

6. The F List -
with Dr. Nupi Arora



FULL EPISODE TRANSCRIPT

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Michael: Hey everyone, and welcome back to another episode of Doctors Living Deliberately. Hi, Arpita. How's everything going today?

Arpita: It's good. Michael Hersh, how you doing?

Michael: I am doing great and I am so excited to introduce to you our next guest. So today we have Dr. Nupi Arora. She is a general practitioner and family medicine physician out of Manchester, England, and she also goes by the name the Glitter Practitioner, and I am excited to ask her more questions about that. She is also a burnout warrior, a spiritual and transformational life coach. She's a public speaker and she has not one but two livestream shows on LinkedIn live with the glitter practitioner and their supernova sisters. Please help me welcome Dr. Nupi Arora. Hi, Dr. Nupi.

Nupi: Oh, hi Michael. It's so lovely to see you. Hi Arpita, it's gorgeous to meet you. Thank you both for inviting me onto your podcast. I'm honored to be here, so thank you.

Arpita: Thank you. We're glad that you're here with us. I would love for you to tell us a little bit about how you actually recognized that you were no longer living with intention per se, and what you did from there. How did you discover coaching and, and tell us a little bit about that part of your story.

Nupi: Sure. Wow. Okay. So I've always been drawn into medicine, always, and that has been from a pretty young age. I've always been curious to know what's going on behind the scenes, what's going on behind that person. I've always been quite holistic and loving what I do. I'm following my purpose. And then I was a GP partner. So I've been a doctor, I've been in, within the NHS for 25 years. I've been a GP partner for 17 of those. So this is the mainstay of my profession.

And I had, had twins. I returned to work when they were eight months old, and initially I was like, okay, I can do this. I can be the mummy, I can be the doctor, I can do my clinics, I can do this. Underneath it all, I was sort of a bit overwhelmed, but back then I was still a perfectionist. I am now a reformed one. I was like, no, I can do this. And just kept pushing through. And there was a lot of pressure and tension left, right, and center. And I just didn't give myself a break. I was just, okay no, I, I have to prove myself. I kept pushing, pushing, pushing, pushing and I was getting physical symptoms. Aches and pains, not sleeping. I put it down to the twins being babies and I'm having interrupted sleep, for example, and my body was talking to me even then and I was kind of ignoring it, and I remember just feeling completely exhausted, frazzled.

And it was just getting harder and harder to be that energy source, to be this, as people described me and my husband did, as this radiant sunflower of energy and people just gravitate towards that. I couldn't put the mask on any longer. I was literally disappearing in front of my eyes, and the only way I can describe it is I remember my husband saying, you are this radiant sunbeam to other people

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and la la and I'm looking at him going, can you not see inside me? I'm an absolute weed. I'm literally nothing. I'm a shrivelled up mess. And I just was on autopilot. And then a couple of other things happened, which made me stop and go, okay, I'm so not okay. It was an insidious thing. It was three to four years, and all I can describe it was just this black hole of this. And there was like a track on repeat of name, shame, blame, constantly. This is what I was feeling and thinking and I just didn't know myself anymore.

And that's when I allowed myself to crash and burn because the thoughts were getting a bit scary. I was like, what's the point? What actually is the point? And that's what made me kind of stop. I was imagining things and I'm like, not that I would ever have done anything, but the fact that I was that broken, it was just as somebody slapping me in the face going, okay, you need to get some help now. And that's when I knew I'm not following what I'm meant to be following. I didn't even know who I was anymore, to be very honest. And it was only when I stopped, then I realized, holy moly, what the hell? But it took time to come through that. So yeah, it was the worst time of my life and it sounds really weird, it was also my blessing and I wouldn't change it for the world. I wouldn't change it for anything I needed that in order for me to grow, wake up, learn, evolve, pass it on to my patient community, which I've done for the last 10 years.

Michael: Wow.

