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** * * Intro Music * * **

Welcome to Supplementing Health, a podcast presented by Advanced Orthomolecular Research. We are all about applying evidence 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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[01:10] *Dr. Nirat Nibber, ND:* Welcome to a new episode of Supplementing Health. I'm very excited to have on today with us Joy McCarthy. Joy has been on our show before and is a very inspiring and engaging founder of Joyous Health. She is a best-selling author and health expert. She has been featured in a number of publications, television and radio shows, and really understands and compliments the whole gamut of wellness and health. We are very excited to talk to her today about the reality of self-care and how we can build systems of practical self-care to start alleviating some of our stressors. Welcome and thank you so much for joining us.

[02:03] *Joy McCarthy:* Thank you for having me. I love this topic and I am so happy that you are tackling it. This will be a great chat.

[02:12] *Dr. Nirat Nibber, ND:* One of our most important relationships is that with ourselves. What would you say self-care means to you?

[02:19] *Joy McCarthy:* I agree 100%. Just to echo what you said, self-love is the first love. I would even go as far as to say that self-care to me is really self-love. It is really creating space and carving out a little space for your wellbeing. In my case, in particular, I definitely carve out space. Sometimes it is a very small amount of space in the day, sometimes I have more time, but I certainly do make self-care a priority in my every day because it helps me be more productive, it boosts my levels of happiness, it helps me be a better mom, a better partner and be more compassionate in the world.

[03:12] *Dr. Nirat Nibber, ND:* I love that. The approach that if you show up as your best self, you are now able to be as engaged in the world around you and the people around you. Can you speak a little bit as to how that physically manifests and the physical benefits of our self-care?

[03:34] *Joy McCarthy:* Absolutely. When we are in the chronic stress response, we are living in the sympathetic nervous system mode, so fight, flight or freeze. This is not healthy for us. Acute stress, sure that is fine. Acute stress is when our heart rate increases, our blood pressure, and our pupils dilate, I think those things are all fine if it is temporary. The problem is that so many of us live in a chronic state of stress and so there are so many benefits, whether it is meditation or just doing some breathe work like box breathing, 4-7-8 breathing, which we can talk more about in a bit. Instead of stimulating the sympathetic nervous system, when you do something as simple as doing box breathing you are immediately affecting your biology. You are stimulating the relaxation response. You are simulating the parasympathetic nervous response, your rest and digest. When you slow down your breathing rate, you slow down your heart rate, so this is long term better for your cardiovascular health. There are so many different benefits. The biggest one is lowering stress.

[04:53] *Joy McCarthy*: When we lower stress, we can go on and talk about why stress is not good for us and how it can be harmful for us in the long term, obviously you mitigate the negative effects of stress when you make a point of having self-care. I am a big fan of self-care rituals. Even just having one ritual a day that you know is always for you, that is something that stimulates the relaxation response, calms your stress hormones and helps you better. There are so many physiological benefits of getting out of the chronic state of stress for your health and wellbeing. Even your longevity, it increases your lifespan. If you look at the blue zones, which are the seven areas of the world where people are living to 100 and older, these people have self-care rituals. It is not like us in western countries where we are like, “ahh I’m doing my self-care rituals with my crystals and my candles.” It is just a part of people’s life. They don’t see it as self-care, it is just a ritual that they have every day that supports their wellbeing.

[06:05] *Dr. Nirat Nibber, ND*: I love that you say that because I think living with my 92-year-old grandfather for a period of time you see how infused it is. He will do these little things, like he’ll have his beet juice or have a consistent routine. I love that you said a routine that you do every day. The part that I try to help my patients understand is, it needs to be consistent. For consistency we need to recognise sustainability. Many patients come in talking about the stressors in their life which are usually broken down into finances, relationships and healthcare. We are often sold this idea that self-care is really glamorous, it is very indulgent, it’s very about the bubble baths and like you kind of mentioned “let’s take out our crystals”. How about more of the practical side of self-care?

