

cardiology between all different parts of the person. Whether it be their biology, their genetics, their lifestyle, their outlook, and positive emotion, and how that influenced the progression of disease in their quality of life. For me, it was a major intersection of the whole person. I found that both fascinating and an angle where I could really help people.

[00:03:45] Nichols: Absolutely and I just can't wait to dive into that more. Dr. Williams. Basima, I know you intimately because you are my doctor-
[laughter]

[00:03:56] Nichols: -and you are our Dr. Pages doctor. You've helped us tremendously. Tell us your story a little bit Basima.

[00:04:04] Dr. Williams: I am first generation physician in our family and I just fell in love with helping people. I've always been an empathetic person, that's in my DNA. It's in my family's DNA. We grew up in Iraq, everyone helped everyone. When mom had a baby, all the moms in the village helped that mom. No one had to ask, no one had to send any messages. Everyone just knew, and everyone just automatically pitched in. I think it's a little bit in my DNA. When I was going through high school, just the idea of helping people when they needed it the most stuck with me. I was determined to do it and I did it, and here I am doing what I know I was called to do.

[00:04:48] Nichols: Well, I'm so glad. I know your husband's a doctor as well, right?

[00:04:51] Dr. Williams: Lots of interesting conversations.

[00:04:53] Nichols: I bet. I was just thinking, Lauren, one thing I read about you is someone had said, "Lauren has heart." [chuckles] I thought that's really interesting. You have a real heart for people and I know Basima is exactly the same way with the empathy. You really are very people-centered and you want to heal. You want to so what you're doing for the right reasons. That's always a good thing because then you have passion around what you're doing, right?

[00:05:21] Dr. Dal Farra: Yes, absolutely.

[00:05:22] Nichols: Lauren, I know that you're not the only one. This is not your brainchild, PALM Health, but let's get into PALM Health and what inspired you to start PALM. I want to

know, what does PALM even stand for? I've never even ask Basima that. I can surmise [chuckles] but it probably won't be the right answers. I want to hear your story.

[00:05:44] Dr. Dal Farra: Well, PALM is an acronym. It does stand for Personalized Advanced Lifestyle Medicine but it's really become so much more than even that. As you said, it's a culmination of a lot of contributions from various team members as we put this together. It started out as something that I felt was needed from both a patient perspective and going through the medical system as a patient, and from a physician perspective and what are all the tools in resources that I felt could really come together to help people cultivate and sustain health and well being.

That includes having daily access to a community of wellness experts and medical experts. As well as convenient lifestyle resources like a healthy cafe to have a nutritious meal or fitness center to work out with a personal trainer or taking an engaging class. Or come for a novel therapy that really can help both prevent and treat illness like salt room session or an infrared sauna session or cryotherapy.

Under one roof, bringing together everything that helps support people in their physical health, their mental health, and their spiritual health. Those are all the components. Then make it accessible in a community that it can be integrated into the fabric of someone's daily life.

[00:07:08] Nichols: I love it so much because people are holistic, are they not? I had read something where, if you've got a problem in one area, it can cause a problem in another area as well. We'll talk about that. I was talking to Basima earlier this week and I was thinking about our son. We have a Kubota tractor. A few years ago, he was doing something with the tractor and he put real gasoline in the tractor. It's a diesel engine. Then it completely stopped and he calls my dad in Kentucky. My dad's like, "You should put diesel fuel in there." I was just thinking about that and how you know really what we put in our bodies matters, doesn't it?

I know that we're going to talk about lifestyle and that sort of thing but Basima always talks to me about gut-health. You got to make sure your gut is good and healthy. Basima can you dig into that a little bit? Because I think our society sometimes is not really putting the right things in our body to make our engine optimal.

[00:08:12] Dr. Williams: Absolutely. When we see patients for the first time at PALM, we do take a very extensive history, usually about an hour to an hour and a half. Then usually about

one to two hours of our individual time after the visit to look at everything, look at triggers that may have caused illness, look at mediators of disease that may have caused illness, look at multiple different types of therapies and treatments that could really help this person. At the end of the day what I've learned after about seven years of doing more functional versus traditional medicine is that if the gut isn't happy, then it's going to be really hard to heal the body.

