



[00:00:00] Intro

Darin: You are listening to the Darin Olien Show. I'm Darin. I spent the last 20 years devoted to improving health, protecting the environment, and finding ways to live a more sustainable life. In this podcast, I have honest conversations with people that inspire me. I hope that through their knowledge and unique perspectives they'll inspire you too. We talk about all kinds of topics, from camping up your diets to improving your well-being to the mind-blowing stories behind the human experience and the people that are striving to save us and our incredible planet. We even investigate some of the life's fatal conveniences, those things that we are told might be good for us but totally aren't. So here's to making better choices in the small tweaks in your life that amount to big changes for you and the people around you and the planet. Let's do this. This is my show, the Darin Olien Show.

[00:01:11] Guest Intro

Darin: Hey, everybody. Welcome to the show. Thanks for tuning in. This is a great episode. I'm stoked you're here. This is an emerging time, new year. Come on. We have to focus on what's good in our lives, full of gratitude, full of what we can do. There is so much we can do to improve our health, to improve our life, and to move forward. So everything you're putting in your mouth, every circle of people you're surrounding yourself with or that you're surrounded by the choices we can make, the chemicals we can avoid from all these fatal conveniences, there's so much we can do to improve our lives and especially staying away from mainstream media, staying away from thinking that governments and politicians have your best interest. I think we absolutely know that that does not exist. Our whole democracy is shaking. I don't care who is up front. Everyone is inauthentic from my point of view. So let's go inside. Let's be authentic and express that in the world, in actions that support your health, your life and the environment and do good in the world, be kind, be kind to humans as we move forward so that we can truly live a super life. That's what it's all about. That's what I'm all about. And that's what my guests are all about. And I love this next guest, Dr. Uma Naidoo, is an M.D. She wrote this incredible book we talk a little bit about, This Is Your Brain On Food, who we are really now talking about the things that intersect between how you feel, how your body's working, how your brain's working, and what you're putting in your mouth. Well, I could have talked to her forever. She's got this incredible background. She's a Michelin starred chef, but also has got this Harvard-trained psychiatry background. So as you can see now, this intersection between food and psychiatry in the brain, then a professional chef and also nutrition specialist. So she took what she was doing in the world in loving food. And she has this background of how these interactions work within the brain from the nutrition standpoint. She is internationally recognized as a medical pioneer by her colleagues, Wall Street Journal, ABC News, Harvard Health Group, GOUP, many others. She's been all over the world impacting food, the mood, mental health conditions, but she's the first hospital based clinical service in nutritional psychology in the US. So that is really exciting. She's director of Nutritional and Lifestyle Psychiatry at Massachusetts General Hospital. This woman is no joke. This woman is a bad ass. I love her. She is so great, so sweet but yet, she's got all this background. She has many awards, American Psychiatric Association, leader in this



development of physicians and scientists at Harvard. I tell you what, looking into all conditions, especially ADHD, OCD, anxiety and depression disorders. So you have to tune in. This mental health episode is specific around how powerful food is, how powerful nutrients are, how powerful nutrition is. And I just really enjoyed this conversation. So please enjoy this incredible conversation with this incredible woman, Dr. Uma Naidoo.

[00:05:09] First Part of Interview

Darin: Really excited for this conversation because I think your work, the Harvard trained psychiatrist, but now kind of this nutritional aspect as being a chef, and you're really this interesting blend of really taking food as medicine to this interesting and next level. And I just love all of the different aspects that you really get into from depression, from PTSD to this interaction that we have to many other subjects and anxiety, especially now more than ever with your background of being trained in all of these different ways. It's like you're kind of the perfect person to start having a very clear and intellectual but common sense approach to like, we've all heard this, we've all want, not that we want to believe it. We know on a deep level, but you're actually breaking it down and doing the research and taking the colours of fruit and understanding and vegetables and really making an argument that it really is medicine. And so this incredible book, and I've got most of the way through it, but I've got to certainly got a stack of books lately. So This Is Your Brain On Food, what an accomplishment. Congratulations.

Dr. Uma: Thank you. It means a lot.

Darin: I'm so curious when that kind of light bulb moment happened? Was that even before psychiatry? Was that during it? Was it after studies? I'm curious as to when that epiphany moment happened for you about how powerful food is on the brain and the body?

