

[150: Dr Jill & Lauryn Lax discuss Total Gut Reset: Optimize Your Health and Reset Your Second Brain](#)

Dr. Jill 0:12

Well, hello everybody! Welcome back to another episode of Dr. Jill Live! As you know, you can find me on YouTube. Please stop by there and subscribe so you get advance notice of all the upcoming episodes. Or if you prefer audio in your car, on your walk, or wherever you're going like I do, you can listen on iTunes, Stitcher, or Spotify; anywhere you listen to podcasts, it's all there. But wherever you listen, please, please do subscribe, follow, and make sure you leave a review because the more reviews we get, the more listeners we reach.

Dr. Jill 0:43

So today I have a delightful friend and amazing colleague, and we're going to talk about the gut and all things gut-brain connection. I also want to mention that she was on a previous episode. I think it was episode 21, way back in the day.

Dr. Lauryn Lax 0:57

Yes.

Dr. Jill 0:58

I think it was early in COVID, actually, that we connected.

Dr. Lauryn Lax 1:01

Oh my gosh.

Dr. Jill 1:02

So you might want to catch that episode. Episode 21 is with Lauryn Lax today. Let me introduce you, Lauryn, and then we will jump right in. Dr. Lauryn is a former TV news journalist turned functional medicine and gut health expert. Her work is inspired by her 25 years of clinical and personal experience overcoming 12 "incurable diseases"—I know how that goes—the diets, doctors, and Dr. Google couldn't solve. Dr. Lauryn's death-to-life story has been featured on CBS, ABC, Good Morning America, and USA Today. And you can find more about her work by reading her latest book, *Total Gut Reset*, which is also the title of our episode today. Tune in to her *Go With Your Gut* podcast and join her in the *Total Gut Reset* program and virtual functional medicine clinic.

Dr. Jill 1:44

Lauryn! It's so good to see you here, and welcome back! It's always fun to talk to a colleague but also a friend because we often share prayer requests outside of this, which is so fun to have that kind of friendship. But I'd love to start with [your] story. So I want to start with: How did you get here? We heard just a little bit about the incurable diseases and everything in your bio. Tell us a little bit about your background and what you're passionate about.

Dr. Lauryn Lax 2:09

One hundred percent. Well, yes, I was on the path to becoming the next Katie Couric on the *Today Show* before the big man upstairs had different plans with the journey I had been on. My journey really begins back at 10 years old, [during] fourth-grade recess. All I wanted to do was fit in. I had frizzy hair and a pink scrunchie my mom made me wear. And that day at fourth-grade recess, the popular girls invited me to join their gossip circle. They're laughing at Melanie Shawn's ugly sweater and gawking over Eric Arthur's cute 'freckly' face.

Dr. Lauryn Lax 2:40

Then the topic of weight comes up, and the queen bee says: "Oh my gosh, you guys, I weighed myself last night, and I'm 69 pounds—so fat!" And then turning to each of us, [she asked], "What do you weigh?" And one by one, we had to go around the gossip circle and report to our drill sergeant. At a healthy 80 pounds at 10 years old, I was by no means a fat kid, but when the circle got to me, I gulped and I lied. I said, "I don't know." And I never forget going home and standing in the pantry that day, turning over my favorite Doritos snack pack, and learning a whole new language, which was fat grams and calories. And at age 10, my life path took a sharp turn.

Dr. Lauryn Lax 3:17

Little did I realize I'd spend the next 20-plus years of my life on a roller coaster of diets, dogmas, Dr. Google searches, and doctor's offices, all in search of feeling good in my own skin for multiple things. I was diagnosed with anorexia around that age. My habits started and were quickly discovered by my parents and pediatricians. From there, it became an all-out war between my goals of just feeling good in my own skin and what the world, the culture, the doctors, and the conventional healthcare system told me to do. Really, little did I realize I would go head-to-head with that conventional thinking at such a young age. But really, my many years in hospitals and treatment centers...

