

181: The Brain-Body Connection with Dr. Ali Novitsky



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Bonnie Koo, MD

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Welcome to the *Wealthy Mom MD Podcast*, a podcast for women physicians who want to learn how to live a wealthy life. In this podcast you will learn how to make money work for you, how you can have more of it, and learn the tools to empower you to live a life on purpose. Get ready to up-level your money and your life. I'm your host, Dr. Bonnie Koo.

Hey, everyone, welcome to episode 181. Even just saying that, to me, it sounds crazy that I've recorded 181 episodes. Well, close to it anyway, sometimes I do replays when I think there's value in replaying them. Because if you're a new listener, you probably haven't gone back and listened to all 181 episodes.

So today I have a special guest, a dear friend of mine, Dr. Ali Novitsky. I've known her for, actually I've known her since I was living in Philadelphia. So that was at least six years ago, because we moved there right after Jack was born.

Anyway, the reason why I want to have her on is most of the things I talk about and even inside Live Wealthy, and even in my private coaching practice, it's really working on your mindset, working on your thoughts, identifying unuseful thoughts, and intentionally thinking, like thinking on purpose more useful thoughts.

Now, in the money world I call these expensive thoughts versus money making thoughts. And expensive thoughts, kind of like what it sounds like, they're thoughts that literally cost you so much money.

And so back to Ali, she incorporates body work with thought work. And this is something I haven't really talked about and so I really wanted to bring this to light because you're not what I call a brain in a jar. Like you're not just brain, thinking, overthinking. Like there's this whole other part of you, AKA your body, that we normally don't even talk about or access because so much of our inner wisdom comes from listening to our body.

And so when a lot of my clients have trouble "listening" to their inner voice or looking within themselves, that is all body work in terms of accessing. It's not in your brain, okay? It's not like a sentence that pops up in your brain

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like, this is the right decision. It's like really grounding yourself, we're going to actually talk about what that means, how you can start practicing it, and how important it is for if you do have a coach and you're working on your mindset actively, that bringing in that physical and this will be helpful.

Now, Dr. Ali will actually be at the Live Wealthy conference, the money and wellness conference for women physicians in March of 2024 in Miraval Arizona, it is currently sold out. I will say, at this point it's highly unlikely you would get off the waitlist, the waitlist is pretty long at this point. But if you are going and you're listening, I'm going to see if I can have Ali do some sessions with us. It's just some logistics I have to figure out.

But if you are coming, you're definitely in for a treat to do some live body work with her. But we're going to talk about it and give you some ideas on how to incorporate that. And if you're inside my Live Wealthy program, or even if you're a private client, we're going to have Ali come in and do sort of a session with us. So you'll definitely get the details when we do that.

Okay, here is Dr. Ali Novitsky.

Bonnie: Welcome, Ali Novitsky.

Ali: Hi, thanks for having me. I love chatting with you, as usual.

Bonnie: I know, it's so fun to finally have you on the podcast. So why don't you introduce yourself?

Ali: Yeah, so I'm Ali Novitsky and I am, well, a neonatologist by training. However, I currently do not practice neonatology. I, for the past six years, have been working mostly with just women physicians with optimal health. So mental, emotional and physical health. And then recently became board certified in obesity medicine, which has been awesome because while I don't do the actual medication part, I use all the other principles within the work that I do.

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So that's been really, really fun. And I spend my time doing that, traveling around, going to some conferences, and raising two girls. And we have a dog now, so it's pretty busy.

Bonnie: Was the dog a pandemic acquire?

Ali: Absolutely she was.

Bonnie: I'm sure the kids love him, her?

Ali: They do love her and she's extremely high maintenance. And so it's funny because my husband never wanted a third kid. So as soon as the second one was born, he ran to the doctor and had a little procedure done. And then we got this dog and she is literally more high maintenance than any of the kids.

Bonnie: Oh gosh.

Ali: Yeah.