Nupi: So even though at the time it, my soul was just broken, I didn't know spirituality then subconsciously I did. Consciously no, I didn't. And that's why I had to go through that. After that. It's just been one blessing and it is incredible. I live and breathe what I share. I live and breathe what it is I guide other people with. I've practiced it in clinical practice for the last 10, 11 years on the ground, day in, day out with my cohort of patients, and I love what I do. It just lights me up. It totally lights me up. It always has. But that's the beauty of this. When you combine whole person, heart-centered care, which is the learnings I learned. Which is what I'm sharing. You combine that with the science of medicine. That's the transformations I see. And I'm living proof of it as my patients are and as my clients are. And Oh, I could talk about this for hours, so please just interrupt me.

I will not mind.

Michael: What I was gonna ask you about was, so that sounds like an incredibly dark time, talk to us a little bit about the process. Like what took you through this transformation and how did you find your way through it?

Nupi: So, I found myself from that space of not knowing who I am, not recognizing myself to allowing myself to accept that help from acknowledging I'm a million miles from okay. I'm so not okay. And accepting that it's okay. I need this help for now because I was still a perfectionist then, I was like, okay, I'm going to listen to the people who are here to support me. And I remember my

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specialist saying to me, if we are going to do this, let's do it properly. There's no point to dipping your toe in coming back out. The number of medics I see who won't accept the help or will only go so far because it's a sign of weakness and all of this, and I'm going, Hmm, not me. I'll be the perfect patient.

That was a huge part to play when I finally accepted and allowed and acknowledged it all and took action because I was still a highly functioning perfectionist. I'd already booked my appointments with therapist and it was schema therapy that I had, it was a combination of SSRIs, antidepressant, anxiolytics. And that took me a while to accept. I remember it, I had the prescription in my hand and I was like, really, do I really? And I remember calling my best friend and I was like, okay, I have just been to the GP, they wanna do this. Really? Am I really? And even I do this for other people. No problem. There was a barrier almost in me going, I need this treatment seriously? And she just said to me, Nupi, you've not been okay for a while. Listen to what they're saying. So I did. It was that with the combination of the in-depth work. It's not just the treatment. I was that bad. I needed it, it's fine, but it's the understanding of your needs.

And at the point of that burnout, I had no idea what my needs even were, and it was from that understanding what my needs, are recognizing them, going back to the basics of your baseline human needs. Understanding know thyself, is what I learned from where these coping strategies have come from, that perfectionism, unrelenting standards is not healthy, but the majority I would say, are physicians who go into this profession. You have to have some element of hard work, determination, et cetera, et cetera. All the beautiful qualities that make us the positions that we are, the compassion, the empathy, tuning in, the knowledge base. But that can be a double edged sword as well. If you are putting other needs first always, or people pleasing all of these things play a part. And I think once you understand that shadow self, almost, recognize it for what it is, know how to keep it quieter. Tuning into yourself, that's when you can navigate things that are going on.

And I knew none of this. This is not taught in medical school. I knew none of this, until I had to crash and burn. And so that was the journey, the process that I took. And then I started pulling things together going, it's not just mind body, it's mind, body, soul needs, and I get better. I took the five months out and when I returned back into practice, I had this light bulb knowing of I'm gonna share exactly what I've just been through, what I've learned, how I've put it into practice for myself, coupled with all the learning over the last 10, 11 years, treat it obviously and give that back into my community. Because the conventional medical models, there's nothing wrong with it. We need it, but you're missing half a trick if you're not looking at that whole person and that's what I've always done subconsciously. Which was the foundation, the inspiration for my F list, actually.

Arpita: That's amazing. I think even just listening back to how you first described your story with that eloquence, you know that it took three to four years before you really recognize something was wrong. And I think that is very, very common amongst a lot of physicians. We think it's something

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with our health. We don't recognize what's actually wrong. We're done. We're fried. You mentioned the F list. Can you speak a little bit about what that is? Because I'm not familiar with that.

Nupi: I would love to share that with you. Yes, indeed. Oh my God. So the F list is a framework, I call it my holistic prescription to keeping your needs in balance. It's simple, it's easy to navigate. And that's what you need when you are going through stuff like this. How I describe this is it's understanding your whole self health needs the core foundation to health and wellbeing is the balance of your mind, your body, and your soul needs. So, physical, health, emotional, psychological, and spiritual. All of these are interlinked. You can't have one without the other. It's like a seesaw. So if one's off kilter, the other is going to follow.

