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Welcome to Supplementing Health, a podcast presented by Advanced Orthomolecular Research. We are all about applying evidenced-based and effective dietary lifestyle and natural health product strategies for your optimal health. In each episode, we will feature very engaging clinicians and experts from the world of functional and naturopathic medicine to help achieve our mission to empower people to lead their best lives naturally.

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[1:29] *Cassy Price*: Hello, and thank you all for tuning into Supplementing Health. I'm joined here today by Lindsay Thomson, an ICU nurse from Salt Lake City, Utah. After last week's discussion with Jordan Bruce on what burnout is, along with the signs and symptoms to watch out for, we will be discussing natural strategies for avoiding burnout as a shift worker. Thanks for joining me today, Lindsay.

[1:48] *Lindsay Thomson*: Yeah, of course. Thanks for having me on.

[1:51] *Cassy Price*: I'd love to start chatting by hearing a little bit about how you became interested in nursing and your journey in healthcare.

[1:59] *Lindsay Thomson*: I have been in the healthcare field for decades now. I started as a CNA back in high school, just as a little job to get away from family life after school, and then I worked as a CNA all through nursing school for about ten years. I always knew I wanted to be a nurse, I just didn't know because I was the first one in my family to go to college, so I didn't know how to get started, but being a CNA and seeing all the nurses and talking to nurses, I decided that's what I want to do.

I actually had a grandfather in the nursing home that I worked in. He had a brain tumour, but the nurses had him so sedated on medication that we didn't get to interact with him at the end of

life, and I decided at that moment I wanted to be a nurse. I wanted to be a nurse that actually cared about patients having a good relationship with families and making that end of life experience different than what my family and I went through. Then, I started on my career. I went to nursing school and started as a psych nurse, which was not for me, and that's where I experienced burnout, and then recently transitioned to an ICU nurse for the last two years, and currently in the midst of all the COVID world.

[3:25] *Cassy Price*: Yeah. I very much commend all of the healthcare and emergency professionals, since you and your team and others in the field have to face a lot of emotional and physical stressors in your day-to-day. Especially as you said, with the pandemic currently going on. Even when there isn't a pandemic, your job isn't easy, I'm sure. What do you love about nursing that keeps you going on those challenging shifts? What's your internal motivator to keep you going on the days that it would probably be easier just to throw in the towel?

[3:59] *Lindsay Thomson*: Right. Yeah. Well, nursing is hard with long shifts, days away from our families, and holidays away. But, when you have those patients that are actually respectful, and they really appreciate the care that you're giving, nursing is so much easier to do and appreciate when you have moments like that. Like I said, it's hard.

But, when you help change someone's life, or you hold their hand at the last moments, that's what nursing is really about: caring and seeing the long-term effects of what you do as a nurse. It makes it so worth it. Then, just having family members right now, it's a very sad time. We don't actually have family members in the hospital, so these patients really rely on nursing, and you have to dig deep into "how can I make this patient's time in the hospital better", and just sitting at the bedside. On PPE, they can't even see you, but sitting there holding their hand and talking to them and getting to know who they are because they don't have anyone right now. That's the compassion that nursing is, and that's what I love about my job.

[5:10] *Cassy Price*: That's awesome. I can only imagine the difference you make in their lives by doing that. Even though you're able to keep your motivation high through those challenging times, and you're able to be that beacon of hope and light for your patients, that doesn't mean that it doesn't take a toll both emotionally and physically on you. So, how do you go about avoiding burnout when you have those emotional tolls or physical tolls on your body so that you're able to show up for your patients?

[5:38] *Lindsay Thomson*: I think the biggest thing is really understanding what burnout is because when I started as a psych nurse, I had no idea this burnout thing was real, but going home and doing destructive behaviours, and crying, and emotions. You really need to understand what the signs and symptoms are. When things happen at work, or you have a stressful shift, you take all those emotions home. If you don't have a way to escape, you're going to spiral downward.

So, I leave my shift at work. I try not to take things home. Then on my days off, I try to dive into self-care, if it's working out or getting a massage or getting a facial, doing things that make me

feel comfortable, and it's 30, 40 minutes to an hour to just relax and take my mind off of work. Plus, I enjoy doing things outside, so I'm always at the lake. I'm always hiking. I'm always doing something outside because that's my release. It's clearing your mind. I don't have to think about what happened at work and destressing.

[6:52] *Cassy Price*: Do you tend to talk to your family members if there are challenging things that you experience that you need to talk through? Or do you tend to go for professional help or friends in the industry? How would you handle that part of it? Because some things, you can't just forget them. Right?

[7:09] *Lindsay Thomson*: Right. Families are great. Your families are the number one support system, but if they're not in the healthcare industry, they don't really understand it. Nurses get each other. We have all these nurse jargons, I guess you can say. Families are great, and it's nice to talk to them, but sometimes they don't like to hear the gory details that nursing brings with it.