[07:04] *Joy McCarthy*: You are so right. We do often think of those glamorous things, whether it is getting a massage for \$100 or going to a chiro appointment. Of course all of those things can be very beneficial, but they are not practical for everybody. I would love to go for monthly massages. I can’t even tell you the last time I went for a massage, but I’m okay with that because there are so many other things that you can bring into your day that don’t cost anything whatsoever. We just talked about one of them which is stimulating the relaxation response by focusing on breathing. It doesn’t have to be glamorous or indulgent. It could be a walk in nature. I think that self-care is actually available to anybody. It is great that we are doing this episode because I think a lot of times people just need ideas because they do automatically go to “oh getting a manicure, that’s how I take care of myself” or “getting a blowout of my hair.” Again, those things are fine, but it’s just not attainable and it’s not sustainable for everyone.

[08:19] *Dr. Nirat Nibber, ND*: Access points. I would love to see more opportunity for access points to some of those indulgent things for people...but then also the levelling up our self-care are things that also feed into reducing those immediate stressors. That can be meal prep. I know you have so many tools on your website that help people meal prep and create schedules. What are those important tools and resources that you think people actually need to be consistent and have those routines and regimes?

[09:02] *Joy McCarthy*: I have hundreds of free recipes on my website. I think the key thing for people is that you need to get organised. Self-care rituals, whatever it is, say your self-care ritual is going for a nature walk for 20 minutes every day, those rituals fall off track when we have all of this busyness and our lives feel hectic. Then we don’t have time for those self-care rituals or rather we don’t make time. I think it is really key with other health proprieties to get organized. That is why meal prepping, meal planning, is so beneficial because it takes the complication out of eating. I would say that, for me especially, eating well and eating nourishing food that tastes really yummy is absolutely part of my self-care/self-love routine every day. That is one thing that to me is an absolute priority in my life, is eating good food. I wouldn’t be eating good food – one thing that I started doing two or three months ago, was I started ordering my groceries online because I felt like I didn’t have enough time

to go to the grocery store and walk around, even though it is something I enjoy doing. I felt like things were really busy, so I thought it was going to be easier for me once in a while to order my groceries online. Getting organized, that is a simple way to get organized, whether it is ordering your groceries online, if that is not available where you live then it could be writing out your list of groceries.

[10:37] *Joy McCarthy*: Something I do is that I have a little notepad that is stuck to my fridge and whenever I run out of a grocery item, say I ran out of almond butter, I jot it down on the notepad and I grocery shop once a week. So I always make sure I feel organized and I don't forget anything because I have that ongoing list. Something else that I do when it comes to food which helps me get organized so that I do have time for myself for rituals is on the weekends, usually it is on the Sunday afternoon. While I don't meal prep for the whole week, I know some people do that, I just don't do that because a lot of our weeknight meals are not where I am in the kitchen for an hour. A lot of our weeknight meals are super simple like sweet potatoes that I pop in the oven with some fish, so dinner is ready in 25 minutes max and most of it is just cooking in the oven. But what I was going to say is on Sundays I do like to do one baking item, I might do muffins or energy balls, so I have a quick and healthy snack. I also like doing one big soup or stew, so I have it for the week, so then I also have quick and easy lunches. I feel like dinners for me, I always have a good sense of knowing what protein we are going to have, and I can build the meal around that based on the fact that I grocery shopped. That was a really long answer, but I really like talking about food and it is such an important part of my life. I am a nutritionist. Food is my life and I think that getting organized around your nutrition is really key, so that you have time for other things.

[12:17] *Dr. Nirat Nibber, ND*: I think what is interesting is that you are making a lot of those decisions and really thinking about things. It may sound initially like you have so much to think about or you have to do so much work to be organized, but I'm sure at a certain point it just transitions to a very quick calculation in your mind. It is that starting that almost feels the most difficult.

