

14. Optimizing Wellness Through Meditation - with
Dr. Rashmi Schramm



FULL EPISODE TRANSCRIPT

14. Optimizing Wellness Through Meditation - with Dr. Rashmi Schramm

Michael: Welcome to another episode of Doctors Living Deliberately. Hey there Arpita, how's everything today?

Arpita: Oh, it's just chugging along. How about you? How are you doing?

Michael: I'm doing great, but I have a question for you. Do you meditate?

Arpita: I actually, I do now.

Michael: You do?

Arpita: I didn't used to. I thought, I'm like, who the heck has time for that? And I never did. And then with coaching and blah, blah, blah, and slowly just needing to settle the chaos in the brain, I started doing it and it's been amazing.

Michael: Yeah, I know I tried, I used one of those meditation apps and I went through and I did like the 30 days and I found the meditations that I thought like, worked best for me, and then it totally fell apart. I totally stopped doing it, and it's so hard to get into the habit and to stick with the habit. And so I'm so, I'm so excited to talk to our guest today. Do you wanna tell everybody who's here with us?

Arpita: Oh, I'm excited, today we have Dr. Rashmi Schramm she is a friend and colleague. She is also a board certified family physician and a national board certified integrative health coach. She is amazingly, also certified in meditation and Ayurveda and is a teacher of both of those. And is the founder of Optimal Wellness. That's a coaching platform rooted in neuroscience and one that supercharges coaching with meditation. Welcome Rashmi. So happy to have you here with us today.

Rashmi: I am delighted to be here. Thank you for having me.

Arpita: Yay! I know I haven't seen you in a couple of months, so it's super exciting to see you. I saw you actually on one of your weekend meditations, so that was really nice. But in person, I haven't seen you in a couple of months, so it's always good to reconnect. So Michael tell me your experience with Rashmi. Have you met her before?

Michael: So I have not met Rashmi before today, but I have heard her on other platforms, other podcasts, and definitely got me recharged and re-motivated to kind of start learning more about meditation. And so when you said that the two of you were friends, I was like, well, we have to have her on. And can you tell us a little bit more about your background, Rashmi? Like tell us about how you found meditation and what inspired you to go on and become a meditation instructor.

Rashmi: Yeah, absolutely. So I actually was born in India and I grew up in India and it was sort of all around me. It was immersed all around me, yoga and meditation. I mean, it's not like I was

14. Optimizing Wellness Through Meditation - with Dr. Rashmi Schramm

meditating as a child, but it didn't seem foreign to me. In fact, it felt a little bit like home to me. We immigrated to the US when I was 12 and I, you know, in sort of that usual way that we want to assimilate it kind of left a lot of that behind and then found another group in college where I was like, kind of in a secret meditation group because I felt like, oh, I can't be pre-med and say that I meditate. Right? And then again, assimilated totally in med school. Never really meditated at all, even through residency and then as I started to have kids and the stressors started to build up around me, I just didn't really have a way that I knew a good tool to release some of this stress, and so I was doing all the things that we all do to distract ourselves and it wasn't working. And it wasn't until I eventually started to become physically sick, so I was really experiencing a lot of insomnia and anxiety. But eventually I started to have some GI issues and I started to have chronic daily migraines. And so that's when I really had to go back to, okay, when did I feel the best and what tools was I using?

And so I just, you know, very, very, very slightly picked meditation back up. And that was, maybe 14 years ago, and again, I did it very secretively. I was literally in the closet like meditating because I was like, I'm so embarrassed, you know? I dunno what's wrong with me, that I need to meditate and, and so I had some of those tools and same thing, Michael, that you were talking about, right? Like you start and stop. You start and stop. That was me for like a really long time because life happens, right? Like I would meditate kind of consistently, and I would get so many results from it, I would start to notice improvements in different parts of my life, and then I would just stop. It would be like three months later, and there I am again. Oh, my headaches are back, and you know, da, da da. So eventually I ended up signing up to become a teacher, not because I thought I would ever teach, but really because one of the things that they required for 18 months was that I signed this thing that says I'm gonna meditate every day. And so that's what I needed was this external accountability for me to say, I signed that so I could admit I'm gonna figure out how I can meditate every day, because otherwise I'm not in integrity with myself. And so that's really how the whole thing started. And then for several years...