So what do I mean by these needs? These are your baseline human needs. So the first three Fs on my F list, are all about reminding yourself to zone in on your needs. The first F is actually my favorite, not because it's a swear word, but because of the power behind it. And actually there is science behind swearing, it's the whole point.

Arpita: Go ahead and share it.

Nupi: Oh God. Can I please? Because it sounds weird. Fuck off.

Arpita: There you go.

Nupi: I can't do my F list without fuck off, quite frankly. And it's so powerful because the science behind this of swearing, it's almost like a defib, it goes like this and stops the brain from going into chronic stress and oh my gosh, threat mode. It stops that just for that enough time for you to do number two, which is to remind you to tune into your needs.

Second one, which goes hand in hand, focus and breathe. You have that power to stop this response that's going on in your brain. All the thoughts and all this, oh my God, I can't do it. You can slow time down, you can freeze time actually, and you gain that pause. And that is so powerful because it gives you a broader perspective. It allows you to respond instead of knee jerk react and then run away with your thought cycle. And this is all to do with the neuroscience of stress response and all that, the amygdala and your primitive brain. So your breath work helps to keep things here as opposed to high alert. It keeps your perspective expanded and it helps you to tune in to the parts of your brain that can problem solve still. So the focus and the breathe, go hand in hand with the first one.

Michael: For our listeners who may not be familiar with this type of breath work, you referenced box breathing and so I just wanted to provide for our listeners a little bit of a very quick tutorial. I am not an expert on this. Do you wanna share with how to do a box breath?

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Nupi: The breathing I'm talking about, it's the breathing that you do with meditation. If you imagine a square box, four corners. Breathing in through the nose for a count of three to four, and then hold for a few seconds and then breathe out through your mouth. A longer exhale, pause for a couple of seconds. Breathe in for count of two to three, pause, two, three out, 2, 3, 4. So you do the four corners of a box, and you can activate that at any time, and that takes less than a minute. But when you start doing this, one minute can feel like 10. That's what keeps the whole system right here. So you are still in respond mode. You've still got the faculties going to make decisions, to make choices, to consider options, for example. So I hope that's enough.

Michael: Absolutely. And I, will say again, not an expert on breath work. And this was not something I was aware of before finding coaching. But what I will say is it's incredible once you become aware of this, when you start to notice, like when you are frustrated or anxious or overwhelmed, how frequent it is for us to start breath holding, so we stop breathing. And when you can refocus, as you were saying, your second F, focus and breathe. So when you can focus and then look at your breath work. Do some of that box breathing that you were just referencing, the difference it can make and how I'm gonna let you then move on with your third F and see how all of these things are intertwined and how they lead in. So I will pass it back to you. So why don't you tell us about the third F?

Nupi: So the third one is flip, which is all about perspective. So it's almost like if I had my glasses on, and everything's really blurry and I can't really see, and it's just all foggy and I'm foggy, my brain's foggy. It's almost like you take them off, you give them a polish, you put them back on, you're seen with a different lens, and that's what I mean by perspective. So what you thought was perhaps negative and foggy and oh my God, confusing all of a sudden, oh my gosh, I can see metaphorically, I can see clearly again from here, all of a sudden I've got different options. So it's not to be like a Pollyanna positive or anything it's looking for what appears to be a negative thought or a critical thought. What else is this showing me? Let's look at the flip side. What else could this mean?

And it's applying what we learn through our thoughts, our beliefs, our feelings and examining them with curiosity instead of criticism, and just look at the evidence. Where's the evidence that that thought and feeling is actually true? So it's a challenge of your negative self-beliefs, your negative thought patterns, but you have to recognize it first.

So the F off, focus breathe, and then the flip. There's always a flip side to what you think is happening and it's the reminder. Notice the feeling. Notice the thought. Name it for what it is. Let's take some of its power away. It's a thought. It's a feeling. It'll also pass and reframing it. How else could I look at this? What else could this show me? Where is the evidence that this thought is actually, yeah, it's valid, it's true. There isn't any usually. F it off. Go through the rest of the list. Come back to center again.