Dr. Lauryn Lax 4:07

I spent four accumulated years of my life over the course of that eating disorder journey inside hospitals and treatment centers on a feeding tube and heart rate monitors, IV fluids, and being fed Pop-Tarts, pizza, and Prozac because that's the conventional medical system's treatment for eating disorders. It still is kind of today as well, just like we see with the 'move more, eat less' [approach] for people who are overweight. Just symptom-based treatment or a 'take a pill for an ill' lifestyle-induced disease.

Dr. Lauryn Lax 4:39

So at a young age, my wheels began to turn, and [I was] like, "This is not the path to feeling well or being well." That early journey came to a head from the eating disorder at age 23, when I found myself about to enter my second year of grad school. I was actually studying to become a doctor of occupational therapy—roundabout ways of getting places. But I'll never forget stepping on the scale and seeing a number I had not seen since I was that 10-year-old girl—actually one pound less, 79 pounds. Only this time I was 23 and a full-fledged adult, and my journey really started and stopped there.

Dr. Lauryn Lax 5:15

I'll never forget praying: "God, help me make a change today." It wasn't my parents standing over me telling me what to do or doctors. I was a full-fledged adult. I was making my own decisions and [was] like, "This is what my life has come to." So as I prayed, "God help me make a change today"—I yelled that out loud on my way to the gym at the YMCA—when I got to the gym, not one, but nine other strangers walked up [to me]. And they're nine gym goers, [whom] I now call my YMCA angels, who stepped in, spoke up, and said they wanted to help. And really, not knowing anything about my backstory, they just saw a girl slaving away on her StairMaster and in the gym eight hours a day, subsisting on very little, and just withering away.

Dr. Lauryn Lax 5:56

Within the next 48 hours, I found myself in the CCU with a heart rate in the near 20s and doctors saying I may not make it. In that moment, something inside me clicked. That download was, "The answer is not out there; it's in here," and really in my gut. The Holy Spirit is a big part of my story as well. I heard a download from the Lord as just: "Lauryn, I've got this, but buckle up your seatbelt; it's going to be a ride." And it wasn't just another six-week stay at a time in a hospital or a few months at a treatment center. I spent another year in treatment, really refeeding back to health, but not in a very healthy way. But something inside me had changed. I said, "Life is going to be different on the other side." It 100 percent was. I became

just completely remiss from that eating disorder and that mindset that I had had for so long and [felt] freedom from that.

Dr. Lauryn Lax 6:47

But little did I know, on the back end of that journey, I had another journey I'd go through. So the next 10 years, I would actually be diagnosed with these 12 "incurable illnesses"—I put that in quotes because they're now in remission, 100%—from all those years that both diets and treatment had destroyed my gut. So [it was due to] both diet culture and conventional health care. It really formed this, like, fire in my belly to figure out: "There has to be another way outside of both of these worlds that are promising health for people."

Dr. Lauryn Lax 7:21

And the diagnoses I was given were anything from like five different autoimmune diseases, hypothyroidism, being worked up for cancer and brain tumors and strokes, and then mast cell activation syndrome, mold illness, Lyme disease, and co-infections. Really, the list goes on. There's not a disease I did not touch on paper, I guess. But I had to heal from the inside out. So that journey and that roller coaster became my underground medical school, so they say, of learning how to heal from the inside out.

Dr. Lauryn Lax 7:54

And that's what developed my love for the gut and the gut-brain connection because that runs the show in our bodies. Your gut is connected to everything: Head, heart, and health—all three of those things. So it's both figurative and literal. And then the brain—just that direct link right there. So everything that we intercept in our outer world filters from there to the gut, and then, obviously, vice versa. So that's where I began to find so much healing.

Dr. Lauryn Lax 8:25

Today I'm healed to heal others, and I'm working with others. I'm launching this company, Total Gut Reset, which is really a compilation of my lived experience over all those years. I'm now 35. I feel like I'm 25 because I am anti-aging and [because of] my clinical and personal experience working with patients for the past 10 years.

