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[#88: Dr. Jill Interviews Greg Tenney, Fire and Disaster Expert: Colorado Wildfires](#)

Dr. Jill 00:12

Hello everybody. We are live here on Facebook for a special edition of Dr. Jill Live with two important and precious people in my life here today. You might have heard or seen that I was interviewing Greg Tenney, who you can see in the box on my side. But I've also got business owner and dear friend Ashley O'Connell here with me as well. I'll introduce them both in a minute.

Dr. Jill 00:36

Just to give you a little background, if you haven't heard... Gosh, I don't know who hasn't, but in our community, it's hard to miss. Maybe you're somewhere, though, that you haven't heard: We had devastating, literally epic proportions in Colorado—the worst fire for residential damage in the history of our state. It happened on Thursday, December 30th. I was out of town and watching from afar. Many of you, who maybe aren't in our community, saw it on the news and saw playbacks. Nearly 1,000 residential homes were burned to the ground, just completely gone. There are several communities—I drive from my home to work each day—where there's nothing but rubble and burned homes. Lots of our close friends and people that we know dearly as patients have completely lost everything.

Dr. Jill 01:29

President Joe Biden is going to be here this afternoon on the ground, literally moments away from where we're recording, to visit. We're so grateful for the outpouring of emotional and financial support from all of you and even the federal government and how they're acting quickly and helping because this has affected so many people. We're going to talk today about what to do after the fire, how to navigate with insurance companies, and how to deal with your air quality.

Dr. Jill 01:57

One of our main focuses and why I have business owner and friend Ashley on today is that we are both business owners in the epicenter. Literally, our offices shouldn't be standing, neither of ours. I was watching from 1,000 miles away and looking at

the map. My office, if you drew a circle around the center, is smack dab in the middle. It should not be standing. I consider it a miracle and an honor that I still have a place of business and I'm sure Ashley can agree that we can serve and love the people in our community.

Dr. Jill 02:28

I know she and I both have a heart for: How can we love and serve those people? Not only the people who've lost everything, but also our friends, family, and community members who still have businesses that have been affected by the smoke, the damage, and the air quality. Again, we're going to go into that today and I'm going to let Ashley tell a little bit of her story.

Dr. Jill 02:47

Just a couple of fun facts. Ashley has been a dear friend. We went to Switzerland together a couple of years ago for a Swiss mountain retreat and really got to know each other very well as we lost our luggage and had all kinds of funny experiences in Switzerland. That was how we met and got to know each other. And we found that, as female business owners in this small community, we have a lot in common and share a lot of the same goals.

Dr. Jill 03:12

She owns Renew Movement in Louisville. I probably won't say this right, Ashley, but it's an amazing place to get movement and physical therapy. She has some unique methods of doing that. Not only that, she has been a real mover and shaker in community service. She's one of the leading advocates for helping her community. She also now offers IV therapies in her clinic. We have a lot in common. Welcome, Ashley.

Dr. Jill 03:38

Greg, I want to introduce you. We met over dinner about a year ago and found out we had a lot in common. He reached out to me.

Dr. Jill 03:47

It's funny because when I got back in town—the fires were on Thursday, and Friday morning was crazy because the snow came in—all of a sudden we had this snowstorm on top of the fires. Thankfully, it put most of that out. I flew in that

Friday and on Sunday, I got my staff and sub-lesers together. I said: "Hey guys, we need to mobilize. We need to think about what we can do for this community in shock right now." We sat in my office, choked through the smoke for an hour, and started praying for our community. Then we sat down and said, "What can we do?" What we realized was that we needed to go where the needs are. We don't need to think about: "What do we want to do?" But we need to say, "What are the needs?" And we knew. We prayed that as the week progressed and as the months progressed, the needs would become evident and that we could just be there in our capacity to respond.

Dr. Jill 04:36

We already had a lot of vitamin companies and things mobilize and help us. We're going to be putting together relief packs with some basic nutrients and basic immune support for anyone in the community who's been affected because this is a stressor and the stressor affects our health. So that's my little area where I can help.

Dr. Jill 04:52

What's come across in the last 24 hours is Ashley and I realized that in our communities and the buildings that are left, the outdoor air quality is horrendous. Ashley is going to tell you in just a moment about her employees and herself. But I can speak for myself and my employees: We're having trouble breathing. Getting a simple breath even outside is difficult right now with the air quality. We're having burning lungs, we're having headaches, and we're having symptoms. So what's come about literally in the last few hours is that we need to get clean air to our community.