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Those three are probably the most important because it's the more in depth work. Then your physical health needs food, fluids, fresh air, food. It's not rocket science, you eat crap, you're gonna feel like crap. Eat the right food, eat the right amounts, eat what you need as your body needs it for This is particularly with patients, say for example, it can highlight issues with undereating because of self-esteem and body images or overeating. So I always ask, why are you eating? Are you hungry or are you blocking something because actually I'm just feeling really stressed out. So it's the behavior behind the action.

Fluids, water, hydration, not alcohol. If you are feeling under par, not okay, you don't need anything else to make you feel worse. Alcohol at the end of the day is a depressant and it's addictive and you really don't need anything else that's gonna make you worse. Alcohol, it's a coping mechanism, which is not the healthiest. It might have served you til now. But using alcohol to help you sleep, to calm you down, you're gonna enter into this cycle perhaps of needing more. And uhuh, let's not go down that slippery slope. Just be aware of it.

Fresh air is all about exercise, really movement. It's connecting back with nature as well. The exercise movement for your body releases all those beautiful endorphins. It's a natural counterbalance to the, oh no, oh my God, everything's going wrong. And it's just doing the things that you love doing. You don't have to go and do a marathon or anything just to walk in the park, for example. Choose something you love to do.

Arpita: For me personally, like it was mostly during Covid, I remember when we shut the office down, it was just that feeling of I need to stop and just get a breath, like the depression. Going outside for five minutes just to...

Nupi: It's beautiful. It's feeling the wind on your face and it's connecting again. It's connecting to the bigger, wider world, which is coming later on the F list. And you notice the sounds outside, it's all about mindfulness really, but it's connecting with things and it makes you feel better, gives you different perspective.

Arpita: Completely. Completely.

Nupi: The next couple of Fs are about the emotional side of things, so fun and friends. So by fun, I mean remember the hobbies that perhaps you did as a kid and as a child you are just, there's no boundaries to what you possibly could be, and you kind of lose that. And it's the quiet time stuff. And the biggest challenge that comes up here is, oh, but Dr. Arora I haven't got time for that. I've I get it. I know, but you giving yourself time, this is the most precious gift you can give to yourself. Five, 10 minutes even. Build it up over the time. Book an appointment with yourself. And I made a patient actually do this. It was hilarious. I said, right. Let's put it in your phone right now, Dr. Nupi's fun time. And she stopped at one o'clock every Friday to do something creative for 20 minutes, half an

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hour. But by doing that, the impact is, is that you feel better because you've done something you love to do. You're having fun. That's the whole point. And once you start doing that, you're filling up your happy meter. You're gonna wanna do it again, and before you know it, all the other things that are your work, your job, you actually do them a heck of a lot more productively. That's how you give that time back to yourself. That's how you can capture pockets of time for yourself.

The next F is friends, which is all about connection. We need to have that element of connection, being seen, being heard, feeling valued, and it's the fine, fine tuning here of the connections that uplift you, that make you feel (sigh of relief) as opposed to, oh my God, I'm drained of energy now. And in that comes a choice. And this is the whole point of this framework is understanding you always have a choice and you get to take ownership of it. So it's choosing your connections wisely. And that could be colleagues, relationships, work, all of this.

The next two is flow and fabulous. So the flow is being in tune with yourself, your baseline needs, and being in a state of flow where you are, everything just seems to just happen. You are aware, and it's with this expanded awareness that your mind, your body, your soul, comes back into balance. And actually that's where you become your limitless in potential because you're following exactly your passions, your purpose, the meaning, your value, which gives you joy in your life.

Fabulous, is all about vulnerability. And I always say to my patients or clients when they come in, no matter where you are in your journey right now, whatever the symptoms are that you're presenting with, the very fact that you've come and said, and taken this on board, you are fabulous just as you are. Your vulnerability actually is your strength. And you know, it's learning to shift this mindset from, oh my God, if I ask for help, I'm weak. I failed, and all of this just common and I'm like, that's the bravest thing you could have ever done actually. And we'll do this together. You're not on your own. That's the whole point?

And three affirmations that come with my F list are, these are all about ownership. I will, I want to, because I am worth it. Once you have this deeper understanding of yourself, your needs, taking ownership of them, knowing how to rebalance, knowing how to replenish them, keep all these needs topped up, that's when you become aligned with yourself. That's when you can radiate your own inner energy. That's the glitter. And like glitter, it sticks and it spreads to somebody else. Cause when you are in tune with your whole self health needs, the energy that comes from that, which is unconditional love, essentially for self and then everything else. It becomes empowering, uplifting to the next person and it changes your trajectory. It changes who you are, how you behave. And that is The whole process really.