Dr. Jill 8:48

Wow! What a compelling story, and what a beautiful way you have of telling your story! It's intriguing. I know that our listeners, if they didn't relate to one point,

related to another because what you're describing is the human experience, right? And especially for young women, I had a lot of similar stuff I talked about in my book. I didn't know I was celiac—undiagnosed. I was zinc deficient. I was hypochlorhydric. I had swelling, I had puffy face, and I was thinking I was fat. And I had the same kind of pathway—more like a couple of years of bulimic behavior. But it wasn't about the eating disorder; it was about mindset, right? And it was also about our health from the inside out, from the gut level, because my gut was so ill that it was affecting me physically. I really understand that.

Dr. Jill 9:30

And I know a lot of mothers, grandmothers, patients, young girls, or others listening can relate. And if there's ever more pressure, this next generation is even more [overwhelmed] with our filters and our toxic load. This is only becoming a bigger issue because people on the outside are trying to fix this surface, this mask, right? And [yet], it's [on] the inside where we heal. So I love that you go there.

Dr. Jill 9:55

And I want to talk about mindset because part of what you described was when you were in the gym and you had the angels intervening at the fitness center. What I heard in your story was this understanding at some deep level at some point, which was probably God's spirit in your life, that was like, "This isn't an outside job." And you said that, right? I love that. Let's talk about that, because that leads to what we're going to talk about today and, really, what I also believe are some of the key healings.

Dr. Jill 10:23

If we hate ourselves or don't love the body that God has given us, we will get disease, and we'll often manifest autoimmunity or other things. So it's so important. Let's talk a little bit about that. And tell us: How did that feel to go from... I mean, honestly, I don't know, or we don't want to project, but I'm guessing you kind of hated your body in the beginning, right?—because that's what we do when we have those kinds of disorders. And then we have to switch and shift. Tell us about that.

Dr. Lauryn Lax 10:48

Yes. Oftentimes, I tell my clients that dis-ease in our lives can show up as disease in the body. Dis-ease being uneasiness, stress, imbalance. A lot of that is intercepted through the brain. The HPAT axis is taking everything in in our fight-or-flight world. So it could be external stress that is manifested and definitely just the psychosocial emotional stressors that we are vibing at on a daily basis.

Dr. Lauryn Lax 11:14

And 95% of our brain and our thoughts are actually subconscious thinking. So anything that we're consciously aware of is like the tip of the iceberg. So if I am in a place of not feeling good enough... Like, that was my story for so long that it was really just entrenched in my innermost being. So what continued to drive a lot of the eating disorder and the later residuals of all the other health issues was that full-embodied belief that I'm not good enough, as well as the enemy's greatest lies.

Dr. Lauryn Lax 11:52

So that, I think, can really manifest in eating disorders, but with any symptom, actually. There is a map to a specific type of stressor. So with eating disorders and gut issues, a lot of times that's related to an indigestible conflict in our lives. Our body and our symptoms are metaphors for what's happening in our mind, in our world, and in the stresses that we're encountering. Obviously, at fourth-grade recess, a little girl tells me I'm fat; that's pretty indigestible. Something I couldn't swallow, figuratively again, and break down. That is like, ping—ouch, that hurt! And I never processed that at that time.

Dr. Lauryn Lax 12:34

These can be the seemingly littlest of things, but it can also be a building story. That "I'm not good enough" didn't just happen at that fourth-grade recess. It was very entrenched in my early life: Wanting to be a people-pleaser, being the firstborn golden child, and feeling like I needed to perform. Growing up in a society where there was a lot of expectation, an upper-middle-class kind of school, etc. A teacher in third grade telling me to suck my tummy in. So there are a lot of seeds that can be planted. It's not just one instance, either.

Dr. Lauryn Lax 13:05

And a lot of times, the length of that illness may mirror the onset of it, so it's slow-building. Whereas maybe an acute cold or flu that lasts a week is a stink conflict related, too. So that may have been like: "The weather is changing. It's winter. This sucks." Like "that stinks." Or it could be just something at work, like a tough little email or debacle that you were navigating, that could onset it. But I have been able to understand how the brain is mapped for different conditions based on stressors. Through my own lived experience and workshopping each of those individual things, it has really made so much sense and also helped with healing because with awareness comes more healing.