Bonnie: So, Ali, I've known you for quite a few years at this point. It's been really cool to kind of see things change. Okay, maybe you'll see like a snippet of the video, but you can't see Ali's arms, her arms are amazing. So I've seen the transformation. Not that your arms sucked before, but now they're really defined and awesome and I envy them.

Ali: Love you. Oh my gosh. Yeah, I mean, well if we're chatting about arms, so one of the things that happened when I first started work in the coaching world, my business started as mind/body marriage and kind of the theme behind that was like the mind/body connection, but also we talked about relationships. So it was a little bit confusing.

And so my focus wasn't this real heavy health focus for women physicians at that time. But we did talk about health. And then what I realized is, what am I really passionate about doing? What do I really want to do? And why am I not doing that? And really, what it comes down to is I'm obsessed with nutrition and I'm obsessed with exercise.

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I mean, it literally started as something that was not healthy as a younger person. I definitely had body image issues. I had weight issues. I had over exercising issues, under eating issues. And through that work in my own healing, I came to a place where I really felt my calling to help others coming from a very body positive, body acceptance approach.

And so I think once I made the decision that that's really what I love doing, and why am I not just doing that? You know, I was like, and I think that I will also follow my own principles. And so for the past two years, even though I'd always been fit, I really came into my own authentically with finding my authentic body. And it really came down to just committing to just really simple things.

And then I kind of just took those really simple things and started teaching other people these really simple things.

Bonnie: Yeah, including arms.

Ali: Yes. And again, it's not rocket science. It's literally just doing a little bit of weight training, eating a good bit of protein and keep doing that.

Bonnie: Yeah, did you know there's an arm coach in the LCS world?

Ali: What?

Bonnie: I'll tell you later. I don't follow her, but I think she literally calls herself the arm coach, just as kind of like a marketing niche. But it is like, you're like, "Oh, an arm coach, I need that." But obviously, she doesn't just work on the arms because that would be weird.

Ali: I'm like, gosh, that's a really cool idea. I never thought of that.

Bonnie: But it's just really specific, right? And I didn't mean to talk about arms the whole time, but I do think that's an area of the body that women have issues with. I definitely have issues with my arms. So we can talk offline about how you can work my arms.

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Ali: Yes. Okay, so I love that let, so let's go there for a minute. Because I think that yes, in general women have issues with every part of their body. And so one of the exercises I've recently been offering, and I'm going to actually, because it's super easy so I'm just going to tell you right now.

So we're so hung up on numbers, and it can be anything from how much we weigh, what size our pants are, what our waist circumference is, what our arm circumference is, how much muscle we have, how much body fat we have. And it's all these like numbers that we don't really have control. Well, I don't want to say that we don't have any control over, but we basically stand on a scale and we get a number.

What I'm trying to kind of help people do is to define their own number. So I say in your body that you're in right now, what is your number? It's not a scale number. It's literally on a scale from 1 to 10. How much do you feel that you're in your authentic body? And people that are following principles that serve them in their nutrition, serve them in their exercise, and even we can go beyond that and talk about how much mindset work they're doing and emotional work they're doing.

If they can tell me that they're a nine in their body, yet they don't weigh what they think they should, then they're at a huge disadvantage because they're not honoring that they're probably authentically where they need to be. And so I think that this idea with this acceptance piece, it's like we are all different. We all have different body types. And I hate to say, I mean, it's genetic, it is so genetic.

I mean, where we store body fat is completely genetic. I used to always be so upset because I'm very flat-chested. And I'm like, oh man, I'm so flat-chested. And the advantage is that I don't store a whole lot of body fat in my front area. So my stomach never had an issue with getting more definition there because I don't store body fat there. And so, right, but I never honored that I was more obsessed with, oh gosh, my training bras are too big, you know?

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Bonnie: Yeah. So actually, let's talk about that. I remember you and I talking briefly, is this the mesomorph thing that we once talked about?

Ali: Yeah, yeah.