Michael: I'll just say that's like, tell me you're a doctor without telling me you're a doctor. Right? Like you needed, you needed to like commit to something to sign a contract with yourself in order to make sure, like, okay, now that I'm know I'm doing this now I'm definitely gonna do it every day.

Rashmi: That's it. That's what it took. I don't know that it would've taken, you know what else it would've taken, because I wasn't online. Right? I don't even know that social media was on, I wasn't on social media. I didn't know anyone. I didn't know any other teachers locally. And so these programs, they were run, you know, they were very scientific and that's what attracted me to them. They were very much based in science. But they also embraced a lot of spirituality and they had a lot of ties to ancient wisdom, and so it kind of fit the bill. And that's how I became hooked on it. And then I just, you know, I never stopped taking these different certifications and I'm still in one now. And that's how it goes.

14. Optimizing Wellness Through Meditation - with Dr. Rashmi Schramm

Arpita: Yeah. I said that's another doctor trait, right? Yeah this certification thing. But I, I wanna ask you one thing that you touched upon, like the evidence base behind it. And I can speak to that even with my own husband, you know, in the beginning there was, he meditates too now regularly, and, but in the beginning he was just, you could tell not really into it and he is one of those type of guys, he's also a physician that has to have evidence based behind what he's doing. So can you speak to that a little bit about what the evidence base is regarding meditation?

Rashmi: Yeah, for sure. There have now been thousands of studies that have been published on meditation and if you can kind of think about what happens physiologically, sometimes it's helpful to think of it that way, and then we can kind of talk about the results and so physiologically, what most of us are in most of the time is in some form of a sympathetic response, right? Whether we're at work or responding to one of the 65 things that we have to do in the next 10 minutes. Like, you know, that's just kind of a constant. And so we're, we're high alert. And it's great because we can get things done. But really if you think about physiologically all the things that are happening at that point, and you guys know this already and everybody listening knows this already, but evolutionarily we were never meant to spend this much time in the sympathetic response. And so in really very simplistic terms, you know, meditation practice moves us out of that very deliberately and puts us into the parasympathetic response. And so it increases the vagal tone. It, even in very first time beginner meditators, within just the first five minutes, the brainwaves change. So we go into alpha brainwaves and that, as we know, is incredibly healing. And so we begin to have these physiological changes that have nothing to do with the brain or the mind or our thoughts or anything like that. And so eventually, if you can kind of continue with that, we start to see what we can imagine comes out of being more in that restful state of that restful awareness state. And those are things like improved neurotransmitters that we call, you know, kind of the happy ones, right? So serotonin, norepinephrine, dopamine, I mean, really within 11 hours of one of the kinds of meditation that I teach, that's totally guided, we, you know they've published these studies shows 35- 40% increase in serotonin, in norepinephrine, in D H E A and a 60% increase in dopamine.

And so you can see what comes from those things can be more focus, less distractability improved sleep, more groundedness, all the things that we start to see at the end of that. So I hope that makes sense and really, I, when I teach this inside my groups, I talk about yes, we've got some published studies, but these practices and meditation is part of every ancient wisdom tradition, right? And so I just tend to pull from the one that I'm most attracted to that I can relate to the most. But it doesn't mean it's the only one that's there, and it's not the only valid one. And it's not like the best kind of meditation. It's just one that I can go deep in and understand and teach. So I think we're just at the tip of the iceberg. I think there's so much more that's there that we're going to understand a lot more as the years unfold.

Arpita: So do you have any insight also, like you mentioned Ayurveda, and I know like with our audience, we probably have a broad spectrum of the audience here. Can you talk a little bit about

14. Optimizing Wellness Through Meditation - with Dr. Rashmi Schramm

that? Some people may not even know what it is. Tell them how that relates to meditation and how it's kind of intertwined and incorporated with some of your programs and what you do.