Dr. Jill 13:55

Yes. That's one thing you and I love to text back and forth [about]: The learning we're doing. Understanding ourselves at a deeper and deeper level often leads to transformation, and that's what you're describing. Now, two things that come to mind that I talk about in the book and that I think are common to so many men and women are: "I'm not worthy. I'm not enough." Or "I'm not lovable." Those are universal things that people often struggle with. Tell us from your perspective: With your background in NLP and some of these things, where do those come from? How can we overcome them? How might they manifest in disease? The worthiness, the loving ourselves—tell us a little bit about those frameworks because they seem to be super common.

Dr. Lauryn Lax 14:35

Yes. I think they are part of the human needs. Tony Robbins calls them the six human needs, which would be [things] like worth, significance, and connection. Love is another one. The need for control and peace in our lives. The need for variety. The need for joy and ease, too. That's his framework that he'll come from. I call them 'gut hungers.' But I think they are part of the human experience because we do live in a world where this world is not our home as well. So there are pinings for [things] like significance, worth, purpose, love, and connection. We saw that a ton during COVID.

Dr. Lauryn Lax 15:20

I think it's so interesting that during COVID, we were locked down for like four to eight weeks in some places, and people got way sick after being locked down. It's how that lack of love and connection was really taken from us and where that disease escalated, as well as the stories we were feeding ourselves during that time and the awareness there. But yes, I think it is definitely rooted, even that [sense of] worth, back in the Garden of Eden too—the need for purpose and meaning and wanting to be something greater. So I think it is just embedded in us. With awareness, though, comes power.

Dr. Jill 16:05

Yes.

Dr. Jill (pre-recording) 16:06

Hey, everybody. I just stopped by to let you know that my new book, *Unexpected: Finding Resilience through Functional Medicine, Science, and Faith*, is now available

for order wherever you purchase books. In this book, I share my own journey of overcoming a life-threatening illness and the tools, tips, tricks, hope, and resilience I found along the way. This book includes practical advice for things like cancer and Crohn's disease and other autoimmune conditions, infections like Lyme or Epstein-Barr, and mold- and biotoxin-related illnesses. What I really hope is that as you read this book, you find transformational wisdom for health and healing. If you want to get your own copy, stop by ReadUnexpected.com. There, you can also collect your free bonuses. So grab your copy today and begin your own transformational journey through functional medicine in finding resilience.

Dr. Jill 17:02

Yes. And these aren't bad things because being loved and loving in return is such a core [part] of who we are and what we are put on this earth to do. And then worth and value—we all have intrinsic value. So let's turn a little to the gut-specific because we have the physiological gut, the gut issues you and I have both experienced, and then the gut-brain connection. Do you want to frame that a little and tell us a little bit about how you approach the gut with the *Gut Reset* program?

Dr. Lauryn Lax 17:25

Yes, definitely. I always say health is an inside job. So if you fix the inside, the outside is going to greatly improve. We were talking a lot about mindset, but also physiologically, because the gut is the mothership. It's kind of [like] if you've ever seen *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*, they use Windex on everything. I think there's really nothing that your gut does not touch. You have more microbes than cells in your body. The majority of your immune system is there—70% to 80%. Then you have, obviously, the brain, where 90% to 95% of signals to the brain are actually coming from the gut microbes. Over 500 million neurons are inside your gut, which would be brain cells inside your gut, more than any other part of your peripheral nervous system. Your metabolism is greatly affected.

Dr. Lauryn Lax 18:13

I love the studies where they take the germ-free mice and put bacteria from an overweight subject and from a lean subject into these mice, and they gain weight or lose weight depending on which bacteria they get. No change in diet or exercise at all. Your hormones as well. It's your largest hormone-producing endocrine organ itself. So a lot of our hormone balancing and a lot of our active T3, which would be thyroid hormones, are produced there. Cortisol inflammation is going to affect what's happening in the gut. The gut is also going to affect the HPAT axis, which is

your cortisol producing system. There are so many layers there. And yes, the mothership is really what I like to [inaudible].