Part of the reason for that is about 80% of your immune system lives in your gut and your immune system can affect every single other aspect of your body. In so far as stress, for example, is concerned, there is a direct gut-brain connection. There's also something called the leaky blood-brain barrier. Leaky or the blood-brain barrier is the leakier the gut is then the more inflammation will happen in the brain so it'll be easier to have more stress.

Let say you have a diet that's high in refined sugars, that's high in soda, candy, ice-cream, bread, pasta, noodles. Not that we can't enjoy that sometimes, but if that's a primary source of your calories, then you will probably to some degree have leaky gut, and you will probably to some degree have a leaky blood-brain barrier. When you ingest that stuff, you will probably be more irritable. You'll be able to focus less, things like that.

I always say, "Heal the gut, heal the gut, heal the gut, and then go from there." I say, "Heal the gut and push the restart button." Literally, after we heal the gut to our satisfaction, mine and the patient's, we won't have the patient come back in because a lot of times, their chief complaint is gone. We didn't even address their chief complaint. Like if it's a rash or if it's fatigue, we don't even address that until we heal the gut, and then we push the restart button. A lot of times they're like, "You know what, I'm good. I don't want to do anything else." A lot of times we're like, "Okay, now we can address hormones, or now we can address other things."

[00:10:21] Dr. Dal Farra: The approach that we take at PALM is all of our physicians are trained in their traditional specialty whether that be family medicine, internal medicine, neurology, cardiology, psychiatry, but the one additional layer of training and depth that they have is that they have all been trained in either functional or integrative medicine. What that means is, is that a system of thought that really helps us go to the root cause of symptoms and understand, again, that intersection of all the different factors that contribute to helping or hindering our health. Whether that be our genetics and underlying DNA, our biology, and how that evolved over time.

For example, as Dr. Williams has been speaking about, what is that health of our gut and our intestines, whether that be our environmental factors, our emotional support systems, our social behaviors. All of these work together and influence each other into either an upward spiral of positive health and positive emotion and behavior or a downward spiral. Getting to, first the root of where are we at within an individual person and where are we at within that cycle, what are all those factors that is in each individual's life is our starting point for understanding how we're going to go from there. As Dr. Williams says, a lot of the influence that we do see that can really change somebody's trajectory is their gut and their gut health.

[00:11:51] Dr. Williams: Is not putting a bandaid on things. It's not just taking a pill. It is truly trying to understand and get to the root of what is going on and it's a multifaceted situation.

[00:12:03] Dr. Dal Farra: We need to work every angle to build up the person and really fortify them and keep them resilient, especially in times like right now when things come out of nowhere and you want to make sure you're your best self.

[00:12:15] Nichols: Absolutely. Talking about COVID, how have you guys-- Lauren, you're the CEO of PALM. I'm sure patients are not coming into PALM as much. I know I've had a few televisits with Dr. Williams. How have you guys pivoted, how are you still supporting your members with what's going on with COVID right now?

[00:12:36] Dr. Dal Farra: As a company, we've had to adapt very quickly. A lot of people depend on us. It's important for us to continue to be a resource and a community to our members, whether that's on the medical side, or the wellness side. We did pretty much launch over 80% of our services onto a virtual platform within a couple of weeks of the pandemic really starting and needing to go into a physical distancing mode.

We've taken our personal training, our nutritional counseling, our mental health well-being, coaching and counseling, and all of our physician visits as you've experienced onto a virtual platform, as well as launching an on-demand library of classes. Whether those be fitness or meditation in live classes, and then really keeping that educational component going with our seminars and webinars, I guess now. It's been a big pivot for us, but I'm impressed with how much everyone took on the challenge and adapted to the new platforms for engaging with people and it's been great to see and experience.

[00:13:37] Nichols: Right. Well, there's a lot of companies that have had to pivot during this time, but it's awesome because technology is enabling some of that, right?

[00:13:46] Dr. Dal Farra: We've been engaging with new and different forms of technology and figuring out what works and what we can bring in longterm now to PALM, so I think we can continue to be a resource that extends beyond St. Louis, which has been one of the more interesting aspects of what's coming out of this for us as a company.

[00:14:02] Nichols: Right and that's a perfect segue for us to take a quick break. When we come back, we'll talk about that a little bit and what you're going to carry forward, because as awful as this pandemic has been, I've said there's so many silver linings. What you just described is one of those silver linings that you've pivoted, and now maybe you can help even more people. We'll take a quick break and then we'll be back with Lauren and Basima.