Dr. Uma: Thank you. And firstly, thank you for hosting me and for your kind words about the book. You're actually taking away exactly what I intend for any person reading it, which is that it's about making sensible connections, but not just rolling your eyes when the doctor or nutritionist tells you to eat salad. There are actual reasons for the colors of the rainbow and the salad. But to answer your question, Darin, the light bulb moment about putting together the power of nutrition with mental wellbeing happened early on when I was a very young resident at Harvard and a patient yelled at me for telling me that I caused him to gain weight. Yes, it is a side effect of the medication, but I knew from the medical record in front of me that he had already been slightly overweight when he came to see me and a few weeks later the medication was not the cause. And in that moment, being a newbie and not wanting to be yelled at by anyone and wanting my patients to like me, I glanced at what he was drinking and he brought in this 20-ounce Dunkin Donuts coffee famous in the far north east and originated somewhere outside of Boston. And I said, oh, by the way, [00:08:28] is a distraction but also it occurred to me in that moment, I said, "Well, that's interesting you say that. You're right, it is a side effect of this medication, but let's also talk about what you're eating, for example, what's in your coffee." And then he broke it down. And in that moment, what I realized is it was an opening to a conversation. We were able to work out together that he had about a quarter couple more of



creamer. So not cream or some other form. Actual creamer, which is processed then about six to eight teaspoons of sugar in that. And he had maybe one and a half of those a day. And I was able to quickly work with him online on my desktop and say, "Well, let's just look at the nutrients that you're taking in in this coffee and how many over a week you'd be consuming from the added sugar and the processed ingredients." And that was for me was a very important moment because when I could reach him and he said, "Oh, you know, what you're saying makes sense." I could break it down in a way that was sensitive to him. He understood it through the coffee, and the nutrients in the food. He didn't have to know any hard-core nutritional science. I realized that for mental health where there are so many unfortunate side effects to medications that can also be lifesaving people needed more, more tools in their tool belt to feel emotionally well if they had to take medication and some people don't. So that to me really signified a change in how I was thinking. Of course, I came to that with growing up Hindu and having this holistic background and medical doctors as well as I have medical practitioners in the family. So I had that mindset. But at the same time, that was a moment when I felt I could connect the dots for someone and it made a difference. And I began to improve that more and more of my conversation and studying because there's a huge deficit in learning nutrition in medical school.

Darin: Well, that's amazing to be able to because it's all about how does this apply to me? And if people don't truly understand that, it is hard for them to make the association of what harm am I doing by these habits that I'm in. And so you were able to with this one patient. You were able to go like, here's how much sugar you're taking in, here's how much coffee, here's the detriment, here's the maybe even toxic load, the preservatives from the creamer's, all of that stuff. And so there's an art to of communicating that. And what was that you think that patient, what was their light bulb moment? Just really seeing the data kind of in their face and then being able to--

Dr. Uma: That's a great question because it points to probably the reason I ultimately wrote the book. It was interpreting that data. It was the fact that people look at food labels and don't know that 4 grams is one teaspoon, so 4 grams of sugar is one teaspoon. Just simple things that help people connect the dots because when we cook and bake, we use pounds and ounces in this country. So people are confused when they look at the food label, and we never think about that. So just that connection for him and making it common sense like, oh, that makes sense, doc, because that's 8 teaspoons of sugar. I wouldn't usually put eight teaspoons of sugar, but when you count and break down the number of packets I use, that makes sense to me. And for him, it was not so much. I guess for him, he realized there was one habit that he could change a little bit, tweak to make a difference in the fact that he noticed he had been gaining weight. And it was one of the factors diet was another, but that was one very big habit, was a daily habit that he could tweak. And for him, it was doable. Providing information made it actionable for him. And that, I think, is what the power of food is for many.

Darin: If someone is nutrient starved and essentially maybe toxic exposure and then they switch to an abundance of plant based micronutrients, et cetera, it's a hell of a switch. And it's amazing how powerful of a switch that is. And if people would understand that and I think what you're saying is so true. And I think it's the biggest challenge I think as professionals we all have is how do you then make it so personal, but yet less inconvenient to make the tweak. So for you, so



you use that word tweak. So what was that tweak that allowed him to say, hey, I'm not giving up all of this, but I'm doing enough to steer my life in a different direction to receive some benefit? What's your what's your approach with him? But also what's your approach as a general population?

Dr. Uma: Sure. So I think we can use him as a great example because that principle applies to a lot of people. I asked him what was more important to him because I said to him, I explained to him what the power and impact of the negative nutrients in what he was eating were. And he decided that and I hoped he would, but I kept quiet and let him decide because autonomy is an important part of this process psychologically because let's face it, we don't like to be told what to do, and a prescription pad does that. The power of the prescription pad that I have respected but at the same time, I know it's difficult for people is here, take this. And it's it's something you don't feel you have power over whereas food, you do. So I hope secretly he would pick sugar, but I let him decide.