Rashmi: Yeah, Ayurveda is a consciousness based healing system. It's an entire system that developed over thousands of years in India, and it is actually incredibly simple, but very, very sophisticated, a lot like meditation. And you can think of Ayurveda as the original lifestyle medicine because a lot of Ayurveda is really about lifestyle, and we look at ways to optimize mind, body, spirit, well being, in the context of environment. So in Yoga Ayurveda the environment that we're in is also part of us. And so in that way it's very, very holistic and it can also be kind of catered to individuals based on their mind, body type. And even though it might seem complicated, it's actually really, really simple once you kind of get a handle of you know, some of the basic concepts in that, and sometimes people associate like Ayurveda with like just turmeric or something, which is really funny and it's fine but, what I wanted to say about that is there is a big part of Ayurveda that uses food as medicine and uses these, you know, kind of so-called super foods right? Before we started calling them that, these foods with these huge amounts of phytonutrients in them. Really there's a big spectrum of ways that we can enhance our wellbeing if we wanna turn towards Ayurveda and food as medicine is one of those things.

Arpita: Got it. Got it. So and with, regards to this Ayurveda, I mean when we talk about all the different components of it, does Yoga Nidra, is that kind of part of either one? I remember I did a yoga Nidra session with you. The first time I did it I can't remember if it was with you or it was before you, but I had no idea what it was. And from my perspective, my layman's way of explaining it is it's a very deep meditation that you do, and a lot of times people do it before sleep and it actually gets your brain into kind of that sleep brainwave pattern. So you're really getting to be in that zone and it's just, I don't even know how to explain it, but the episodes that I've done of it are just so amazing. Almost the rush and the high you get from it afterwards. Can you speak a little bit about Yoga Nidra for me?

Rashmi: Yeah, absolutely. And yes, they're all kind of tied in together. So Yoga Nidra is one of the kinds of meditation that I teach. It's an all-time favorite. So no matter where I go or what I do, I end up leading with it because it's so much fun to do, like Arpita said, right? So yoga means union, which is mind, body, spirit; union. And Nidra just means sleep. And so really we're using these sleep states to essentially deliver ourselves into a state of consciousness that is a little bit of an altered state of consciousness and kind of come back, right? So we kind of go this full circle, and then I, I sometimes joke that it's like an Uber ride to yourself, and then you come right back. So that's where you get to bump into yourself. And some of the, some of the tools that we use in a Nidra too is we use the power of intention of planting different intentions and affirmations when we're in those really powerful states, like, you know, alpha, theta, there's even Delta that, you know, that we can catch. And so they're really programmable states and so when we can reprogram the mind in that way, it is much easier to do so than to fight sometimes with something that's really solid that's been

14. Optimizing Wellness Through Meditation - with Dr. Rashmi Schramm

conditioned for a long period of time. So we say we go past the mind in Nidra if you will, right? So we go past the mind, we go past the body. We're not trying to fly or anything like that, but it's just a fun, completely guided, beautiful experience. And so it's really challenging for physicians for sure. When I say all you have to do is nothing, it's really hard.

Arpita: Yeah. Yeah. I can see that.

Michael: It sounds impossible. So I'm so glad we're talking about this, right? Because you know, again, just like when I've heard you speak before it completely re-energizes me and wants me to get back into this to recreate the habit for myself. And so I know you had mentioned a similar journey where you were into meditation, falling in and out of it over long periods of time. And so how does somebody who doesn't have a real habit of meditating on a regular basis, what recommendations do you have about how to create the habit?

Rashmi: Yeah. So honestly I think for most folks it's giving themselves permission, right? So whether it's four minutes or five minutes a day, and that's really where we start. Like in my group or anybody that I'm working with, we really almost never start more than five minutes a day because obviously then we can bypass the amygdala. It's like, no, I don't have the time. And then in many ways, once we've given ourselves permission, we also need to understand the why. And we just talked about so many of the benefits. But one of the things that I hear over and over again that's true for me as well, is that I, I literally get the time back. It's like, what's my ROI from this time? Right? Because our time is of course, the most important thing that we have. Everything else comes and goes but it's the non-negotiable of our time. And so that's why there's so much resistance to something like this. And so once you recognize that you're in many ways kind of reverse aging, right? Like that's one of the things we didn't touch on, but we're starting to see that epigenetically. And I tend to be more productive and more focused, and I actually get more done with less mind drama when I meditate. And so that's one of the ways that I had to, when I looked at some of those studies, I had to give myself permission.