So, I have a great support system with my co-workers and fellow nurses, and we can talk about the shifts because a lot of them are in the same situation. They're in the codes with me. They were on that bad shift, and we can talk to each other. I think, personally, it's better to talk to your co-workers because it's not just a release for me. Maybe they need me to listen to them. So, you can bounce your emotions off of each other and debrief from the shift, and then you feel so much better.

[8:19] *Cassy Price*: Yeah. That supporting community, I'm sure, makes a huge difference, for sure. And it can be in a career, too, not just the healthcare field, but I think any sort of stressful role or stressful experience, having that support network and community to talk things through or help you work through those challenging life experiences, personal, professional, etc. can make a huge difference in how quickly you can recover from them.

[8:13] *Lindsay Thomson*: Right, yeah. Anyone that works in the public eye, they have that chance. It's not just healthcare workers. It's everybody; every job is stressful.

[8:45] *Cassy Price*: Yeah, absolutely. In your role, you're often switching between night shifts and day shifts. I imagine that can really mess with your sleep schedules.

[8:54] *Lindsay Thomson*: Oh, yeah.

[8:56] *Cassy Price*: I think we all know that sleep is important. We hear it all the time in the media. It's a key to keeping your body functioning at an optimal level, keeping your immune system up, so what are some of your tips and tricks for getting adequate sleep when you're constantly shifting back and forth between when you're sleeping.

[9:15] *Lindsay Thomson*: I'm always a go, go, go, and I love the day shift schedule that I have, but when I switch night shifts, I used to get down on myself, like, "Lindsay, your sleeping a

whole entire day. I'm wasting that time. I could be doing other things." But, I think now that you really do need that whole day to catch up.

I try and schedule my shifts three in a row, so I can stay on that schedule, and then that last day, I can sleep all day, catch back up. This week, I just worked five-night shifts in a row, and now next week, I'm going back to day shifts. The other day, I spent 12 hours sleeping, and I needed that. Your body needs that time to switch its clock back to normal and get back on a normal schedule.

Then, setting your alarm. You may have a lot to do, but you need to go to bed early. You need to set that nighttime routine. I come home from my shifts at 7:00, eat dinner; by 9:30, I'm in bed because I have to get back up at 5:00 am, and if I don't get that time asleep, I'm not going to be awake and alert and there for my patients. I know sleeping, it feels like you're taking a lot of time away, but your body and your mind need that sleep.

[10:38] *Cassy Price*: Yeah, absolutely. Do you ever use any supplements or anything to help your body relax after you've got those huge adrenalin spikes after a shift?

[10:46] *Lindsay Thomson*: I know a lot of people use melatonin. The only thing I do is drink chamomile tea or nighttime tea. My body reacts to medications, so I just try and stay on my natural cycles as much as possible.

[11:04] *Cassy Price*: Cool. As you alluded to, this year has been very much impacted by the COVID pandemic. However, obviously, you've been directly impacted as you've worked directly with infected patients. So, how has this impacted your lifestyle, when many of us were able to stay safe at home and not have to deal with it day to day the same way.

[11:28] *Lindsay Thomson*: I was like a lot of people, in the beginning. I thought this was just going to blow over. It was just going to be like the flu; it's not that serious. Then, when I actually had to take care of those first patients and hold the hands of people that died from this pandemic, it really put things into perspective that this is real. It's not just a flu, and it's not going away. If I don't do my part when I'm not at work and not wear a mask and follow the government's recommendations and the CDC, then I'm not being a good example.

It's really made me step back and say, "You know what, Linds, you may want to go do all these things. You may want to go hang out with your friends, but I've taken the time to step back and keep myself safe. I have older parents and older grandparents, and I don't ever want to put them at risk. When I'm at work, my PPE is so important, and I make sure I wash my hands and make sure I have it on tight and correct.

If I do work with a patient, and I may possibly be exposed, then I self-quarantine myself for two weeks and just do work and the bare essentials. But, I've really tried to be the example for everyone. A lot of people don't want to wear masks. I know it's awful wearing masks

everywhere, but it's a good example, and we need to do it to slow this pandemic down and get to safe numbers.

[13:03] *Cassy Price*: Speaking of the masks, I know lots and lots of people have been mentioning "maskne". We're suffering from it, not even just mentioning it. Do you have any tips that you use to reduce the "maskne" when you're someone who has to wear them day-in and day-out?

[13:20] *Lindsay Thomson*: It basically just became a part of life; part of me. My mask is like a tee-shirt that I wear. You put your bra on every day. You're putting your mask on every day. I never take it off unless I'm eating. Then, when I'm at home, I try not to go anywhere that I don't need to, unless the grocery store. Then, as soon as I get in the car, that mask comes off.

[13:50] *Cassy Price*: I think we all feel the same way. It's a necessity, but they're not the most fun things for sure.

[13:57] *Lindsay Thomson*: No. We were joking at work yesterday. "We're all going to have cloh-lungs from wearing masks for 12 hours, 13, 14 hours a day after all this is done.

[14:10] *Cassy Price*: Do you have tips for maintaining a healthy immune system that you suggest for others who are experiencing stress regardless of profession?