Bonnie: Let's just briefly talk about that because I remember you telling me what I was. But yeah, I don't know how many types there are, I'll let you do it.

Ali: You're a mesomorph, for sure. So they're somatotypes. So the three body types, somatotypes. So ectomorph is going to be your naturally thin body type. So this is the body type where they were a kid, they could eat whatever they wanted and they would have comments made towards them like, they might be 50 pounds soaking wet. And just like always just, you know, a smaller bone structure, don't carry a whole lot of body fat at first until we get a little bit older. But just definitely lower muscle mass even, so just naturally thin.

Mesomorph is more of your muscular body type. So this is the body type where they tend to evenly distribute muscle and also body fat, tend to be pretty even up and down. Strong, so like kind of strong naturally, tend to excel at things that require functional body movement. And again they usually lose weight and gain weight kind of in the same pattern.

And then endomorph is the body type that tends to store additional body fat. They just tend to have a little bit of a higher body fat percentage, and not a big deal. There's not one body type that's better than the other and most of us are a combination of.

So the most common body type is going to be a meso/endo combination, which is somebody who has a good amount of muscle mass. And they also like to store a little bit of body fat. So that's the population that I, in the past, would work with a lot because those are the women that are typically thinking I weigh too much, and it's that whole thing.

And I also want to say that it doesn't matter what your body type is, you can be a naturally thin person, it doesn't make you immune from having body

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issues, right? We think that it does because society would probably say, oh, an ectomorph is going to be accepted more. It does not make us immune.

So yes, those are the body types. And the reason why I like them is because they will influence our BMI and our weight. And this is the number that we have so much hang-up on, but we really don't understand actually, what could be normal for our body type.

Bonnie: Yeah, no, I love that because also it sounds like knowing what it is will help you sort of customize. It's like you know kind of what your body needs, versus a one size fits all, right?

So I'm just curious, are you saying that ectomorph, it's harder for them to put on muscle or do they have to work harder?

Ali: Absolutely.

Bonnie: Is that what you're saying?

Ali: Totally. Oh my goodness, yeah. So actually, my women, the really cool thing that I've seen in the transition of my business is that I work with a lot of ectomorphs now. And it's because they're like, oh gosh, I just had my DEXA scan and my bone density is low. And they start getting nervous and so I'm getting a lot more women coming to me for that.

But yes, ectomorphs, actually they early on in their life will have lower muscle, but also lower body fat percentage. So they'll appear very lean, you might even see good musculature because their body fat is low. What happens over time as things start slowing down, and again, once we hit 30 we start losing muscle mass.

So if you're an ectomorph that's losing muscle mass, you're going to start to see that you're going to gain body fat. And they're like, oh my gosh. All of a sudden they say, I never had this before. And now I have this. And so they have to work harder to gain that muscle back and then also maintain muscle.

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So that's the hard part too, is just to maintain muscle as a woman over the age of 30, you actually have to work to even maintain it. To gain it is way more challenging and the results are very slow, especially once we hit about 40.

Bonnie: Yeah. Everyone listening is like, God dammit.

Ali: I know, I know. I'm like, yeah, do you want to hear the crappy part about it? Here we go. But I will also say that a lot of people think, oh great, now I'm going to have to work out for hours and this is just going to be super hard. And that's actually not true.

In fact, I used to lead all the exercises for an hour in length. Over the past year, we've decreased everything to 30 minutes. And so I would say that 30 minutes three times a week is actually going to be somebody who gets an A plus, plus, plus, plus, on their chart. I would say if you're doing 30 minutes once a week of strength training, you're going to at least maintain muscle mass.

Bonnie: I feel like since, I don't know, since I could remember, I think the day of several hours a week, one hour plus a week of weightlifting, and maybe it's different for men. It's sort of not what we're doing anymore. Like, oh, actually, you can get the same benefits by doing a lot less. And now they kind of know what's effective. Obviously, this is what you do, so you know probably.