Darin: So unpacking that a little bit. What did you say? Like you added up the week's worth of sugar. And for everyone listening, unpack that. We can easily go, it's bad, but what did you say and what would you say to people about all the sugar that they're--

Dr. Uma: Sure. So I broke it down into-- he worked in construction. And so it is very important for him to have a large coffee in the morning and the soda of 4 3/4 size in the afternoon because he would keep going to like 6 or 7 PM. We broke down the amount of liquid, then from the liquid of coffee, the amount of creamer. And it ended up being about almost 3/4 of a cup of creamer for the day. So the calories in that. And then we Googled the type of creamer that was being used or one that was similar. And we looked quickly at the nutrients, and I should say they're enough nutrients, but we looked it in together. Then we looked at, well, how many grams of sugar in a teaspoon, and I taught him that. And I said, well, if you're putting X number of these packets in, this is the number of grams of sugar and that's how many teaspoons it is. And then we convert that to calories. Now, I'm not a big calorie counter, but I think what makes sense for people is when you break it down and show them how many teaspoons they're consuming and what is the recommendation by the World Health or the American Cardiac Association or American Heart Association, and sort of provide some guidelines and say, what do you think you can do with this that's reasonable? Now, that being said, I don't necessarily want them to say, "Yes, doc, I'll take a sweetener," because there are problems with many of the sweeteners as well. So he was able to have smaller cups of coffee and he started to cut back on sugar on his own because less sugar, less coffee at one time, less calories in was okay for him. He didn't feel he maybe, if I recall correctly, this is a while back, but he stood up that large coffee into three smaller cups. He consumed less sugar and he started to cut back on his sugar slowly and steadily immediately. So by the next visit, he was really counting the number of packets that went in and he was doing it slowly so that he didn't have any sort of anxiety from the withdrawal from sugar. And we did it in an incremental way. And that principle is how I work with people and in a more of a personalized plan because of the mostly unique microbiome we have with whatever foods they're willing to switch. So after they discuss with me what the problem spots are, we also focus about the positives and try to bring those together. And then have some



simple concrete steps that they need to really buy into because if not, they're not going to do it when they leave my office and that I've learned over time.

[00:17:30]

Darin: Hey, what do you use on your skin? I use this incredible product, The Good, from Caldera Lab. Its lightweight serum is made of 27 active plant botanicals that are organic and wild harvested. Yes, this is my ideal serum for my face. Just a small amount every night after washing my face, and it's all it takes to have this great skin. It smells good, it feels good. It helps tackle dry skin without being oily, wrinkles, scarring. It really does keep my skin looking young as I absolutely feel from the inside. Got to try this stuff. Go to calderalab.com/darin or use the discount code, all caps, DARIN, at the checkout for 20% off your first order of The Good. If you don't like it, guess what? They will give you a full freaking refund. So invest in it, invest in your skin and your health and it's easy. Guys, go get some.

[00:18:53] Secondn Part of the Interview

Darin: At any point, did you or was it obvious to him the detriments of sugar itself? Did you hammer any of that point home of like, listen, sugars are hammering your insulin, beating up your adrenals? Did you get into another brain and microbiome stuff? Did you mention any of that to him or was he already on board?

Dr. Uma: He was on board with the complaint that he came in with, which is I caused him to gain weight. That was his complaint. And I knew from his baseline weight that he was carrying a few extra pounds. So I didn't want to argue that because the facts were in front of me, but I respected the fact that he was upset. And I think it's also important to meet someone where they act and to be respectful because no one wants to walk and chew. I think about myself, I don't want to feel judged. Even during the pandemic, people worried about what they're eating. If we can just step away from the judgment and try to make healthy tweaks, I think we can have healthier relationships with ourself. And what he was able to do was buy in to the fact that sugar cause weight gain. He understood that fact. And it wasn't that he wasn't smart or couldn't understand the microbiome. I bolted him slowly, which is the short answer to your question. I started off with that and I said, look, if that's your complaint, then I think the one thing you can do, because I know this medication, he was he was moderately depressed. He needed a medication. And his functioning was starting to be lowered. And that, to me, was a sign that he wasn't coping. So I said, why don't we at least give you a trial of this medication? But let's also tweak this because that will help you. That combined with increasing his actual exercise and starting to slowly build in what he was doing in terms of his diet. So instead of eating fast foods because he was on a construction site and one person would do a run at lunchtime and buy a ton of fast food. I started to break down that slowly, but we did it incrementally. So, A, he didn't feel judged because he was leaving for worked at 4:30 in the morning. So taking care of a family and trying to say, oh, make a green salad and go to work. It wasn't practical. You've got to understand who you're working with, but he could make a tweak around. Well, instead of having all the guys just go order that fast food because I then started to explain to him what is a fast



food, can we go to this other location and get a healthier meal, something like a side of vegetables with, you know, some healthy protein that he ate. He ate chicken. So it was something he could do or even something simple that may not be the perfect meal, but a supermarket rotisserie chicken with some vegetables because they could eat that. They could eat that where they were at. They didn't need a lot of fanfare to do it. And I think it's about finding something a person understands. They link it to something important. With him, it was weight loss. And then what can they do that's practical because you can give people lists and food lists and patients come in and say, I've gotten these lists and those lists and I can't follow, what am I supposed to eat? Which also made me feel that information had to be digestible. So know the science, know that there is science behind it, but this is what it actually means. So in the book, I break it down into foods that you should embrace and foods that you want to stay away from because people don't realize they think they're coming off sugar and they go to an artificial sweetener and they could be more anxious. So things like that that I think helped to connect the dots.