Dr. Jill 04:52

You know me. You've heard me say it a million times: Clean air, clean water, clean food. I am dedicating my services and my abilities to getting contacts and air filters to our community. We're going to ask for donations, because we've already secured a massive discount from one of our main air filter suppliers, Austin Air. I'm going to ask for donations from some of the other ones as well. We're going to try to mobilize some funds to buy air filters for anyone in our community who needs them, because some of the buildings that are still standing are the worst. In fact, one of my employees has a child in daycare in the midst of the devastation and her

child can't go back to daycare because the air quality is not safe. Clean air is a big deal.

Dr. Jill 06:08

And I'll just tell you now and I'll tell you later: Right now, if you want more information, we're getting together with nonprofits, and we will have more information on donations. But right now, if you want to be signed up to get information on how you can help with clean air, just email my clinic at cleanair@flatironfunctionalmedicine.com, and in the next couple of days, you'll get information. If you do want to send a donation, you can put "clean air" in the memo, and you can send it to the care of my clinic. But like I said, we'll have more information coming out as we go.

Dr. Jill 06:41

Greg, I want to introduce you, and then I want to go back to Ashley and have her tell us about community. And thank you all for letting me talk for so long. Greg has dedicated his life to service to others. Like I said, we met. And the miracle—[going] back to that Sunday meeting—was that I prayed that the resources and people that I would need to help my clinic and my community would come. That very weekend, I got a text from Greg, who said: "Hey, Jill. I deal with fire disasters and restoration. If there's anything I can do... Can I help?"

Dr. Jill 07:09

I could just cry, Greg, because you are like an angel. You came in, you looked at my office on Sunday before the business even opened, and you gave me some tips on how to start to remediate. You have been there this entire week with any questions I have and now, of course, you are giving your knowledge to the public. I am so blessed by you, and I'm so grateful for you reaching out. Again, I have no doubt that was an answered prayer, because you were there in my time of need.

Dr. Jill 07:35

He's a licensed engineer contractor, a Colorado State-certified firefighter, an NTSB-certified first responder in all 50 states, HAZMAT operation certified, and holds many other awards and certifications. He received training through the Department of Homeland Security, the National Transportation Safety Board, the State of Colorado, and the American Red Cross. He's a Colorado resident, friend,

colleague, and expert in emergency response. We are so blessed to have him here today. And after we get to hear from both Ashley and Greg, I will try to respond to some of your questions as well. So thank you for that!

Dr. Jill 08:08

Ashley, I want to hear from you. You've been in the midst of this, just like me. Share with us a little bit about your experience as a community member and then also as a business owner.

Ashley O'Connell 08:18

I grew up in Boulder, Colorado. I've lived in Louisville for 15 years. The fire was about 1,000 feet from my house. Miraculously, we were spared. We thought we had lost it. We evacuated from our home to my business, which is in Old Town Louisville. We then had to evacuate my business to Lafayette, where we were then evacuated to another location.

Ashley O'Connell 08:42

Immediate needs: We've taken care of a lot of things, but we got back and recognized that we can't breathe. And I don't mean figuratively... I mean, as well, figuratively, but literally. I own a business, this wellness center in downtown Louisville, and my coaches are having headaches. They're having spontaneous nosebleeds. Our chests are burning. We're suffering the long-term damage of this. There are so many particulates in the air. It's not just the victims of the burning themselves, but the people who have homes that are still standing. To hear of the amount of soot and what's happening inside of these homes is catastrophic. Then we pile stress on top of that. People in Louisville and Superior are suffering. They really, really, really are.

Ashley O'Connell 09:30

Everybody in the community is heartbroken. And we really need to focus on health. That's what I love about you, Jill, is that you go after it as so strong and so determined. And I do think raising some money and getting some healthy air. We need air, literally and figuratively, right now.

Dr. Jill 09:50

Yes. Thank you, Ashley. And thanks for sharing. Literally, we just decided this about 20 minutes ago: "Hey, can you come on this interview with Greg?"—because I think your perspective is so important as a business owner. And what I realized too is: "Oh my gosh, I'm struggling. How do I get employees back in and everything?" And it's all of us. It's not just me. And just for us to know that we're all in it together... And the air quality is so important. Thank you so much for joining us. Any other things that you want to share or [mention concerning] how people can respond?

Ashley O'Connell 10:25

We went and launched some donation things and clothing, and so many of these needs for the community are being met. There are so many wonderful organizations involved. I'm so grateful. But this is, I don't want to say a blind spot, but it's not something that's being covered. An absolute need for everybody living in this community is clean air. I think that this is critical. We have so many people wanting to donate and help—[ones] who are local and [ones who] aren't local—and this is a wonderful way to put funds towards helping people with their long-term health.