Because I think everyone listening is like, who has time for even one hour, three times a week, right? But 30 minutes seems very doable. Okay.

So one thing I thought would be fun to talk about is, so obviously, all the coaching I do is really focused on your mindset. I don't really do somatic work, per se, but emotions are somatic. And that is something I'm learning more about, because I think it's really easy to – Well, since we both coach physicians, they don't want to think about their emotions or their bodies, right?

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And one thing I've learned, and I know we talked about this before we started the podcast, is the body is so important in helping us process emotions. And to even take a step further, it's like the movement is so important. So let's talk a bit about that and how fitness helps you access that.

And not to make it more complicated because we all know people who are like gym rats, but their minds aren't necessarily managed either. So let's talk about that.

Ali: I love this question. It's so good because one of the things that typically happens, I'll say, in the work that I do is women might come in and think that they want to start exercising for a physical result. And then they'll soon find that they're actually not exercising for a physical result anymore. They're actually doing it because of how it emotionally makes them feel.

And so one of the things that I got into personally a lot, I mean, I learned, obviously, the model and I really love the CBT component. But there's Dialectical Behavioral Therapy, which is DBT, which is a derivative of CBT.

So it really focuses more on the emotional aspect and there's four components of it. So it's distress tolerance, emotional regulation, interpersonal communication, those are the three big ones. And there are four components of it and the other part is just along the lines of mindfulness.

Okay, so it's mindfulness, emotional regulation, distress tolerance, and interpersonal communication. So the idea is that these emotional regulation techniques have everything to do with grounding. And one of the strongest emotional grounding techniques that you can ever do is to move your body. Just move your body. So whether it's taking your steps, doing your strength training, whatever it is, and especially moving your body in nature, completely grounding. And when we can ground ourselves –

Bonnie: Can I stop you for a second?

Ali: Yeah.

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Bonnie: Let's define grounding.

Ali: Yeah. Okay, I love this. So picture an electrical circuit and there's nothing to ground the circuit, right? So if you don't ground an electrical circuit, what's going to happen? It's going to explode. Humans, if humans aren't able to become aware of where they are currently, to be able to kind of decide what are the state of affairs that exists within you right now, where is your stress level, then if we're not taking that check-in on where's my stress level, we're going to explode.

And that's when people become overwhelmed, become burned out. They're completely reactive. They're irritable. They're taking on behaviors that completely pull them away from what they want for themselves.

Bonnie: So when you talked about the nature of things, I'm assuming that you bring in sort of like nervous system work?

Ali: Yes.

Bonnie: Explain that a little bit. And I've talked briefly about it, but I really haven't. And this is something I'm learning about. So why don't we talk about how the nervous system, obviously physicians know what that is in terms of physiologically, but what it means for emotional work and how it's important.

Ali: Yeah, no, I love it. So, basically, when we're thinking about our prefrontal cortex, right? And so we take in the information, and a lot of times because we're so programmed for negative bias, meaning in any circumstance we're going to probably believe that it's negative versus positive. We're probably going to think that the shoe is going to drop versus a miracle is going to happen.

And so what typically happens is when we perceive a circumstance, we're going to hit the next level, which is going to be where our stress hormones get released, right? So it's going to, kind of, hit that area of our brain where it's like, okay, fight or flight. Let's let off the stress hormones.

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And then what happens then is whenever that happens, the next part we kind of call on our hippocampus for old memories. So basically, the tendency is we're going through this feedback loop of circumstance, we get triggered, and we kind of go to this space where we bring in old memories. And so we kind of stay stuck.

So where emotional regulation can kind of come in and how we can tripwire this, particularly with movement, is a lot of times really using breathwork. And so I use breathwork all the time and I have particularly brought it into my workouts combined with also core exercises. And I'm going to talk about that in a minute because it's breathwork and activating your core together, which actually we think provides a tremendous amount of grounding and emotional regulation as it relates to exercise.