Darin: I realised that the health journey in reality, all of our health journey, I don't care who you are, if it's me, if it's you, if it's some other expert, it's still a journey.

Dr. Uma: Absolutely a journey.

Darin: So people look at me and like, oh, my God, I could never eat that way. Well, if you look 20 years ago, myself would have said I could never eat that way either. But it's that journey and it's important that we give ourselves the time. And then I like, for some reason, the word tweak. Really, it's a nice way of moving in the right direction without creating overwhelmed.

Dr. Uma: You're exactly right because I feel that some of the complaints coming into me with individuals struggling with just not feeling good emotionally was I have this list or I have this that I'm supposed to do. I'm supposed to follow this exercise plan or my other doctor said, do this. And they come in with list, so coming now with things on their phone and it's beyond overwhelming. It's like I can't do it. Or they do it religiously for a week. And I think we are sort of as a nation, we want a quick fix, we want something to happen. We're kind of impatient. And I do understand that, but I think you're absolutely right, Darin, with the health journey, everyone starts somewhere, including myself. I'm by no means perfect, but it's what can I do? What little bit can I do differently today to make it better? You're absolutely right about the microbiome because I say to people, you know, in a 24-hour period, research has shown that if you're going to the fast food restaurant every day versus the healthiest salad or healthier meal, you're going to impact those gut bacteria today, right now, in 24 hours. You won't feel it immediately, but it will show up. So it's exactly those tweaks that you're referring to that start to happen immediately and then show up in our health profiles a few weeks later.

Darin: What are some of the most alarming things in that from those studies and your experience when someone's eating just horribly from the immediate impact to the long term, what are the what are the biggest kind of red flags that you see in that research?



Dr. Uma: So I think to start off with, I think when someone say following the fast food lane that they start to report that they just physically don't feel well. They don't feel well after a meal. They're exhausted. They can't function. And, you know, initially they satiated, they've eaten a meal and they're fine, but then it starts to show up. I think over time, the biggest thing that I see is what are signs of dysbiosis of gut inflammation. So it might be a worsening of symptoms of anxiety, direct correlation to processed vegetable oils, which are frequently used in fast food preparation because they are inexpensive, but that is one of many examples. So worsening of symptoms of mood. If they have ADHD, the processed foods, coloring, dyes don't help them either. So not able to focus, not able to function as well as they were. The problem is that the longer term effects are actually the most serious because longer term, the brain inflammation and ultimately the effect of what do we care about in longevity is that we have our minds that we can think that we know what's going on. The saddest thing is, is sort of losing a sense of who we are because of our cognition changing. Ultimately, one of the things that happens is that the brain cells are affected in a negative way. And the quick sugar rush that people get from that say, sugary doughnut, yeah, actually, they do feel good, but it's the long term effect that's a problem because insulin gets stimulated and all of that feeds back in a negative way to the brain. And ultimately, you know, one of the things that sugar does is it affects cognition. So the added and refined sugars are just not good for us. So that's the long term effect, but the immediate effect can be those signs or the feelings that basically they got becoming inflamed and then feeding back to the brain.

Darin: Certainly now, because of the strange world that we're living in, anxiety at a global population is at all time high. Depression is at all time high. Certainly, if you're already depressed, you're more depressed. And there are two choices, you're either going to use this opportunity to take care of yourself or you're just going to keep pouring gasoline on your fire that's already happening. What are some things that people can do, like if they're listening to this and they are bummed out, they are sad. They're thrown around by COVID. They're up and down with the election. And certainly that's like a macrocosm of the up and down that's going on with what you're putting in your mouth. So what do you think are some powerful kind of sovereignty choices from a food perspective? People can take like we're depressed. Let's start there maybe.

Dr. Uma: So there are some foods that really target depression, but there are also some building blocks that while they can help depression, anxiety and many other things, they will start to rebuild that important microbiome, as well as just help general healthfulness. I call those more of the pillars of mental health. Those are things that we covered a little earlier, like eating the color of the rainbow and why. Challenging people to eat as many colors of fruits and vegetables and have adequate servings in a day. We worry about protein in this country, but we're sadly lacking in fiber. Most Americans are just not getting enough fiber in their diet and you can't get it from animals or seafood protein. You have to get it from fruit, vegetables, beans and seeds, legumes, healthy whole grains if you consume them. So just paying attention to the color of the rainbow and the antioxidants and polyphenols just by the range of colors you're eating brings back biodiversity at your gut. So that's a simple thing any one of us could do today. And if you don't have access to fresh farm, fresh foods or a good supermarket, you can even