So some of those things that, you know, James Clear talks about is just start small, habit stacking, all of those things count. So I mean, that's, I still habit stack even after all these years, I still just wanna get up and have a cup of coffee because I'm obsessed with coffee. But the thing is, my deal is I'm gonna meditate before coffee. Like I don't have coffee before meditation. And so, but don't think that because it's been so many years that my brain still doesn't wanna just go straight to the coffee. It does. So, so it's just a matter of that awareness, the commitment, all of those things. The starting small, those things I think are really important.

Michael: It's interesting that you bring up James Clear because I just heard him speak about creating the habit of meditation. So just for maybe audience members that aren't familiar with James Clear. When creating a new habit, he suggests make it obvious, make it attractive, make it easy and make it,

14. Optimizing Wellness Through Meditation - with Dr. Rashmi Schramm

satisfactory. Right? Like, make it something that gives you a sense of satisfaction when it's completed. And so when he was referring to creating the habit of meditation; make it obvious. So create a space where you are like, that's the space that I meditate. Make it easy. So he was saying, you know, you mentioned four to five minutes, he was saying even a minute or two, showing up for yourself over and over again will prove to yourself, all right, it helps to shift your identity from somebody who doesn't meditate to, oh, no, I meditate. And then it's so much easier than to increase the amount of time that you meditate for. It's easy to go from two minutes or four minutes, or five minutes to 20 minutes and things like that. And then make it attractive, right? So finding a type of meditation that you truly enjoy and then make it satisfactory. Well, of course, you know, you feel so much better at the end of a meditation, so going through the first three steps can get you to the habit of wanting to go back and do it over and over again.

Arpita: Yeah, and one of the things that I had also picked up on along the way with this journey is the anchoring of it. Like, and you mentioned it a little bit with the stacking, like, I'm not gonna have my coffee before I do my meditation. And one of the ways I've done it is I recognize that in the morning I do my routine, I brush my teeth and I get ready and it's anchored to that. So part of my morning routine that I'm doing every day, no matter what is doing that meditation. So maybe picking something that you know, that you have to do every single day and just tagging it onto that as becoming part of that, even for that minute or two is just a way to maybe start trusting yourself. Like, I know I'm gonna make this commitment. I'm gonna start my minimum baseline one to two minutes a day, and then I'm gonna start trusting myself that I'm doing it cause I can see that benefit that I'm doing it every single day and say, oh, hey, yeah, I'm a badass. I can do it. I did it. Yeah. So yeah, Rashmi will tell us a little bit about your programs and what you offer to clients and, and with regards to your ME meditation and your integrative health coaching. We didn't even talk about that today. I mean, I don't, if you wanna tell us a little bit about that as well. That'd be great.

Rashmi: No, I can tell you that some of the things that I offer, so I have a small group program and this is where we do some teaching within Ayurveda and we also practice meditation and we do some coaching in there too. It's called The Power Within. I open those doors a couple times a year, and then I have a membership as well. So it's really fun. And then I also do one-on-one coaching too. And so we, you know, a lot of people who are interested in meditation, but might want some coaching come to work with me one-on-one, and is so very tailored to whatever it is that they need, that it can be a lot of fun to do the, I love doing one-on-ones but sometimes people don't wanna do real deep dives. They just wanna get like kind of a toe dipping experience, and every now and then I start to offer those as well. So a couple times a year it's called Rewire Your Brain, and it's just simply, it's just Nidra and it's just a beautiful, luscious experience. And, you know it's live but also recorded. Those are really, they're all fun. But a lot of people tend to try the rewire your brain programs first before they'll do anything else.