Dr. Jill 19:05

Yes. It's a great way to frame it. What are some practical lifestyle tips? Obviously, we can talk about probiotics and those kinds of things, [along with] interventions. But tell us how sleep, mindset, and some of the other things affect our gut. So we have the top-down and bottom-up directions, but what about these things that actually affect our gut function?

Dr. Lauryn Lax 19:24

Yes, definitely. The fundamentals of health help. It's like an olive branch to the gut. The reason why diets even work in diet culture for a time—we know 95% of diets end up failing people—is because of what's happening in the gut. So if one adopts a carnivore diet—I was just at KetoCon this past weekend, and a lot of carnivore keto was talked about—it's modulating the gut microbiome. Diet can be an influential piece in healing your gut, and what was once productive can become counterproductive too without balance in the gut. The gut and your body as a whole ultimately desire homeostasis. We definitely live in a toxic world where we're inundated with a lack of homeostasis. So sometimes what seems extreme—cleansing, etc., or a diet of some sort—therapeutically can be really productive and helpful. But I would say diet is the number one modifier of the gut, aside from a fecal microbial transplant, at least for a time. And most people are not doing that right now.

Dr. Lauryn Lax 20:30

And then, from a diet-granular perspective, balance. Protein, fat, and fiber being essentials there, and the least inflammatory versions of those as possible [are best]. It is interesting from a mindset perspective when we factor in diet, too, because I do believe an 80/20 balance is so essential from a diet perspective. It's kind of like the hygiene hypothesis: The cleaner we are, the sicker we become. A lot of my patients that come to me are eating so pristinely or are eating like five to 10 foods, and yet they're still sick, still not feeling well, and still feeling way stressed around food. So a big part of my approach is actually branching out and finding food freedom. We all know 90-year-old Uncle Joe, who eats Spam and orange soda every day. He just sits on his couch, and he's never had a diagnosis in his life. He's a happy camper. There is something to the mind and our peace of mind. The Blue Zone studies, as well, are great where they show—

Dr. Jill 21:31

I love those studies.

Dr. Lauryn Lax 21:32

Yes. Community is a huge piece of the puzzle, but that's just one factor. Diet, as I'm mentioning, [is too], [along with] balance. There are multiple other things I can [inaudible].

Dr. Jill 21:43

I'm just stopping there real quickly. Even with my history with Crohn's, I went on a very restrictive diet to heal from that. But let's talk briefly. Say we do go on a low-FODMAP diet for SIBO, right? This is a great example because what you're doing is taking out all the foods that feed your microbiome, and you're doing that intentionally so that you starve the bacteria that are growing in your small bowel. It works. It's very effective. I use that. But if you were to stay on the low FODMAP diet for life, or if you're out there and you've been on it for 10 years, you are starving the diversity in your microbiome. And even for me, with my history of Crohn's and eating super clean, I have continued to try to add foods versus take them away.

Dr. Jill 22:19

And 20 years ago—it's been a long time since I've been doing functional medicine—I would put people on elimination diets. And it's super helpful. Like you said, the studies I quote when I'm teaching about gut health, [after] one day of the mice switching from a high-fat westernized diet to a plant-based diet or vice versa, the microbiome changes in 24 hours. So it's profound—the effect of the food on the microbiome and on the immune system—and that's what we're seeing. But that long-term can be... And it can also be so restrictive for you, even the mindset or going out to eat with friends or whatever.

Dr. Jill 22:53

Now, I'm all for a super-clean diet. To this day, let me be clear: I eat really, really, really clean. I don't touch gluten. I don't touch dairy. I really avoid sugar. So that'll always be, and I have no problem with that. But as many of you listeners have had these [issues] where you're so sensitive or you have mast cell activation, what we want to do is heal that mindset and heal that immune system. Speaking of that, I think this is a great next topic because mast cell activation and the gut are very connected because we have so many histamine [producing] mast cells in our gut.

Dr. Jill 23:19

And the thought that came to mind that I'd like to talk about is fear and safety. Because I think a big piece of this reacting to our environment, reacting to the world, having had mold exposure, both you and I get to be... And even if we know in our minds, "Hey, I'm gonna be okay," there is a limbic response. And the same with being afraid of foods, where you get into this box where you have four food groups that you can eat—not groups but food [inaudible]. And part of that is that if you don't feel safe in your body or you feel like the environment is a threat, even subconsciously, it will affect your reactivity to foods and mast cell issues. Let's talk about that because that's this mind-body connection, and I feel like the more I can help patients feel safe, the more they'll heal their guts.