get frozen because in this country, frozen foods are fresh frozen and pretty much frozen at their peak. So as long as there's no added sugar, syrup, source of sodium, you're good and you can eat those. But the other one is really paying attention to prebiotic foods. Again, these feed the gut. Prebiotic foods, [00:29:23] family. Lots of other vegetables, onions, garlic, leaks, just add them to your food on a regular basis. And then the category that matches that are probiotics if you take a supplement but fermented foods. You can get probiotics and dairy and non-dairy yogurt. That's a good building block. Just get them unsweetened and unfruited. And then miso, kombucha, kefir, all of those are fermented foods which really feed those good microbes in your gut. And that's what you want to be doing all the time because you want your immunity to be optimal at this point. But you also want any type of healing of your gut to happen. So right there, you can add yogurt into your diet. You can add fermented foods to your salads. You can add more vegetables right now today to what you're eating and in any one of your meals. So those are some of the building blocks. And then the principal is sort of eat the orange, skip the straw-bought orange juice. Just highlighting the fact that you need to know there are now close to 250 other names for sugar on food labels. So knowing where your sugar is and the added sugars becomes really important, especially at this time. So that's just another one. And then when it comes to targeting depression, omega three fatty acids, people have heard about the supplement, but you can also eat good sources of salmon and other fatty fish, sardines and anchovies and things like that. There are few more that you can eat. And if you don't eat seafood, you can get the shorter chain from things like chia seeds, flax seed, basil seeds, sea algae. And I have a little bit of a hack for that because it turns out that that's the food chain Omega three. And our bodies are not that efficient at converting it to the long chain that you would get from salmon, but curcumin and turmeric can help you. So just add that into, say, a chia pudding that you're making to help along that conversion for your body should you not eat seafood. So that's one good category to focus on. Then another one that people tend to ignore are spices. So things like turmeric and saffron have actually shown in studies of depression to help. Saffron because of the quantity used in how we eat. You might want to talk to your doctor about a supplement for that. Those are two ones to really focus on. And turmeric always add that pinch of black pepper because it gets more bioactive. So a good one there. Then there are whole category of B vitamin foods, vitamin C rich foods, magnesium rich foods, all of which bring back healthy nutrients of folate and leafy greens. It turns out that it actually interacts with certain gut bacteria which are good to improve your mood. And there've been studies that have compared the use of a probiotic supplement compared to antidepressant medication. So I'm not just glibly saying, you know, eat more probiotics, it's actually been shown in research. So those are some ways to just get started right now today with building up that almost fortifying your brain against a lower mood or kind of feeling blue.

Darin: And I think it's so important for this kind of message to be out, because we do tend to want that one supplement, that one thing that's going to change all this, but it's never that. We can't reduce that down any more. We have to start with these foundational things. And like you said, there are so many of these foundational things that are going to help you right now, as well as build that foundation and let your body become more optimized in those things. And turmeric is such a great example of this almost utility knife, you know what I mean? Obviously, the



curcumins lowering inflammation, the tumors. And the curcumin is shown to be neurodegenerative in terms of increasing--

Dr. Uma: Yes, it's multifactorial. I'm excited you said that because it's one of my favorites because it hits the high notes on so many things. And it's so simple to incorporate. No one is saying you have to cook. You can add it to super smoothie or a tea. It's easily done with a pinch of black pepper.

Darin: Yeah, if people don't like the taste at all, there's some people that are just like, no, I can't do it. There's veggie caps and throw it in and you can get around that. It's just one of those things. You don't have to cycle it. You're not going to build up an intolerance to it that we know. And you can have it on a daily basis. And there's so many beautiful--

Dr. Uma: So many good benefits. I love to game a fight for people because that's another way you're asking about how to engage people and it's challenging people to challenge themselves, but making it fun and not making it boring. How many types of greens? How many types of colors can you add to your plate today? Challenge yourself every day to up your game on that. How many different types of nuts, seeds, whatever it is? So that way it becomes interesting and engaging and people feel that they are empowered by making that choice. And they feel like part of the solution rather than being told to do this and do that.

Darin: I really wish people would understand this cross section, this understanding that really the colors and the antioxidants and the phytonutrients and the anthocyanins, all of this stuff literally is medicine that keeps in the synergy between plants and us, which is just a miracle that we consume this and it supports our living.

Dr. Uma: It supports our living and it supports our mental health, which is the point you're making. Now I have a come back for my patients to come in and roll their eyes when I talk about salad because now I can immediately start saying unlike, you know, when I first started, well, here's why this is the most kind of research, and I'm not just saying eat your greens. And if they don't want to eat them, I'll say, well, at least start by putting them in a smoothie. It's better than nothing. You don't get the exact nutrient value, but still, at least you're consuming the greens and then work towards that salad or even soup like you said that you can eat.

