sleep quality and depression improved in patients who utilize meditation in the study. Now, this is obviously remarkable, but a lot of people might be like, what kind of meditation? What type of meditation? There's so many different types of meditations like Baskin Robbins out here. There's a lot of flavors. All right. Well, the study that we covered earlier that was published in the journal Frontiers and Immunology showing that meditation can reduce inflammation and also shift your genetic expression. Track the effects of mindfulness meditations, tai chi, yoga, qigong, focused relaxation techniques, breath work. They looked at studies that utilize a bunch of different types of meditation. And what they found was that. All of them work, all of them work to help reduce inflammation. All right, so just pick something, just pick something and do it.

Something that resonates with you. The most important part is that it is a regular part of your practice. It's called a practice. So whether it's qigong, whether it's breathwork, meditation, utilizing any of these modalities is going to help you.

SHAWN STEVENSON: According to the data, it helps to reduce symptoms of depression. Now here's the rub. Different things are going to work for different people at different times. So give yourself permission to experiment with some things. You could be like, well, I tried that and it didn't help. We'll try something else because it isn't just about this practice itself. It's what it opens up in us. And one of the most important aspects of a meditation practice is the ability to access more introspection to be able to objectively see our thoughts, to objectively see our emotions. And that's the first thing that happened for me that changed my life was the ability to see my thoughts as something that wasn't entirely me.

I could objectively see my thoughts because at that point, my thoughts and my consciousness were one in the same. I was just thinking thoughts my whole life, didn't think about my thinking, didn't think about those thoughts. I was just living with them. and reacting accordingly. But with the meditation practice, I was able to create some distance and to be able to see the thoughts that were coming up in my mind, the different inputs that my body was giving me. And to think about them, I could think about my thinking. I could be more objective. I could stop being so impatient and reactive. And I started to create this space and this, in this space, that growing. Space was a growing sense of peace and that's something that's definitely the people that know me from 20 years ago, very different, very different temperament today, you know, and I still got, you know, I got those things.

I got that, you know, different resources when I need them to be aggressive, to be assertive, but I don't jump right to that, right? I have this space there where I can choose my response. Yeah. And having a consistent meditation process really helped to grow that space and that sense of peace and calm and, and that sense of, uh, of agency in my life to choose. To think the thoughts that I want to think, to choose the response that I want to have in different situations. Now, by the way, I am not perfect. Nobody is. You know, we can all overreact to things, but even in that, when we have this practice, we're able to better see faster when we overreact. And we can pull ourselves back into that space, into the place that we want to be, and feel empowered again quicker. And so, you know, all of these tools are backed by science.

They're incredibly valuable, but As with anything, and thanks to the legendary Jim Rohn, he said that no one can do your pushups for you. No one can do these things for you. No one can do the meditation for you. No one can do the exercise for you. These are things that we need to do for ourselves. And we can create an environment to inspire others to do the same thing, but everybody has to make the choice to do it themselves. And so that's what it's about to be the model, to be the example, to lead by example, and to be inspiration. For others, for our families, for our communities and I'm grateful for you being on this mission with me. And if you got a lot of value out of this, please share this with somebody that you care about. Incredibly valuable tools here.

SHAWN STEVENSON: This is a Huge situation that we're dealing with right now as a society and there are solutions. But sometimes just getting access can be that first step. I know it was for me Just getting exposure to something different help to change everything. So again, please share this out with somebody that you care about. We got some Epic masterclasses. World class guests coming your way very, very soon. So make sure to stay tuned, take care, have an amazing day. And for more after the show, make sure to head over to the model health show. com. That's where you can find all of the show notes. You can find transcriptions, videos for each episode.

And if you've 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.