Dr. Lauryn Lax 24:02

Yes, 100%. So the fear response overtly is going to shut down your digestion and then release that, like "Mayday, mayday, histamine," because fear and anxiety go together with the histamine release as well as cortisol. It's kind of like if you're running from a bear in the wild, the last thing your body's going to want to do is digest that chicken breast. So that fight-or-flight response is huge as well. So it does start here, in the mind.

Dr. Lauryn Lax 24:28

One of my favorite studies is the milkshake study, where they give two groups a milkshake and say, "Enjoy it." One of them is an "Indulgent Shake," a 600-calorie milkshake. The other one is a "Sensishake," a 140-calorie milkshake. In actuality, they gave them the exact same milkshake, a 300-calorie milkshake. They wanted to see what happened to their metabolic response. The people who had the "Indulgent Shake" were actually more satisfied. They felt very nourished, and they were like: "Earned it. We enjoyed it. It's one time. Great. Glad we got to do the study and enjoyed that." The people with the "diet shake," on the other hand, had a three-fold increase in their hunger hormone, and they felt more deprived. They kind of earned it as well. They earned their calories so they could have more, and they wanted more. And again, [there was] no change in the actual milkshake that they were served.

Dr. Lauryn Lax 25:16

So that in and of itself, going into our meals and the way we approach food, especially when we are labeled... And we've come to this conclusion a lot of times on our own because we've been doing all the searching and realized: "Man, I do have mast cell activation syndrome." And then you start getting inundated with

[things] like "low oxalates," "low histamine," and low everything—alpha-gal syndrome, etc. Then fear sets in, so if we even think about eating food, we react.

Dr. Lauryn Lax 25:45

I think something that really helped me begin to get over that was to assume a new identity. And I can say with 100 percent confidence that I've been able to introduce every single food that I wanted to that I had not been able to have before, like when I was going through that. When I say that "I wanted to," I have a very deep-seated, I would say, trauma with gluten and dairy just from the eating disorder. Days of being served Pop-Tarts and being force-fed these ice cream resource shakes. I just haven't really wanted to go there. But I think my body could handle it if I really mentally used that muscle, like if I go to Italy and try the gluten/bread there, which is more pristine than our toxin-[laden] bread here.

Dr. Lauryn Lax 26:38

Something I'll do with my clients is do a topping exercise and find two to three affirmation statements. When I was struggling with the mold, it was like, "I'm strong, I'm resilient, the mold can't hurt me." And I would tap right here on my third eye, which is like where your pituitary gland is and where the stress is really being released. So doing that around food [is helpful]—like, "I'm strong, I'm resilient, the almond milk can't hurt me," or whatever the food is—so that way, you begin to assume a new identity.

Dr. Lauryn Lax 27:11

And then really getting good visualization. Kind of like Michael Phelps style, where his secret to success as a 20-plus gold medal Olympic athlete was visualization—seeing himself at the end of that race, standing on the podium, waving to his fans, feeling himself in the water. You can do visualization with who it is you want to show up as in health and healing with food, envisioning it, and then really beginning a new belief because our body is going to respond to what we're telling it. So if we're showing up to a meal and very quietly [are] like, "I can do this," but there's that deep-seated belief still, it may be more challenging.

Dr. Lauryn Lax 27:54

And then, alongside, what I'll do to help support clients, kind of like floaties, is put in the supplemental supports that feel like a life vest for them. Whether it's an MC Stabilizer or some natural antihistamine—who knows, placebo effect or real—they can take that with that; or digestive enzymes if tolerated. So putting in the reinforcements and then focusing a lot more on building up versus breaking down

is what I do. If we can build up your good gut bug army and not leaky gut symptomology that's often present, as well as your drainage lymphatically... I focus a ton more on support versus detox, kill, detox, kill, because we want that good gut bug army. Then the oral tolerance increases, and you're able to digest more foods as well.