[12:49] *Joy McCarthy*: Absolutely. It can be a bit intimidating. I think it is a good idea to have a bit of a plan. Something I do, I have a six year old and obviously we make her lunches every day. So on Sunday nights after we've done the grocery shop, we always grocery shop on the weekends. On Sunday nights I jot down on a piece of paper that is also stuck on the fridge, what her lunches are going to be Monday to Friday. We don't make it the night before; we always make it the morning of. The mornings are busy, and I don't want to have to figure it out and make all of those decisions of what we are going to put in her lunchbox. I already know Monday to Friday what she is going to be eating. We also do that for dinners as well. I quickly jot down that tonight we are going to have salmon, sweet potatoes and a big salad. Even though I haven't meal prepped stuff I have a plan in my mind written down on a little Post-it note what the meals are, so that when you come home from work you are not scrambling trying to figure out what you are going to eat. Whether you are cooking for one or you are cooking for a family of four, which you have already alluded to, it is key when you have fewer decisions to make, it makes your life easier especially if you are working all day. We work all day in the office and we pick our daughter up from school and we head home and it is just nice to know that I took out that chicken this morning and I will pop that in the oven and I'm going to whip up a couple of sides and dinner is done in the 30 minutes.

[14:21] *Dr. Nirat Nibber, ND*: That is actually a good point. Having a plan is meal prep. I always find that cutting and washing the vegetables sometimes is the tedious part so if I can assign some time to get that done, it is really satisfying when you are putting your meal together. How are you finding that you are able to support, you alluded to the fact that there are a lot of free resources and a lot of things that don't require financial investment, but often times self-care requires a time investment.

How do you start encouraging people to carve out that time? Especially if they know that there is value in it but they are just not able to find that time, how do you help consolidate or strategize for efficiency?

[15:23] *Joy McCarthy*: I think it is important to look at it over a 24-hour period and what are all of the different things that you do over that 24-hour period. After you have dinner are you then sitting and watching Netflix for two or three hours before you fall asleep in front of the TV and then head to bed? I feel like everybody has at least 15 minutes or maybe even more of time that they could set aside for their self-care. I think a lot of people just don't even realize how much time they spend scrolling on social media or how much time they spend in front of a screen but not working. Whether it is a screen watching Netflix or just scrolling on Facebook. I think having more awareness of those monotonous things that you do that totally chew up your time. Then when you have that awareness, you can say "okay, you know what, I am going to start going to bed 15 minutes earlier and I am going to read something. That is going to be my self-care ritual that I am going to commit to this week and next week I am going to try something else. I am going to see if it is something I can enjoy and commit to."

[16:36] *Joy McCarthy*: If you are like "I hate reading." Some people don't like reading. Okay, you tried it, it doesn't work so try something else. Maybe you go to bed 15 minutes earlier and pop in your earbuds and you go on YouTube, and you look for a free meditation that you can do. It doesn't have to be an hour where you go to the gym and run on the treadmill for an hour. First of all, that sounds really boring but if that is something that you want to do, great. I don't think it has to be so time intensive. Something else that I really enjoy is that I am a huge tea drinker. One of my rituals is that at night I love infusing a cup of tea with herbs like lemon balm, passionflower, chamomile. It brings me so much joy. I love drinking tea and I love the whole act of infusing the tea and putting a little honey or some stevia in it. That is totally something that I do for my self-care. It is so loving to do that for myself because it helps me sleep. Hopefully that gives the listeners some ideas of how you can make it. It doesn't have to be a lengthy experience.

[17:54] *Dr. Nirat Nibber, ND*: I love, first of all, that tea drinking that you are describing. It sounds so cosy and perfect especially on these rainy days. It is also interesting that earlier you talked about the sympathetic response. When we are activating that rest and digest, our parasympathetic response, there are two branches, there is a dorsal vagal making us more sluggish and the ventral vagal which does keep us alert and still calm and engaged. I am finding for anyone who has experienced any trauma that engaging in activities that are more focused on self-care towards that ventral vagal response is really what is resetting that pathway. While it may seem inconsequential in that moment, you are doing so much repairing of damage, you're doing so much repairing and healing of that trauma. These are such important tools, and it is important to highlight and underpin that. I think what you are doing to make that accessible is so important.