Michael: This has been really wonderful. There is so much wisdom here. You can tell how important all of this is to you and how you have compiled it into the F list, which I love every time you talk about it, each of the individual parts of the framework, they are individually so important, but they

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are all interwoven. And so you need all of them to work together. And I agree with you. I feel like we could talk about this for hours. So if our listeners want to know more about Dr. Nupi, where can they go to find out more about you?

Nupi: Sure. Well thank you. So you can get hold of me on LinkedIn mainly and my profile is Dr. Nupi the Glitter Practitioner. You can also email me, my email contact details also on my LinkedIn about page. Apart from LinkedIn, I have my own channel on YouTube, also on Facebook and Instagram. I do two livestream shows. One of them is weekly, every Monday at 8:00 PM G M T, which is noon Pacific Standard Time, and that's live with the Glitter practitioner. And then the second show that I do is every second Tuesday, which I co-host with my beautiful soul sister, Dr. Diana Londono who's a urologist in the States.

I always say if people are feeling frazzled, fed up my coaching program is essentially based on my F list framework. You don't have to do the whole program though. You can have a one-off consultation. Please know you can reach out. There is always help and support. That's the most important thing. My first consultation is free, and this is why I really always talk about my burnout story and the detail of it because if it helps one other physician to go, oh my God, I really recognize myself in that story or, okay, I'm not on my own. Job done. Because it's heartbreaking. It really truly is. Burnout has never been higher. The suicide rates have never been higher. Which is why I'm constantly gonna be repeating my message of know your worth, own your needs, protect them. Protect your energy, like your life depends on it. Stand in your power and live the life you desire and you actually deserve and say, no. You have to put your needs first.

Michael: You have perfectly summarized the exact reason why we are all here today because I think this message comes in all different shapes and sizes, and it's so important for us to keep talking about these things to let physicians and everyone know that their journeys look different, the, the symptoms look different, the feelings look different, but that there is a light at the end of the tunnel. Right? There is something that you can be doing, and Dr. Nupi it's been so great having you here today. Thank you so much for being a guest on our show.

Nupi: No problem. Before we go.

Michael: Yes?

Nupi: I have to tell you the reason I changed general practitioner to the glitter practitioner is because the three reasons, number one. I am genuinely obsessed with glitter. as you can probably, I dunno if you can see. Second reason is because the box breathing, when I'm holding space, tuning in with my heart from my heart, doing a couple of cycles of breathing and then I know what's wrong. I can see it in their eyes, I can feel it and once we've done the breathing, and I'll grab their hands, when they

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open their eyes, I can see that light, that glimmer of light coming back in their eyes. Oh my Lord. That's the glitter. That's healing.

And then the third reason, patients would always say to me doc, you know, it's like you sprinkle glitter, it's magic with your words. And this is a, another time for the story behind it, but, he was like, this is a bloke as well. Saying it's like you sprinkle glitter with your words and it just becomes magical. You say it in a way where it just makes sense and everybody needs some glitter in their life. Dr. Arora. This guy came from a really, you know, traumatic background. In and out prison system, in and out of the care home system. No confidence in the health professionals. He came to me on my emergency clinic just before the pandemic started, year later, he's taking his meds regularly, he's applying all my F list stuff and it was one of his last reviews and that's when he said, Dr. Arora can't thank you enough. You've changed my life. You sprinkle words like glitter and everybody needs glitter in their life. And for him, for this particular person to say this to me, you know, it wasn't lost on me. So those are my three reasons why I'm called the glitter practitioner.

Arpita: That's awesome. I love it. Well, I really, really enjoyed hearing your story and hearing your effort. Excellent. All the details, and it is exactly how you say it and how you transfer that information with your words. That is so magical and thank you, Dr. Nupi.

Nupi: Thank you so much. Seriously. Oh, thank you.

Michael: And thank you all for listening and we'll see you next time on Doctor's Living Deliberately.