But the idea is, if we can pause in that moment where we're noticing that we are in fight or flight, and instead of kind of digging into those old memories to kind of just ramp up that fight or flight, if we can just pause and kind of do the opposite and stimulate the parasympathetics by breathing.

So usually it's like five deep breaths. If we can stimulate that angle, we can almost tripwire and reprogram ourselves to instead not go through the fight or flight, but instead go ahead and stay in this more neutral position. And then we can start to pull more of the tools to really ground ourselves to an even lower stress level.

Bonnie: Sounds amazing.

Ali: But that sounds complicated, right? Because what we do in the exercise realm is essentially like, let's say you're doing squats. So what we're doing is when you activate the core, so this is the other thing I wanted to tell you about your core.

So any kind of core and abdominal work activation, and I don't mean we're going to go to 100 setups, I mean, you can activate your core standing up. Those same muscles innervate the area of the brain where our emotions live. So in other words, when you do core work you are accessing really the

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same part of your brain where you're going to kind of generate more of those memories to create the emotion, those thoughts to create the emotion.

And so it's the simple breathing patterns we do through the movements with core activation. And also, this is like the simplest thing you can do, if you literally just press your feet without shoes on into the ground, that is like one of the easiest ways to perform a grounding technique. You literally are just feeling the earth push against your feet and your feet push against the earth. And you just stand there, a little bit of core activation, take a couple of deep breaths. That's the easiest way to really physically regulate yourself in a way that will then allow more emotional regulation.

Bonnie: So why would somebody want to do this?

Ali: Because the reason for activating the area where you can find more emotional regulation will allow us to access, the term I'm going to use is not my term, it's actually like copyright by somebody else. But they say, wise brain.

We know that the lower we can bring our stress level and the more emotionally regulated we can remain, we will access the thoughts in our brain that we actually want to create, to really elevate our lives. And so we call it our wise brain. So I put it this way, when I was a brand new coach, oh my gosh, I feel really bad for my clients.

When I was a brand new coach, they would come and there would be these thought spirals and I literally was listening and I didn't know when to interject, and I didn't know when to stop. And then the next week, they'd come back with the same thing. Okay, so over time, I realized it's because when they were trying to solve the problem, they were completely emotionally dysregulated.

Bonnie: Or disconnected even, right?

Ali: Totally. Yeah, so I'm like, okay, I'm not going to get anywhere with them if I keep them dysregulated and I'm trying to give them new thoughts or

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help them create new thoughts. So then I started wising up a little bit. I'm like, we need to regulate them.

So what I found is when we do, and my work incorporates the grounding, so I ground them and I help them learn how to ground so that when we come to coaching and actually work on the mindset, they can access the nonjudgmental thoughts, the flexibility in the mindset, the growth mindset. And they get better results overall just by working on that grounding piece. So that's why I've really embraced why it's so important.

Bonnie: Yeah, so what it sounds like to me, and tell me if I'm misunderstanding, is that I'm just going to call it the physical work kind of creates the optimal environment to do mindset work.

Ali: Absolutely. So before I got, and I use an app now, but before I had the app we used to do live workouts. Now, when Covid kind of took a backseat, people got their lives back so it didn't work as well. We used to do our strength training workout and then we'd follow it immediately with the coaching call, like as a group. Because the idea was let's regulate everyone and then let's go ahead and work on the mindset.

And it really works. And now what we do is we still have the workouts, they're shorter, but typically they'll be doing the workout a little bit earlier, and then we come on the call. So it's always this idea that we're working on emotional regulation constantly.

Bonnie: It's like the warm up almost literally.

Ali: It's the warm up. That's a great way to put it. Yep, exactly.

Bonnie: Okay, this is so interesting. I think this is such a good conversation because, like I said, this is sort of an aspect, and what I've found in the coaching world that we're in I think there is a lot more awareness, that you can't just coach on thoughts, right? Like, it's not so simple and isolated like that. Like I think of energy and physicalness.