[19:05] *Joy McCarthy*: I love that you brought that up too because I think about something like meditation. So many people say, "I am a big fan of meditation and I love promoting it and talking about it." So many people say that they do it, but they don't really notice the difference. I say, "did you notice that your mind was wandering?" Often times people say, "yes, that is why I feel like I can't meditate." Just that shows you are making progress. Just noticing that your mind is going off in those monkey brain thoughts again and then bringing it back to your breath and your home base is progress. Even if in those ten minutes of meditation you don't feel like you are doing anything, you really are. You are making progress.

[20:00] *Dr. Nirat Nibber, ND:* Again it comes back to that, these are practices that have been honed for centuries and we are so lucky these days to have access to sharing different ideas with different cultures. It seems like every culture has unique and very well-respected self-care strategies. The Turkish hammam, Ayurvedic hair oils. The wellness industry in particular, we are at this interesting precipice because I feel that there is borrowing, maybe without proper acknowledgment, there is this reckoning where people are asking for that acknowledgment. Do you think that things are being appropriately acknowledged? In the fact that there are these centuries of tradition and lineages of how people meditated in the east and the origins of these practices, are they being properly attributed?

[21:04] *Joy McCarthy:* I think sometimes yes and sometimes no. I think it depends. If you use Instagram for example and you go on social media and you see influencers, whether they are slurping back their golden milk or they are using sage to clear the energy in their home, I think some people are and some people are just completely ignorant. I don't mean to say that in a negative way. I have been that way too. What I mean by that, is that some people are not even aware that it is important to acknowledge traditional cultures and where these rituals have come from. That is something that I try to do. When sharing my turmeric latte, I like to educate people on where turmeric came from and the culture around that and why it is so important and why it is an ancient healing food. I personally do my best to educate people on that because I also find it really interesting. It is good to know the history of where things come from.

[22:12] *Joy McCarthy:* It is not to blame the wellness industry, but I have to say that a lot of times I think people just don't even know. I think certain wellness practices in western society become a trend and people jump on this trend and they have no idea that this trend is from a tradition in indigenous culture. I think people need to take more responsibility and learn what is behind that. I don't really know how I feel because this really goes into the area of cancelculture and taking someone down because they didn't properly appropriate something. What I think needs to be done is that more kindness and compassion needs to be seen on social media. If you see something out there and you are like "that person has no idea" then if you are listening to this, then reach out to that person and send them a message to say "hey, did you know that what you are sharing is a practice that indigenous cultures have been using for hundreds of years and you are not really giving it the credit? You should consider that." I think that is a much kinder way. This is a whole other rabbit hole but what has currently been going on in cancel culture, instead people are publicly saying "this person is doing this and that is wrong, let's all gang up on them and cancel them." Circling back to your question, I think each of us needs to be responsible for that, for educating and doing our own research but then also, we have to be responsible for our own reactions to how we treat others and always come from a compassionate and kind perspective so we can help others learn as well.

[24:05] *Dr. Nirat Nibber, ND:* Thank you for saying that. I think there is a lot of disparity in how practices are being attributed but also in the response. Elevating different voices is also going to help change that narrative and support a lot of that work that we want to do. Even in communication and understanding, that is part of self-care. When we are more grounded and aligned, I think when we have invested that time in ourselves, going to the top of this discussion, then we are able to show up in our communities in a much more meaningfully way. Of course, we are able to engage in more difficult discussions with clarity when we have slept properly.

[25:01] *Joy McCarthy:* You are so right. That is a really great point.