Ashley O'Connell 11:01

And we talk about those who are impacted, like myself—granted, my home is still standing and I'm so grateful, but many of my friends' homes are not—and the collateral damage, the trauma, and the long-term health ramifications of this entire catastrophic event. So [it's about] getting people to bond together. And this is a wonderful endeavor for our community. And I can't thank you enough.

Dr. Jill 11:23

Thank you. And thank you, Ashley, because you are a leader. Like I said, you are always there and responding to the needs [of the community]. You are a role model for this. Thank you, thank you. Thanks for joining us on short notice. We will be in touch because we'll be making this effort for clean air.

Ashley O'Connell 11:38

Absolutely. I am here to do anything and everything. And I adore you, Jill, from the bottom of my heart.

Dr. Jill 11:43

It's mutual. Thank you so much, Ashley.

Ashley O'Connell 11:47

All right. Have a good one. It was nice to meet you, Greg.

Greg Tenney 11:48

You as well, Ashley. Thank you.

Ashley O'Connell 11:53

Bye-bye.

Dr. Jill 11:54

So, Greg, let's turn to focus on you and your expertise. You've put together several resources, some sheets of tips and things. Obviously, I just introduced you and you've got quite a background in disaster relief and all kinds of situations like this. How did you first get involved in fire, disaster, and remediation? You're a contractor, so you know how to fix things. That's the core. But how did this come about? Was it accidental or...

Greg Tenney 12:24

Yes, I would say that it was accidental. Like most people who ended up in insurance restoration about 30 years ago, I went to Florida after Hurricane Andrew. That was the first exposure that I had to dealing with a disaster on a major scale. I have continued branching out into fire, floods, and vehicle accidents—all kinds of property damage that you can think of.

Greg Tenney 13:02

I know that we have spoken several times this week and I just want to reiterate again, Jill, first and foremost that people need to be aware and take care of themselves right now. Personal care is so important. This is PTSD. This is the same as if you're returning from a military campaign and you've seen friends, acquaintances, and people that you've lived and worked with. They're not there anymore. This is, as you said, the largest disaster in our state's history. People need to talk, cry, and reach out to friends and family. First and foremost, take care of yourself, your children, your pets, and all of these things.

Dr. Jill 13:54

Thank you, Greg, for saying that. My clinic is standing and my home is standing. And, granted, I am so much better off. I don't want to compare myself to those who

have lost everything. But for all of us, there's a trauma around seeing our friends and neighbors lose everything and seeing the devastation. When I first drove in, you could see it on the news, but when you drive by the person, I was in my car and I just wept because I saw there's nothing left in that area that I drove by every single day. And it's all around. The crazy thing is the devastation.

Dr. Jill 14:26

I'm in this epicenter. My clinic is fine. Yet there are communities that are gone on every side. I take that as, first of all, a huge blessing but also a gift. I want to serve because here I am left in the middle of this. And I'm sure that, with your experience, you've seen all of that. But thank you for giving us permission to grieve and to have those emotions. And even those of you who maybe didn't lose everything that are in the midst of this, it's still shocking and it's trauma.

Dr. Jill 14:57

And, Greg, what I saw too, as I was talking a couple of days ago to several patients and close friends who did lose everything—and I know the signs of shock—I was like: "Wow, they're still in complete shock!" And that's normal. When we sat down Sunday and had a meeting in my office, we realized that we need sustainable support, which means this is going to be for months and months. There are a lot of people right now with their eyes on our community. The president is visiting. And that's going to go away in a few weeks. But the people who are here—it's going to be a long-term need.

Dr. Jill 15:30

Tell us a little bit about that. You've seen disasters and things. Obviously, homes don't get built overnight. We have to clear the debris. What kind of timeline would we be looking at? And what are some of the longer-term needs that people may have that they aren't thinking about right now?

Greg Tenney 15:49

In reality, Jill, it's probably going to be two to three years before most of the homes and businesses are able to be reconstructed. I've seen resources being mobilized from all across the metro area and the state, and I have friends who own other restoration companies. All of us are mobilizing. There's going to be new home construction for the ones that have lost everything.

Greg Tenney 16:20

As Ashley was talking about and you've mentioned, you didn't lose your home. Those people have to also understand that they have suffered a disaster, just as the person who lost everything next door. It may not be to the same degree, but those people also need to allow themselves the opportunity to grieve. The loss is real.

Greg Tenney 16:54

Often, people in general [are like]: "We've got to hurry up." "We've got to deal with the insurance." "We've got to figure out how to get a place to stay." "And we have to do" this and this and this and the to-do list stretches on into infinity. But you have to stop and take time. Seek spiritual solace with your church, your mosque, your temple, or whatever it is. Talk with others. Pray, meditate, exercise, and drink tons of water. Do all of these things to take care of yourself, because this is a long-term process. This isn't going to be better, like you said, in two weeks from now, when the news media moves on to the next thing and President Biden is gone, working on the next disaster. This is going to be very real and impact these people's lives for the next three years at the very least.