Dr. Jill 28:48

Love that. And what I love that you talked about is identity—you know, habits. So any habit we want to change, whether it's eating more foods or getting up every morning to do a gentle meditation or exercise, when we change our identity around that, like you said... I just wanted to reiterate that because I think it's so powerful for those of you out there looking for a way to change. Maybe you're frustrated with yourself. First of all, be kind to yourself because you're doing the best you can. But second of all, when you start to change—"I am a healthy person" or "I have a healthy gut"—and you become that, like you said, and when you're tapping, you actually start to make choices because that's your identity.

Dr. Jill 29:21

For example, I don't eat gluten—I have celiac [disease]—so there's never a choice or question. There's never any mental anguish over "Should I have that bread or should I not?" I just know. I'm gluten-free. I don't eat gluten. That's my identity. Same with smoking. I don't smoke. I'm a nonsmoker. And again, no judgment, but that's who I am. I don't think I've ever been offered a cigarette, but when something like that would come across me, I'd be like, "No, I don't smoke." So anything you want to change in your life with habits, if you start to become that and that's your identity, it's so much easier. If you're like, "Oh, I'm 90% gluten-free," well, then when that bread comes along, you're like: "Oh, am I going to eat it or not?" and you struggle internally. And if you're in a weak state and you didn't want to, but you were like, "Uh, I'm going to..." And then you shame yourself internally, and there's a whole roller coaster.

Dr. Jill 30:06

So I really love that you talked about identity, because I think that's been a key for me in living life well. For example, I am a cancer survivor, technically. I say technically because sometimes nowadays people will ask about the cancer, and I have to almost pause. When I got cancer at 25, 21 years ago, I didn't identify with it; I didn't become it. And I never really identified with being a cancer survivor or having had cancer. Not that I was in denial. I was full-fledged, participating. But what that has led to is this kind of dissociation with, like, "Oh yeah, I did have

cancer." But it never was me. It wasn't my identity. And I think that's part of the healing, right?

Dr. Lauryn Lax 30:46

Oh, 100 percent. I would say that in both of my journeys, the crux point was deciding that I was well. Like, "I'm going to be well now, and I'm healed." Both for the mold and those 12 "incurable illnesses," and then for the eating disorder, I had specific pivotal moments with that. So that was 100 percent correct.

Dr. Jill 31:08

So in our last few minutes, mold. Our audience loves to hear about mold because a lot of you out there are suffering, have suffered, or know someone who has suffered. And it's nasty. I always say it was way easier to have cancer than a mold-related illness because cancer is obvious. I had no hair. You know, people understood. Mold-related illness is so difficult. And there's also a sabotage to our insight, understanding, our overwhelm, and our limbic system. So not only is it overwhelming physically, people don't understand, but it's also sabotaging our ability to be in the real situation and deal with it logically because our brain is affected. So obviously, mold can affect the gut. And you and I have both had experiences. Do you want to talk just a little bit about what you've learned with mold-related illness in the gut or just general tips and [inaudible] for those suffering from mold?

Dr. Lauryn Lax 31:53

Yes. Oh, man. I love the topic of mold because it is so pervasive nowadays. Obviously, fungal overgrowth in the gut and disruption of the gut microbiome as a whole can be caused by toxicity. The liver and gallbladder are part of your gut. It's part of your digestive system. Those are the pathways that, a lot of times, get most clogged or that we're really targeting when we are "detoxing" from mold or thinking. Even in the sauna for mold, we want to push toxins through.

Dr. Lauryn Lax 32:26

Interestingly, back to the gut-brain, some people tend to have certain symptoms of mold more than others. I did have a lot of IBS. I had colitis flares and mold, whereas some get horrible brain fog. Others will get hormone imbalances where the thyroid is off. Mold touches everything, but not everything for everyone at the same time. Why is that? That's kind of where the whack-a-mole of piecing [things] together [comes in]: What specific symptoms are maybe your top three? and understanding, what is the gut-brain connection there?