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You probably know this because you've been doing this for a while. Do you know how Tony Robbins talks about state?

Ali: No.

Bonnie: He basically, I think it's like your thoughts, but then your body has to also be involved. So that's sort of one of his things.

Ali: I love that. So one of the things similar, well, the way that I interpret it is that, for me, it's because personally for me this is how I respond. And so, for me, I'm in my head all day long. So for me just to stay in my head all day long I'm like, this is not fun. I don't want to coach. This is thinking, I don't like it.

So what I realized and what I've been trying to help people do is our higher self or our inner knowing or what we know to be true, let's lead from what we know to be true. And let's use our mind to just confirm it. And how I help people do this is I say, notice where you are with your natural energy.

And let's say you have a decision to make, right? If the decision is going to be a good decision that your higher self, your inner knowing agrees with, your energy is going to feel full and built up. If you feel like you're completely drained with the opposite, right? Like let's say that there's the decision and then you're like, okay, but if I make this choice it all of a sudden feels deep and heavy in your gut, you already know that it's not a good decision.

Use your brain for confirmation versus trying to out think it all the time and then just let your body follow. I think we lose that mind/body connection if we don't sometimes lead with our body first.

Bonnie: I imagine, just because we both coach women physicians, which means they're literally hanging out in their brains probably 99% of the time unless they've done this work. I'm assuming some of the work or introductory work you probably have to do with your clients is to even get them reconnected to their body.

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Ali: Which can be a yes. And I have to tell you that it's been such an interesting journey, which prompted me to get more educated on a lot of trauma work, right? Because, I mean, when somebody doesn't feel safe in their body and you're asking them to connect with their body, that's a big ask. So there's a lot of things.

So I have my resources of referrals where I'm like, okay, I think we're going to need to do a little more work here. I love this coach for this, let's do this. Because sometimes to even get connected with your body, there's all these obstacles to even go there, but yes.

Bonnie: Yeah, and it sounds like you kind of have the ability to kind of know when someone needs a little extra help for that.

Ali: Absolutely. And to also give the space that it's not a comfortable journey when we are trying to kind of get into our body more and to trust. I mean, I think that's the biggest thing. It's that trusting what we know to be true, I think that can be challenging.

Bonnie: Oh, 100%. Yeah, I think that's a challenge for just humans, is that we lean so much. And also what's valued in society is our brains. And so we learn to sort of lean, especially physicians, right? Because that's all you're doing during medicine, is you're using your brains. And then I'm not a surgeon, obviously, so I can go to the bathroom when I want to, for example.

But when you're in training, you're kind of trained to just ignore certain body signals because you have to do XYZ. So going to the bathroom is a good example, also sleep. So that just creates a lot of dysregulated humans.

Ali: Well, you're so right about that. I mean, that sleep thing is huge, right? It's like that, because I always talk about if we really want to wipe out that ability to make good decisions, drink a whole lot of bourbon and don't sleep. And also be a doctor. Those three things alone, you're going to do really well with, and then we just beat ourselves up. We're like, why didn't I make a better decision?

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No, it's not your fault. You did the best that you could with the tools that you had. But when this is wiped out, when your ability to make good decisions is wiped out, it's difficult.

Bonnie: Yeah, and I wonder if it's even harder for doctors, because we're making so many decisions a day compared to normal work people, whatever that means. But you know what I mean, if you're seeing like 30 patients a day, it's like 30 decisions you're making.

Ali: Yeah, it's the massive amount of decision fatigue that occurs just with your daily job to the point where I can remember when Mark and I, you know he's a doctor as well. But we would be ordering dinner and we would just look at each other like, what do I want? I don't know. I don't know what I want, right? Because you're so tapped out, you don't even know what you want to eat.

Bonnie: That's why I love tasting menus, to be honest. I wish there was a takeout version. Like, don't give me this, but just surprise me.

Ali: I think that actually, that's a really good idea.