[25:02] *Dr. Nirat Nibber, ND:* We are grumpy when we have no sleep. I just want to pivot the discussion a little bit. You have given us lots of examples on self-care ideas and a lot are centring

around nutrition as that is your background and we have also talked about the time investment. Sometimes people look to supplementation as a quick fix for that, if they are not able to get the full nutritious diet. Some people require supplementation because they have very specific conditions and they're trying to address imbalances. Where do you see supplementation fitting into a typical self-care routine?

[25:48] Joy McCarthy: Yes. As I mentioned, eating well is one of my self-care priorities. Right behind it is taking the right supplements for me. I definitely make a point every day, every morning and every evening, I have certain things that I take for my wellbeing. Mushrooms, if we use an example, I am a really big fan of reishi, I use that to help me to support my nervous system, to help me be calm and stay focused as well. Supplements are supplemental to a good diet, but they are extremely important. I think that what you are doing with this podcast, obviously you are educating people on how – that can be a huge piece of the self-care puzzle and it can really help. If someone is dealing with chronic stress, then we can add a B complex vitamin or AOR has really great formulations specific for stress. I think supplements can really help to fill in those gaps, especially fill in nutrition gaps. Stress is such a nutrient intensive thing for your body, so knowing that if you do have a lot of stress and you are not making as much time for self-care, knowing that there are nutrients that can better support the body in the stress response.

[27:23] Dr. Nirat Nibber, ND: You said actually a few really salient points that I want to expand on. The first is when you are in any state that is requiring a lot of nutrients that is pulling a lot like stress, absolutely you can be working on even more of a deficit so sometimes supplementation seems helpful. Then you said right off the top, supplementation for your needs and that is the key piece. Sometimes there are very clear cases that I see in practice where supplementation is not the right answer for that individual. I love that you said right away that it is for what you need at that moment and then you are reassessing. How frequently are you reassessing or changing up a supplement routine?

[28:14] Joy McCarthy: You know what, sometimes it can be on the daily. For example, today as I mentioned before our call that I am feeling a little under the weather as my daughter had a cold virus last week and I have caught that, so today I modified my supplement routine to take more vitamin D and a couple of other things. For me, it is how I am feeling on that particular day. Then there are certain things that I take, my essentials that I take every day and then there are things that I add in or take away depending on how I am feeling and what is going on.

[29:00] Dr. Nirat Nibber, ND: How would you promote a safe and effective supplementation plan? What are you looking for in supplements?

[29:09] Joy McCarthy: I think that is really important. I think specifically about when you see people recommending or just talking about what they take, I am always very careful with that. I am thinking of the example, I have a lot of posts on Joyous Health about rosacea. I have a whole entire post about natural health supplements for healthy skin. What I always make sure that I tell people is that you need to talk to your naturopathic doctor or your certified nutritionist because what may work for one person may not work for you. I think in order for them to be safe and effective it is really important to ask questions. I recommend working with a healthcare practitioner to work out what is the right dosage, what is the right product for whatever your health concerns are. I think it is really key. Whenever I am asked what supplements I take, I am happy to share with people but I always let people know that it is very unique to me, and you want to figure out what is best for you. It is good to make sure that you really do your research.

[30:17] *Dr. Nirat Nibber, ND*: Thank you for saying that. I think it is really important for people to hear from wellness leaders that it is not a one-size-fits-all and that the benefit will come to you from finding the right dose and the right time to be taking them and when to stop. I think that is a really important note and an important note that we can end on. I think you have covered so much ground on what self-care looks like, how people can start implementing it and most importantly the value of it. So on those hard days when you don't necessarily want to sit and do your meditation or you are feeling restless and you don't want to go to bed early, that you implement some regular changes and routines because you know the value of it. Thank you so much.

[31:20] *Joy McCarthy*: Thank you for having me.

[31:22] *Dr. Nirat Nibber, ND*: Where can everybody find you?

[31:27] *Joy McCarthy*: You can find me at joyoushealth.com that is where I have hundreds of recipes and resources for healthy living. On social media as well, just search 'joyous health' and you can find me there because I am always sharing so much information and it is all for free.

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