[music]

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[00:15:06] Nichols: Welcome back. I'm excited to talk about this piece of something extra because I really do believe that what you ladies have to say is going to really help people and I know that everybody's in the same boat. We just talked about COVID, it's been awful. It is a terrible pandemic that we're all facing. It's not just one or two of us, it's the world and there being good things through this, but I also know that the stressors are off the charts right now.

People have lost their jobs. There's financial stress, there's health stress. There's the stress to parents having to now figure out how to homeschool their kids. [chuckles] There are a lot of things going on and I know that I had read, Lauren, I think in something that you had written that the inability to manage stress is linked with five leading causes of death. Dr. Williams, I would like for you to talk a little bit more about stress because I know that you've dealt a lot in this area and then we'll get into a few other things.

[00:16:05] Dr. Williams: Stress is a normal part of life and it's your body's normal response to things, whether it's environmental, like with this virus, whether it's your own thoughts, whatever it is, your body will respond and it responds pretty immediately to stress. Then how you act after you have that stress is so important. In fact, one of my favorite psychiatrist, Dr. Cloninger, actually talked about how we act when stress invades our life is really important.

Lately, I've been having a lot of phone calls as you can imagine with people who are stressed out. Their most common words are feeling overwhelmed, panic attacks, panic feeling, feeling emotional, feeling more irritable, crying, having a lot more on their plate that they can handle. When they call us from a functional medicine perspective they're asking us for other things. Obviously, they're not just asking for drugs to help with their stress, but they're asking for other ways of dealing with stress.

For so many people, I just have to remind them, number one, self-care, going back to self-care. I say self-care slash self-love. To me, self-care is loving yourself. Ways that you can love yourself, making a card with five things that you can go to whenever you're feeling stressed, just to remind you because in the midst of stress, you're not going to remember to go take an Epsom salt bath. You're going to remember to go get some ice cream from the fridge, or go get another glass of wine, or just sit on the couch and binge-watch. If you have a list of five things that you love to do, you have an immediate response and you retrain your brain to go to that.

That's neuroplasticity of the brain, retraining the brain from the common pathways of going to the fridge to an uncommon pathway, which is going to take a bath, going on a walk, reading a book, giving yourself a facial, whatever it is that you consider self-love and self-care. Sometimes that's all it takes is just reminding people that little behavior change is so effective. Another big thing I work on is sleep. We've got many awesome supplements to help people sleep, but also just meditation. Breathing is really important, but changing how we act can often break the habits that trigger stress reactions over and over and over in our bodies.

[00:18:26] Nichols: Lauren, this is not just stress and anxiety that we're seeing in adults. It's skyrocketing, unfortunately, in children and I would love for you to talk a little bit about that. There's just this really fine balance. Kids are expected to perform at such a high level now and we as parents, sometimes we impose those things on our children, not meaning to do anything harmful to them, but we want them to do well in life, but to do extraordinary things in life, you do have to work hard. You do have to excel. You do have to want to do things to the best of your ability and strive to perform, but how do you balance wanting that child to have a great life and

do good things? We're saying, number one, you have permission to fail. Number two, you have permission just to be ordinary. You don't have to boil the ocean and do these grandiose inventions and things like this.

[00:19:22] Dr. Dal Farra: As you've said, we are definitely seeing an increase even pre-COVID of a rise of stress, anxiety, depression, suicidal ideation in youth and young adults. I think what's interesting to observe about that phenomenon is one of that main contributors to depression, anxiety, and stress is a feeling of disconnection. Whether that's a feeling of disconnection with oneself, one's identity, one's community and now that's amplified in the time of COVID with physical distancing.

There's a reason to isolate yourself in a good reason, but that further layer contributes to that sense of isolation. When we isolate ourselves, whether that's through being on our phones or video games or buried in our work, we feel disconnected and we start losing connection with nature, which is a leading contributor to that feeling of disconnection. You feel disconnected from yourself, your family, your friends and nature, and God, and all that starts to amplify into that sense of isolation and anxiety.