Bonnie: Yeah, for people who just don't want to think about it. Yeah, I love tasting menus for that exact reason. Or if I go to a restaurant where someone else has been there, I just tell them to just order. I'm sure I'll like it. Because I also don't have super strong, picky, you know there's a few things that I won't like. But generally speaking I'm pretty minimal, so I just love it when someone just takes over and does that for me.

Ali: I am absolutely in agreement on that, yes.

Bonnie: Okay, so are you saying that we should all do – I don't know, what do you call this pre-work? Do you call it a grounding exercise thing? I'm assuming you have kind of a name for this?

Ali: Yeah, so I typically say that – Well, okay, this is how I want to say it, because I don't want you to get the idea that like, anytime you're going to

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coach or anytime you're going to work on your mind, you first need to take all this time to ground yourself. It's not that either.

So I like to say that I use a stress scale 1 to 10, right? 10 is super high stress and 1 is like you're sleeping. And the idea is it's not like how we define stress, it will be more like your symptoms. I know when I'm at a stress level of seven, I'm going to isolate. I'm literally not going to talk to anyone because I'm so tapped out. That's my symptom of a stress level of seven.

So I'm not going to go through the whole scale, but what I will tell you is that it's almost like we want to prophylactically ground ourselves. So we almost want to institute something every single day of our lives that's going to keep us at a lower stress level. When we do that by default, we're going to be more grounded. So you don't have to say okay, I'm going to meet with Bonnie on a call, I've got to my grounding.

Bonnie: I better do my little pre-exercise.

Ali: Yeah, no. I mean I did that in the past because it made sense for what I was doing. I will tell you though, having a consistent practice, so some ideas – This is what I like to say, however your stress comes out in terms of symptoms. So, for example, I know somebody who's symptom is their hair is getting twirled like this. They're super stressed and they're twirling their hair, this is a symptom.

So their body wants to move with stress. So I typically say, notice when you get really stressed what your tendencies are. Your grounding technique is going to be something that satisfies whatever it is that you do. I am very restless when I'm stressed. For me, it's movement. So daily movement for me. I'm not saying I'm going and working out all day, but I'm going for a 10 minute walk at least.

I know that if I can incorporate something that will address how I react to stress ahead of time, I'm going to pretty much always be ready, I'm always going to be primed. And remember, the lower that you are on your stress,

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the easier it is going to then be able to also adapt another grounding technique.

And grounding techniques can be anything from looking around the room and naming five things you can see. I mean, it literally can get super simple. Having on a fabric that you and just kind of like feeling, if you're a sensory person feeling the fabric. So notice what senses.

People who are super sound sensitive, some real light music might be super grounding. But I would say know what your thing is and do it as often as you can.

Bonnie: Yeah, well, it's funny, you were talking about the look around the room. I did that with a previous coach and she told me the reason why it's so effective is it basically is physiological, right? When you're in an activated fight or flight stress response, think about it, it's all about your brain is like we have to focus, we have to understand the danger. So it's like a very single focus.

But when you're sort of widening your gaze and looking around, it tells your brain like, oh, we're safe. That's what I learned about that.

Ali: Yeah, you're totally right. It tricks the amygdala. So it takes you out of fight or flight by tripping the amygdala. But you're exactly right, what your coach said, by looking around you're proving that you're safe.

So I usually do, it's 5, 4, 3, 2, 1. So it's five things you can see, four things you can hear, three things you can feel, two things you can smell, and one thing you can taste. Nobody will ever go all the way down to one if you're doing it right. Most people can't get past the five things you can see.

But all of those things just trip that amygdala which, again, is going to take you out of that fight or flight. And that's grounding. Grounding is coming out of fight or flight.

Bonnie: Yeah. All right, so what I'm hearing is that it's not like there's one way. We kind of have to figure out what it is for us. One thing that helps me,

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and I notice when I don't do it, is like even a five minute meditation is helpful just to sit still. I actually use the Calm app and my favorite person is, Tamara Levitt.