[14:22] *Lindsay Thomson*: Take care of yourself. Do what you need to do. Take your multi-vitamins every day. Do that 20 to 30 minutes exercise, whether it's walking the dog or getting outside and moving your body. I know a lot of us have been trapped inside, and we get stuck in emotions, and you really have to find a way to escape that.

Again, wearing your mask and going outside for a minute. Taking time for yourself and doing things that you enjoy. Read a new book or research something online. YouTube videos are great. You need to do things for you that make you happy because if not, you're going to get sucked inside.

Eat healthy. Balance your meals. I know we can't go to restaurants anymore, so you have to cook for yourself. So, finding some new, fun recipes that are healthy, that can boost your immune system, dive into that.

[15:21] *Cassy Price*: I know throughout the conversation, you've mentioned a lot of working out, good nutrition, and I know that you're super passionate about that and have started working with clients as a health coach. Do you want to speak a little bit about that, and how you transitioned into that, and what you do as a health coach?

[15:39] *Lindsay Thomson*: Yeah. Like you mentioned in the beginning, I started as a psyche nurse and didn't understand what burnout was. At the same time, I was introduced with this workout routine to help me avoid burnout, avoid medications because I was seeing a therapist,

and that just wasn't my vibe sitting in a room talking about my feelings really isn't me, so I tried to channel my emotions into something else, and that was working out. And, I got on with a gym.

I loved the way it made me feel. I wasn't taking all these patients' problems home with me. I was able to be in tune with myself, and avoid burnout, avoid meditation. I started working as a health coach and helping other nurses and other busy people that have these careers where they're stressed out. They don't love themselves. They're just finding other ways to help them grow as individuals.

So, I started working as a health coach about two years ago, and I've focused on using fitness and nutrition as a way to find joy in life. Most of my community is, like I said, nurses, healthcare professionals, respiratory therapists, physical therapists, CNAs, and busy women. I try and focus on personal development, reading books every day, listening to audiobooks, plus getting that 20 to 30-minute workout in because who doesn't feel great after working out and moving their body. It's such a stress-reliever, and it takes your mind away for 30 minutes. That's what I love about it.

Then I help them eat healthier because you can work out, and you can do all these things, but if you're fueling your body with junk food and soda, that just pulls all your energy from you. So, I try and help people meal prep because 12 hours at a hospital is half of your day. It's half of your life, and if you're not set up for success on those shifts, you're going to be more tired, more drained. Then when those codes happen, and those patients die, it's really going to drain you even more.

So, I try and focus on finding that work/life-shift balance with people in the healthcare field. And I absolutely love it. I love nursing and that I can help people, but a lot of those people don't want to help themselves, so then I have the nurses that need the help, that want to be better, so they can take care of these patients. And, the two work hand-in-hand, and I absolutely love both and how they fit together.

[18:27] *Cassy Price*: That's nice using both the preventative angle as well as the sick care angle because there are two parts to healthcare overall. There's the healthcare where you're trying to maintain that healthy lifestyle, maintain good health, and help the body function optimally, which has some meanings nowadays.

It's alternative care, functional medicine, naturopathic care, whatever you want to call it. There are a million different names that people refer to that same bucket as. Then there's almost like the sick care when you have a diagnosis, or you know you're not healthy per se anymore, and you've got something to fix. It's nice that you get to work on both of those angles at once.

I also liked your note on nutrition because I think many of us forget just how much the nutrients, and the minerals, and the phytonutrients, etc. that we put into our body actually help maintain good hormone balance, and adjustive health, and all of these things that actually can impact

how we process emotions, and how we process stressful situations, and how quickly we can rebound from those situations. Right?

[19:47] *Lindsay Thomson*: Right.

[19:48] *Cassy Price*: You could experience the exact same situation, but one who is taking care of themselves is less likely to be negatively impacted by that situation than someone who, when they're feeling down, maybe eats those feelings or has less productive or less healthy ways of managing them, whether that be through addictions or even like just mindlessly watching TV afterward or things like that can be thought of as escapes, but are actually almost trapping those emotions inside of us in a negative way.

[20:29] *Lindsay Thomson*: Oh, yeah. Exactly. I agree 100%. When you're burned out, people don't realize that those, like you said, watching endless hours of TV, just staring at something, or drinking tons of alcohol. A lot of people don't realize that those things are not the greatest for your body, and you're avoiding a lot of those emotions.

[20:53] *Cassy Price*: Yeah, absolutely. Unfortunately, we've reached our time here today. However, it's been an absolute pleasure chatting with you. If our listeners want to get ahold of you to either continue this conversation or work with you as a health coach, how would they go about doing that?

[21:10] *Lindsay Thomson*: Thank you so much for having me on. It's been so much fun sharing my journey. You can find me on Instagram. My name is @LindsayBrookRN. Or they can email me coachlindsaybrook@gmail.com.

[21:27] *Cassy Price*: Fantastic. Thank you, listeners, for taking the time to tune in. We would love to have you join us again next week as we discuss more ways to supplement your health.

**** Outro Music ****

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[End of episode 22:10]