[00:36:00] 121 Tribe Ad

Darin: So for years, maybe most of my life, people have been asking me, "What kind of foods do you eat? What kind of exercises do you do? What kind of water should I drink?" All of these things and so much more we put into a 21-day program so that can take you through a theme every day of knowledge, action, and then eating these delicious meals, working out, getting support, anchoring in these new habits so you can do what? So that you can kick ass. So you have the energy, the vitality to live the kind of life that you really want. That's what it's all about. So all in this app, we have grocery lists, we have education about real hydration and what greater oxygenation and the balance of alkalization. All of these things we are diving into as you're heading down this hero's journey of implementation into a new life to give you the kind of



life that you actually want. So join my Tribe. All you have to do is go 121tribe.com. Sign up, and you get three free days. Join me on this hero's journey. Join the Tribe.

[00:37:25] Third Part of Interview

Darin: Let's get into, because this is a big one right now, let's get into anxiety. So, I mean, obviously I would imagine the foundations are pretty similar.

Dr. Uma: Similar foundations. What I think really matters with anxiety are the things to avoid. And the reason I start with those is sometimes people don't realize what they're consuming, which is driving a worsening anxiety. Now, I know you won't be surprised by the added sugar one, but studies actually link it to worsening anxiety. And my biggest concern with this is people hear us talking today or they read something on the news and they give up sugar immediately. That's not the idea because when you do overnight go from a candy bar Twinkie diet, no judgment, I'm just saying, if that's what you're having and you stop eating it the next day, your body is needing that, that suddenly doing without that sugar, and I've seen people actually develop anxiety and panic disorder over time like within a few days of that type of change. So you want to be careful with things like even with caffeine. If you're coming off caffeine, just just do it slowly. So I'm not saying-- my tweak for that is actually start eating healthier fruits. My favorite are sort of lower glycemic fruits. And instead of eating the candy bars, try to have your sugar in a healthier way. So that's the first one. The next one is the processed vegetable oils. So certain restaurants as well as fast food, just be aware of where they are because they will drive anxiety. Anxiety also was linked to gluten. So some people who may be suffering may want to think about where they're getting their sources of gluten, where they are consuming them and cut back slowly and notice to see the biggest thing to pay attention to with this is partly intelligence. Because if you're noticing some change that's going to make the difference to you, and then you want to cut back on that. And my top three things to include are turmeric with black pepper has shown to hit the high notes, like you said, just easy to do in most things, the omega 3s again. So sources of fatty fish for the plant based sources and then vitamin D rich foods are going to help you along with anxiety. And then simple things that we know about and have read about or seen, but just incorporating them again, things like camomile tea. We talked about some of the pillars. But one of the things that I say to people with anxiety is fiber is your friend. And the reason I say that we've touched on the fact that we don't get enough fiber in this country. But fiber, basically, like you mentioned, the types of vegetables we put in soup over the winter, those actually are more complex in terms of the carbohydrate load. And so they break down more slowly. So fiber is your friend because it stabilizes your insulin and your blood sugar level. It actually works in a good way with your gut microbes to help them thrive. So adding more fibre to your diet will be more fulling, more satiating, ease off your blood sugar and actually will help anxiety. So it's another one to think about just adding in as much as you can.

Darin: Well, I think I mean, if we took the emphasis on protein and switched it to fiber, our society would completely change.



Dr. Uma: Absolutely. The metabolics in this country would change. I couldn't agree with you more. So if we just made that switch, it would really help us out.

Darin: You and I create a new kind of movement. So you're all hearing at right now. Every time you think about protein, think about fiber. Don't worry about the protein, you'll get enough. Do the diversification. It's in everything. No one's died of a protein deficiency in the modern world. So switch to fiber. Where can I get the fiber? What kind of fiber? And then that's going to switch you off of this over stimulation of trying to get more protein that doesn't have any fiber in it, as opposed to a wide variety of plants, greens, nuts, seeds, legumes, and just go. I'm going to create that. We're going to create that.

Dr. Uma: I love that. I'm with you on that. I love it because I feel exactly the same. If we just made that that week, we would start to move away from the triad of insulin resistance, inflammation and the sort of obesity epidemic. And again, it comes back to a fundamental. Let's stop worrying about our protein and worry about fiber. Let's worry about that.

Darin: That's it. So I will get a whole new plan. Yeah, we've got a whole new plan. It's a re-education too because who knows where the hell this came from, if it's athletes, if it's just this, I don't know. I actually haven't looked at who the hell started this whole thing and how is it still around?