Ali: Okay, yeah.

Bonnie: I don't if you're familiar with Calm. Her voice is just so soothing to me.

Ali: I love that.

Bonnie: If one out there wants to try it. And so everyday, she has like a daily, it's called the daily calm. And it's just five minutes, it's short. I'm just like anyone can do it, anyone has five minutes, right? We're scrolling for hours, so you can do five minutes. And she just grounds you, gives you a few minutes of quietness.

And then she always has an amazing quote. There's like a theme for each call. So today I did it, it was about aloneness versus loneliness. And she kind of explained the connection. So she gives you a little mini lesson.

Ali: That's awesome.

Bonnie: And then a quote, and then she kind of wakes you up, right? In five minutes. It's amazing. The longer I do it, the better. But for me, it's like I'm intentionally spending time quieting my brain. And when I haven't done it in a while, like today, my brain is just like going in 30 million directions. And, obviously, it's about noticing it and kind of like bringing yourself back to Earth and trying not to do that. Because high-functioning women tend to be kind of anxious.

Ali: Oh, 100%. I love that you do that.

Bonnie: All right. Is there anything that you think we haven't said that you think would be useful?

Ali: Gosh, this was so good. I love talking with you because I feel like we said a lot. I think the biggest take home here is that as high-achieving

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women, right, women physicians, we are going to fall into the all or none so often. All or none thinking is a phrase, a term, a thought distortion that we all talk about. We all know what it is, that polarized thinking. Yet, it's the one that we always go back to.

And so I think that the best thing I could say is just make the next best decision. So if you feel like there's something in your life, like your health, or maybe you have a business in your business, or maybe your job at work or a relationship. Instead of going into those extremes, like if it's a relationship, "this person never respects me." Try to find that flexibility and that middle ground.

And remember, the idea is just make the next best decision no matter what it is. Like what you said with your meditation, the five minutes. You're like, I know if I do this for five minutes, I'm going to feel better. This is the next best decision for me today. You didn't say I'm going to meditate on top of a mountain over a stream for three hours. No, you said I'm going to do a five minute calm meditation.

And so I think ultimately, results come with small consistent actions. That's it.

Bonnie: Yeah. Oh, one thing I want to say is, it's kind of a joke but not really. Do you think my clients would get richer by doing more grounding?

Ali: I actually do. I think they would. And this is why I think they would, because a lot of times, think of it, like whenever we're doing business or whatever, there's a lot of different thoughts that come in that are going to make us flighty, that fight or flight. And so imagine if we're grounded and we can really hold onto all of the empowering thoughts that I know you're helping them create, to create exactly what they want.

So they're going to just be able to access those thoughts more often. So yeah, I 1,000% think so.

Bonnie: Yeah. All right, I think we're going to need you to guest coach in our program.

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Ali: Totally. We'll do it all. We'll do the stress scale. We'll do emotional regulation. We'll do grounding, because the thing is they're not hard concepts. It's just getting in a routine to do them.

Bonnie: A habit.

Ali: That's it.

Bonnie: Yeah. Yeah, cool. All right, this was so amazing. Thank you so much for being here and it's nice to see your face again.

Ali: Thanks for having me.

Bonnie: I know people can't really see what we're doing, but we're on video.

Ali: Yeah, no, I love chatting with you. This was amazing. I really appreciate being on. Thank you.

Bonnie: Yeah. So how can people find you?

Ali: Super easy, so recently we have actually rebranded just to kind of represent more of what we do. And so our brand is The Fit Collective, and it's super easy. It's just fitwomancollective.com. And on Instagram, I'm Ali Novitsky MD, and that's kind of it. But fitwomencollective.com is where you can find my podcast and programs we have and it's kind of a one stop shop. So super easy to get there and check it out.

Bonnie: Okay, cool. Thanks so much for being here.

Ali: Thank you so much. See you soon.

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