Arpita: Awesome. Amazing. Michael Hersh, what do you have to add? Tell me.

14. Optimizing Wellness Through Meditation - with Dr. Rashmi Schramm

Michael: I was gonna ask, so for people that are curious about getting started with meditation that are unsure of where to start, what do you recommend?

Rashmi: You know, I actually really like a lot of the apps that are there. I think that's a great place to start. I send folks there a lot. So calm, you know, 10% happier. It really depends on what you like. Most of them have like a free seven day trial. Chopra has a really good app as well, and so it, like you said, make it, you know, make it attractive. And it might take two or three of those apps to see which one you like. Sam Harris has one that's wildly popular. And so the rise of these programs tells you that there's a lot of need for it and there's a lot of kind of interest in it. But ultimately, and there was a study that was published on election day, so it did not get very much very much coverage, but it, it was a beautiful study, and I think it was in the American Journal of either psychiatry or psychology, but it was a very well-read study. I mean, it was a very well-read magazine. But they talked about, it was the the people who were in an arm of just meditation had the same results as somebody who was on an SSRI and I think they used citalopram or escitalopram, but I think it was citalopram. And one of the things that, the conclusion was that people that had the same amount of success, at least for the first eight weeks, they had a meditation teacher. And so that was one of the things that they recommended was if you can get into a program that's like interactive, you know, have a teacher even if it's you know, it's 300 people and a teacher, and you're talking to other people because again, I think it's the accountability and then I think it's, the when we kind of just fall away from it is like we might not know that it is totally fine to have a million thoughts during meditation, or we might think we have to control our thoughts or, or that we have to feel a certain way. And really in meditation, there's no judgment at all. Right? I mean, that's the whole thing is we're constantly replacing. Judgment with curiosity. Judgment with curiosity. And so sometimes it's easy to forget because we have to judge everything else or we, or at least we do judge everything else. And so when we start to judge our meditations, it, it's like, oh man, I'm, I'm never gonna get there. I'm just gonna quit. And so I think try an app first and if you can then find a meditation teacher or some kind of program that that is attractive to you.

Arpita: I'm glad you said that because that is a, a key point also that I think a lot of people don't know is that when we are meditating, it's so natural for your brain to go and think about all the other things and you just gently bring yourself back to either focusing on the breath or whatever that meditation is asking you to do with love. And I think that was like, oh, I didn't realize that that's what everybody does. It's not just me not doing this right cause I'm a screw up. It's how everybody does it, and that's how we bring ourself back. And that in and of itself is part of the exercise of it. So that was really impactful for me to recognize myself, but.

Well, Rashmi, it has been a true pleasure speaking with you today. I think that we have just kind of scratched the surface today with the basic overview to kind of let our listeners learn a little bit about this, and I'm sure we'll be having you back at some point to do a deeper dive into telling us about the science and all the other things around meditation. But tell our audience how they can get in touch

14. Optimizing Wellness Through Meditation - with Dr. Rashmi Schramm

with you. What, what are your website, your handles, et cetera, et cetera. All the things that they can reach out to you if they wanna learn more.

Rashmi: Yeah. Thank you. So actually I've got quite a lot of free meditations that are all evidence-based on my YouTube channel. So if you just go to YouTube and you type in my name, that'll pop up for you. So you can really kind of get started right this very instant. And some are very short and some are, you know, a little bit longer so that is one way. My website is optimal wellness md.org. I have a free meditation download there as well. On Instagram where I'm most active, I'm just, you know, my name is Dr. And then Rashmi Schramm, I'm also on Facebook as well, so I'd love to connect.

Arpita: Wonderful.

Michael: And we will make sure to have all of that linked in the show notes so that people can find you. I think this is, has been incredible and like I've already said, I think it's already inspired me to get back into meditation and we just want to thank you so much for being here, for sharing your wisdom with us. It's been great chatting with you today.

Rashmi: I am so grateful to be here. Thank you.

Arpita: Yay. Thank you, Rashmi. I can't wait to see you in person again.

Rashmi: Same.

Arpita: All right.

Michael: Bye.