We are in an even further amplified period of that right now and I think helping parents remember that cultivating authentic relationships, cultivating time with nature, helping people keep that perspective of the importance of those as the fundamental pillars of someone's resilience and success at the end of the day is really important. We're working with a 16-year-old young male right now who's a member of PALM. He's had his own struggles, but since COVID, it's been more difficult to engage because it's more virtual.

He had a couple of really good weeks, a few weeks ago, and then I was talking to him on Monday and he's like, "My anxiety is really back." I said, "What changed last week? Because two weeks ago you were doing great. Let's look at your behaviors." I think that goes back to what Dr. Williams says is how you act in the time of stress changes so much and that changes daily. You can start behaving different today and you'll feel better.

We looked at his behaviors and he'd slipped back into playing video games till two in the morning, getting his sleep cycle off, cramming the schoolwork in, having to wake up and cram it in before school started. He'd injured-- He's a very athletic person and injured himself. He'd had that excuse to not go into the gym, but really he realized that he wanted to play more video games.

First, it starts with that desire. Do you want to feel better or do you want to live with the anxiety? Because if you don't want to feel better, there's nothing you're going to do as far as changing your behaviors, but he does want to feel better. We went through, let's remember the things that make you feel good. What are those things that brought you that sense of calm you had two weeks ago and that were helping you feel productive? So then that productivity is natural and it's not forced on you by your parents or by your family or by a social pressure. That's an inherent drive, that productivity becomes an inherent will.

That's what we have to remember. It's not using threats and fear to drive productivity, but nurturing that from within and so within two days, I said, "Let's do a virtual chiropractic visit for your injury. Let's get you back with a virtual trainer. Let's stop the video games at 11:00 PM. Let's take a low dose melatonin that reminds your body to go to sleep." Checked in with him today and it's four days later and he's like, "Yes, I'm feeling great. I don't have that anxiety boiling in my system that makes me feel agitated and irritated with people and want to shut myself in my room so that nobody's bothering me."

It's amazing that just turning that dial ever so slightly with our behaviors can change so instantly our outlook and our sense of peace. It's all about nurturing that from within making that desire grow within people for themselves. When they have that, their will to be productive it comes from inside.

[00:23:20] Nichols: Well, I couldn't agree more because there's an old adage out there, "You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make them drink." [chuckles] That's with people, if they don't have that intrinsic desire to change, there's no amount of talking, there's no amount of anything that we can do. Where does habits play into this? Because I think sometimes we can just get-- As Lauren was just saying, this young man staying up till two o'clock, how do you break those bad habits and put good habits in their place?

[00:23:53] Dr. Williams: In short, it's self-awareness. That is something that I personally have been working on. That is why I throw examples of what self-love is. Sometimes you have to be intentional because truly when you're in the midst of feeling overwhelmed, the last thing you want to do is put down that video game because it's an easy thing to do. It's what your brain, what you've trained your brain to do to go that pathway but to develop good healthy habits, it requires a lot of self-awareness of what makes you or gives you joy, what makes you happy, what makes you less stressed and then intentionally do them over and over and over again.

Eventually, you won't need a card of the five things that bring you joy. Eventually, it will be your natural response.

We overlooked neuroplasticity and what that is and that is literally developing new pathways in your brain and helping revive some areas of your brain, if you will, but developing new pathways that lead to healthier habits. Unfortunately, some unhealthy habits are so easy to fall into because they're so easy to do, like playing video games, cell phone usage and the clicks and the sounds are so addictive and they just keep us going because it keeps stimulating that area of your brain, but true habit-changing requires repetition and self-awareness of what brings you joy.

[00:25:19] Nichols: You've got a parent and they see their child in these patterns, where do they even start trying to put limits on your children? Can you talk to that a little bit, Lauren?

[00:25:30] Dr. Dal Farra: I think the place it starts is in building trusted relationships with your kids and parents are never going to win through a tug of war in a control fight. I think it starts with conversation and really opening yourself up to your child, to listen to them and ask the questions and understand, "Tell me about this behavior whatever it is, if it's social media, if it's a video game, if it's wanting to be locked in your room all day."

Really starting to understand your child, "What is this behavior? Tell me what it brings you. What is it that you find solace in about this?" You might come to see a value within that behavior that you didn't even recognize before of something positive that it does bring your child. It's not all negative. It's more about how much time are we spending in this and is it preventing us from living ourselves in our life to its fullest?