Dr. Uma: And I think that that goes back to this idea of fundamental building blocks. Because with every new era or dietary plan or fad that passes through the country, we tend to fall into these different camps. So with mental well-being, it doesn't really matter what I eat, it really does matter what someone comes into my office eating, whether it's a carnival diet or vegan diet, which is why even in my recipes, I always have options to what people can do so that they can get the best benefit out of like the guy with the Dunkin Donuts coffee. You know, let's tweak it along so that you get to a healthier version that is going to give you some benefit versus the weight gain. I want to step back a second in terms of what you said about the sugar. So when you're at this level of processed sugar, I love that idea of just, okay, you're still going to get sugar, but it's going to be in the whole food form. And this rang true because you're a psychiatrist. So I'm listening to it a little bit through that lens. And it makes sense because sugar is essentially a drug, caffeine is essentially a drug, classified as a drug. So it's like if you're doing a high amounts of sugar and high amounts of caffeine, you do have to give yourself this time to transition. And then again, what you've kind of created here is these tweaks that are profound, that are also not profound and the overwhelm of the psychology of someone that allows them to move and allows their chemistry and their metabolism and their brain chemistry to change over time.

Dr. Uma: That's it. I mean, that should be the tagline because it's the individuals, to be honest, who struggle, who want the quick fix and feel that it just won't work. This won't work because it's going to take too long. But the problem is when they try to switch eight habits at the same time, the habit change doesn't click in. But if they tweak them over time, even if it takes a week up to three weeks or four weeks, but they've changed three or four simple habits, you know, eat more



fiber, eat more vegetables, whichever one it is, it really clicks in. And then it becomes the idea is to move it from a habit to part of your lifestyle so that it's just natural to what you're doing every day. And if I eat eggs, I'm going to add veggies to my omelet. If I consume dairy, I'm going to get the source of dairy and I'm going to add berries and cinnamon. It just becomes almost routine, not boring and not without flavor and taste. I care about that. But diversification and just part of almost your new food language is what it is. It's about embracing it and not feeling deprived. And it goes back to that protein fiber part where we're always worried we're missing something and you're right, protein, calorie, malnutrition is not rampant in this country. We're not suffering from that. We're suffering on the other end of the spectrum. And if we just embraced what it is and don't feel that we're depriving ourselves, but we're embracing it. But it does take an evolution or a thoughtfulness or maybe even an understanding of oneself to make that decision because if not, people look at you, you don't need this so why can't that. And I think when they get into that cycle, they just have to find the part within themselves that's ready to change and embrace that first change that they're willing to make. But it does start to click in when they notice a difference emotionally. When they start to feel lighter, better, more satiated, less brain fog, thinking more clearly then those changes really click in.

Darin: And I think those small, little small tweaks that we can make, like just one. Just lowering the amount of sugar and still having your coffee and all that stuff. And then that can give you kind of this other boost and this other energy. Is there anything in terms of the emotional space or aspects of what you think would be powerful for someone to ask themselves to go inward, to maybe start to extract? What are some of those things that you have to kind of get in there and kind of maybe create a wedge of awareness, potentially?

Dr. Uma: Exactly. I think people are very used to talking to their doctors or talking to their nutritionist or a specialist about the family history of diabetes, or some in my family is obese and worried about cholesterol. No one's talking about the brain, the most important organ. And I think that where it starts is it's most like what matters to you. What truly in this moment right now matters to you? And I'm speaking about something that's related to yourself. I'm not talking about the natural concerns that anyone has in the outer world and really talking about your in a world. And if there's something that's troubling you, that's bothering you, paying attention when it comes to food or nutrients or anything you're consuming or drinking, paying attention to body intelligence is one of the most powerful things we can do because when you eat something or drink something and you don't feel good, why are you ignoring it? You know, like you just said, your body's telling you something. Pay attention to it because it's a message. You're there. You're experiencing that emotion and that feeling, whether it's feeling foggy, whether it's feeling exhaustion after meals, bloated, gassy, uncomfortable, a headache, a dry mouth. Whatever those sensations are, pay attention. And that should lead you to what it is. And sometimes it's a healthy food because of our microbiome and the reason I'm saying this is our microbiome is so mostly unique that it might be that you need some gut healing before you can eat that food again. So don't be dissuaded by it. Just take a step back, pay attention to what your body is saying, and then try a different diversity of foods, different types of added fiber that will help you. You know, of course, if you see a gastroenterologist and you have conditions like IBS and ulcerative colitis and things like that, you may have to adjust what you eat based on what your



doctor is telling you. But for many of us who do not have those issues, just pay attention to your body and start there because ignoring those symptoms and ignoring those feelings is taking us further away from the truth. No doctor can tell you, oh, that's how you feel. You can tell yourself how you feel and then report it to someone. And I would definitely start there.