Dr. Lauryn Lax 33:02

When I am thinking gut-brain, we hear a lot about the limbic system and how the limbic system part of the brain is processing stressors and memories and storing and paralleling. So if I smell mold, even if I'm not living in mold anymore, it can re-trigger that fear response that I felt in my very first house. So I may experience the same symptoms, even if it's in my [inaudible] or if I think about it. I used to go into new homes to test or to look at a new home to live in. Before even walking in, sometimes I was already reacting because there was that fear response, and I don't want to be in that situation again. So that's the limbic system and how that's working.

Dr. Lauryn Lax 33:42

So for gut symptomology, as I mentioned earlier, a lot of times that can be related to indigestible conflicts. So what in my life was like a pervasive or hanging healing with an indigestible conflict? I know 100 percent that I've lived in mold a lot of my life in other seasons. But for whatever reason, this season of my life in which I got the sickest had been a series of stressors and "indigestible" conflicts, both within a work context and a roommate situation context. I was working, I think, 12-hour days, like very long, not sleeping very much, maybe four hours, and kind of just in go-mode. So there was a lot of stress happening. But you can workshop your specific symptoms again, depending on: What are the most pervasive ones? And what really helped me greatly was understanding how much stress had been related to the preceding onset from that gut-brain connection.

Dr. Lauryn Lax 34:41

Your immune system is also in your gut, as we mentioned. So a lot of times, with mast cells being paralleled with mold—I would say nine times out of ten, they're linked, if not 100 percent of the time—it's connected in there. So that being like: "Okay, my immune system is in my gut. Mold is something I'm perceiving that I'm living in. It's a toxin." So there are a lot of layers there. And the gut does impact every other system in your body. But if you have over gut symptoms, I would explore: "What were the indigestible conflicts going on in my life prior to the mold onset or around that time as well?"

Dr. Jill 35:18

Gosh, I love that framework of the mind and "indigestible conflicts" so that we can think beyond just the physical organs because our brain, our framework, and some of the subconscious massively affect us. Oh, Dr. Lauryn, I could keep talking to you

for a long time. This is so fun. But let's talk first of all: What would be your big takeaway? I just recently talked to someone and said, "For future generations"—because we know how we survived our childhood and some of the things we struggled with—"I think the younger generations have it even more difficult with our toxic loads increasing." There is so much upheaval, uncertainty, and all of that. Gut-related, health-related, brain-related—you pick it—what would be a takeaway you would give to our listeners?

Dr. Lauryn Lax 36:00

Yes. I would just lean into knowing that, when given the right tools, your body always innately wants to heal itself. So [if you] break a bone, slap a cast on it, in six to eight weeks it heals, even if you're eating McDonald's. Or catch a cold or flu—a little R&R, Gilmore Girls reruns, and bone broth do the body good. The body is really wired to heal itself. So even amidst recognizing the inundation that we are in a toxic world and that our food system and the medical system don't always have our best health interests at heart, I like to really rest in the fact that, when given the right tools, my body is still innately wired to heal.

Dr. Lauryn Lax 36:37

Those right tools being the fundamental foundations of a balanced diet that we talked about: Really great gut health, and the layers that that includes, like sleep, exercise, connection with people, and the five 'gut love habits' that I talk about in my program. Those are all really great core basics. I always go back to the foundations, even for myself, whenever I'm feeling out of balance.

Dr. Jill 37:01

Yes. I love that we landed there because it is so critical with the foundational [steps]. And like you said, sleep and food—I always say clean air, clean water, and clean food. Basic, basic stuff. It doesn't take an expensive supplemental program. It starts with the basics. It's so core. And, Dr. Lauryn, where can everybody find you or follow you? Tell us more about your program.

Dr. Lauryn Lax 37:20

I'm 'DrLauryn' everywhere. So D-r-L-a-u-r-y-n, not e-n [at the end]. And DrLauryn.com is my mothership website. And then TotalGutReset.com will go live in September.

Dr. Jill 37:34

Awesome. Very cool. Thank you as always for your time, your expertise, your story, and your compassion. It's so fun to talk to you today!

Dr. Lauryn Lax [37:43](#)

Thank you for having me on! So fun!