I think it really just starts with opening yourself up to really hearing your child and also respecting them because they're people and they're individuals and they have their opinions, but if we can respect their desires, not prohibit things, but understand them and then help your kids understand other behaviors that they can add on to that behavior to live a more fulfilling life versus taking something away and allocating the right time to each of those pieces of our life, that's really where it starts.

As Basima said, once you help your kid, "I know you want to be on this social media, but can we go out and do this behavior together?" You do start building new neural pathways. You start

understanding other things that can bring you joy and that can make you feel fulfilled. Then you get into new cycles and new rhythms and you start a new spiral.

[00:27:19] Nichols: I love that. There is one common denominator that's needed to do that, time.

[00:27:26] Dr. Dal Farra: Absolutely.

[00:27:27] Nichols: Sometimes we can just get so busy and we're running 200 miles an hour and we don't take the time, but that is one of the silver linings I hope from COVID that we all take away, that we need to hop off the treadmill of life. I'm struggling with this and rumbling with this myself right now and I think that there are things that we need to carry forward and then I think that there are some things we need to leave behind.

[00:27:52] Dr. Dal Farra: I think you're 100% right. You really hit the nail on the head with the time. I was thinking about that yesterday. I was coming out of the shower and looking at something. We have 17 and 18-year-old boys at home and I thought to myself, I really haven't given these boys a lot of time in the last week. I can see a big difference when I can give a little bit more time. Even at 17 and 18, you're your kids compass, and if you can just spend that little time, orient them in a certain direction, even the household behaviors change and the attitudes and I'm 100% in agreement with you. Giving yourself that time with your kids to just connect and make sure you're always just orienting them is so critical.

[00:28:34] Nichols: That is being human. I think humans were created to connect. If they're not getting community and connection with you, they'll go find it online with their video buddies or whatnot. Before we sign off, I want to ask each of you, this is called something extra. It's really the something extra that every leader needs or every parent needs, every individual needs. Basima, what is your something extra that you think is needed?

[00:29:04] Dr. Williams: Perhaps, maybe my something extra is the patients that I see actually changing their life. It is hard work. It is not easy to change your diet. You see fast foods and now you're cooking. That is so encouraging. Thinking about this question, who has made the biggest influences in my life? I'm going to tell you that it's people who are encouraging and uplifting, not fake uplifting, but truly, "You can do this. Why don't you do this? Oh, you can totally do that."

Then encouraging from a sense of my patients who are actually healing themselves. I had a guy who I'm the first time I saw him two and a half years ago, said he was contemplating walking in or using a wheelchair. Now he is riding his bike, he's full of energy full of life and it's that, how can that not encourage you? It's people who are making a huge difference in their life and also encouraging others. That's what I love. I love to surround myself with that. It goes back to that social support. Researchers say, without a good social support that your overall health and wellness- you're more prone to infections, you're more prone to stress, you're more prone to disease. It just all kind of ties back into that.

[00:30:27] Dr. Dal Farra: I see it every day, whether it's in our executive leaders or our physician leaders or our household leaders. I really noticed that passion is that one thing that is a game-changer in leadership. That's what I see makes the difference at PALM Health with all of our wellness and medical providers is they have the expertise, but they also have the passion for what they're doing and what they're saying. They walk the walk aside all of their clients. That's the piece that sparks them inspiration and everything that flows from it. I would have to say passion is that something extra that I think makes one thrive.

[00:31:04] Nichols: I have to tell you today, I was thinking, "I wonder what Lauren will say, is her something extra? I bet she'll say passion," because I see that at PALM Health, I see how passionate and the belief that every one of your practitioners has. Without that, the patient is not going to feel like you're that invested, but when you have that passion and belief, it just flows out as you said. Everything flows from that.

Well, I cannot wait for our listeners to hear this because I just know that's going to help them, but I'm also thinking that they are going to be sitting there going, "Well, I have another question." [laughs] I don't know ladies, we may need to do a webinar or something so that people can have their chatbox and ask questions, but I just want to thank both of you so much for being on today. Thank you. Like I said, I can't wait for our listeners to hear everything you have to say.

[00:31:59] Dr. Dal Farra: Thank you. Thank you so much for having us. It was fun.

[00:32:02] Dr. Williams: Thanks.