Darin: It's such a powerful aspect that I think people blow off. And, you know, there's no one closer to you than you, and that's it. And it is amazing. And I think people get confused. It's not just feeling bad from bad food. You can be reacting to all kinds of "healthy food." And we go back to lack of a diversity, if you've been eating almond butter, even though almond butter's great or almonds and you've been eating them every day for the last two years, you can definitely build up a resistance or have a bacteria that accumulates over time and rejects or whatever it is. But then going back to healing the gut lining, I mean, I don't know what you see out there, but man, I see the list of food allergies and food sensitivities only going up.

Dr. Uma: Absolutely.

Darin: And it's not necessarily just about that food. It's about the breakdown, the gut lining.

Dr. Uma: Or dysbiosis from something else. Stress is one cause. I think you've really hit on something important. It's knowing what we're doing in our bodies. And sometimes you're right, someone's consuming a healthy food. Speaking to the mostly unique microbiome, I evaluated a woman about two months ago and she came in with her daughter. And just because we were having the conversation together, they shared that to the exact same healthy food, they had opposite reactions. And so that just proves this point. And I also have individuals who come in and complain that lentils and beans are uncomfortable for them, not just the usual sort of gassiness that we expect because of the nutrients in them, but just uncomfortable. And sometimes it's not that it's the actual food, it's that they need some level of gut healing or some type of space. I don't necessarily believe in excluding foods if you don't have to, especially whole healthy foods, but maybe some time out from that food, eat some other biodiversity foods like he's talking about and reintroduce them at another point because you're right, I've never heard of as many food allergies as people walk around with these days, and it's sort of scary.

Darin: It's very scary. And it just keeps adding up and adding up and adding up. And this is even such a great conversation.

Dr. Uma: Loved it.

Darin: There's PTSD, there's ADHD. But ultimately, those things are foundational to-- I've worked with a lot of veterans over the years and it's literally you start kind of the same way. You always start with these foundational principles because, again, you can't just show up with a squirt gun to a forest fire. You have to get support from this holism that I think we've gotten away from.

Dr. Uma: Absolutely. And then with the different conditions, with ADHD and PTSD, there are even more slight tweaks like I did with depression and anxiety, like we spoke about that there



are more specific foods and some research behind them. But you're absolutely right. We all start with these basic building blocks because we're ignoring the brain in this conversation and we care about our weight, we care about our cholesterol, but we're not caring about our brain. And that's where this conversation is important. And then you tweak a little bit around foods to avoid in PTSD, foods to avoid in, you know, ADHD and that kind of stuff. But it starts with the same basic principles and paying attention, like you said, about the intelligence.

Darin: Yeah, amazing, Dr. Uma, this has been so great. I mean, everyone listening, this is such a beautiful way to make those changes over the long haul and actually have the changes. And so I want everyone to check out her book, *This Is Your Brain On Food*. And you can literally look because we're all on the spectrum on some degree. Yeah, we go through a depression, we go through anxiety. We all have PTSD from relationships or, you know, I lost my house and there might be a little PTSD in there. So it's like we all have this.

Dr. Uma: In some form.

Darin: Exactly. But I love this because it really gets us out of reductionism, even in the supplement world that can be reduced down to take this molecule, take this thing and take all this other stuff away when that is important because there are compounds that really do support different, but we can't think that one thing is going to help everything.

Dr. Uma: It's putting it together like a plate of food and filling in the gaps when we need with supplements as well. So it's been an absolute pleasure. I really appreciated your questions and your insights.

Darin: For sure. And what would you say aside from reading your book because I think it's phenomenal, what would you say for people right now in this uncertain time? What would you say to them right now in terms of advice?

Dr. Uma: I would say that we could see this as a really difficult time, and it is. I'm not minimizing or not acknowledging that, but we can also see it as a moment to reset where we are somewhat secluded, isolated from others, some people in lockdown in certain countries. But it could also be something we take for a moment of self care, reflection, thinking about one thing we might change for the good, one thing we might give up that's not doing any good in terms of what we're eating. So I would encourage people to worry less about what's obvious and difficult out there right now. We know that. We know that we're paying attention, but take a moment as well to pay attention to yourself and how you can use this moment to reset if you can.

Darin: Yeah, pay attention to ourselves I think is a very important thing rather than being reacted or reacting to all of these things. Thank you so much. This was so great.

Dr. Uma: Thank you. I really enjoyed speaking to you. It is such a pleasure.

[00:56:34] Generic Outro



Darin: What a fantastic episode. So tell me, what is one thing you got out of today's conversation? If this episode struck a chord with you and you want to dive a little deeper into my other conversations with incredible guests, you can head over to my website, darinolien.com for more episodes and in-depth articles. Keep diving my friends. Keep diving.

[00:57:11] Amplify Plug

Darin: This episode is produced by my team at Must Amplify, an audio marketing company that specializes in giving a voice to a brand and making sure the right people hear it. If you would like or are thinking about doing a podcast or even would like a strategy session to add your voice to your brand in a powerful way, go to www.mustamplify.com/darin. That's www.mustamplify.com/darin.