Dr. Jill 17:49

Thank you for saying that. From that perspective, obviously, this clean air is huge, but taking in proper nutrition [is also]. I'm sure that for those who are displaced, it's harder to get good food and make things that you normally would make at home. That was the thought on Sunday when we met, that it's so easy to be like: "Oh my gosh, let's do this and do this and we have to do it quick!" If we just pause and breathe—if we can get a good breath of clean air—and, like you said, connect with people and take the time to grieve...

Dr. Jill 18:21

What I know about trauma too is that trauma gets stuck in our bodies if we don't release the emotion. This is a perfect time when you do want to connect with friends and family, talk about it, and meet with people. I know they're having community meetings virtually over the next few days in each neighborhood that's been affected by Louisville, so you can get that community. And I'm sure there are also groups and communities and some of the next-door things online. And just

staying in touch with your neighbors, I think, is really important.

Dr. Jill 18:50

Let's move on to practical [steps] because you have a list I have here in front of me that you created. It's super practical. I was thrilled. Let's talk about, [while] you're facing this devastation—whether your home has been damaged, you've lost everything, or you're in the community and you're dealing with soot—how do you start with insurance? How do you start organizing your thoughts? Give us practical tips on that—dealing with what to do after the fire.

Greg Tenney 19:19

One of the things that I want to let people know is that over the next couple of weeks and months, you're going to be hit with an incredible amount of information. None of us would be able to remember everything that is going to be thrown at us or that we're going to be confronted with. Our very first recommendation in any situation like this is to buy yourself a nice, thick, spiral-bound notebook with pockets. What you need to start doing is writing down all of these questions that you have. For people who have suffered actual damage to their property, whether they lost it or it's just smoked, write down your claim number, the adjuster, and your insurance company.

Greg Tenney 20:12

One of the things that I also want to remind people of is that almost all of us have property insurance for our homes and businesses. Really understand that your best option at this moment in time is to partner with your insurance company and especially your adjuster, because they are going to be one of your best resources to assist you in returning to a sense of normalcy. I recommend the spiral-bound notebook with pockets so you can tuck in receipts. You can write down, as I said, your claim number, your adjuster's name, and all his contact information. You can write down any questions that you have, and they're going to appear over and over. "What do I do about this? We're going to be confronted with temporary housing issues and food."

Greg Tenney 21:06

For people who have lost their homes, you're going to have to go out and buy clothes. You don't think about things like that, but these things add up rather

quickly when you have to go out and buy seven new pairs of underwear and t-shirts and all of the things that we take for granted. Personal care items like a toothbrush, a hairbrush, and a comb are just part of our daily lives and they are gone now. That would be the very first thing that I would tell people to do: Get yourself a notebook and start writing these things down. You can also use that as a release for your own emotions. You can track how you're dealing with it.

Dr. Jill 21:51

Yes, thank you for that bit. And what I found with the patients, people, and friends that I've talked to—it's that state of shock. It's easy to repeat yourself. I had one friend who lost their home. Their son is nine and he went in the next day as school had to take a test. He was like, "Mom, I couldn't think." He made me want to cry because, of course you can't think. The executive function in our brain is meant to organize details, make a plan, and follow it through. When you're in shock, that executive function is gone. Have some compassion on yourself, whether you've lost this or you're in the community dealing with this, because it may take a little time for you to have a lot of short-term memory and even the ability to put together a plan. It's like your shock and fight-or-flight system takes over and prevents your ability to think logically. So that's all normal. I want to normalize that. And if you ask questions twice or three times or you have to write things down, have compassion with yourself right now because that is so normal until the shock wears off.

Dr. Jill 22:56

You had some things in here that I thought were helpful about the practical language of insurance that I didn't know. Do you want to talk a little bit about the basic terms if you're dealing with an insurance company? The things you might want to know—maybe the top three or four terms that are critical.

Greg Tenney 23:12

Yes. Whenever you're dealing with a new situation, there's going to be a language that is particular to that situation, especially in an industry that's as widespread as property insurance. If you can educate yourself and get a little bit of knowledge, it can help you a great deal as you're moving forward through this process. They're simple things. You'll hear adjusters talk to you about your ALE. What does ALE mean? What that means is your additional living expenses. They're those things that I mentioned a moment ago, like your toothbrush or clothes that you need to

purchase. All of those things are now going to generally be part of your covered loss. That is the additional living expense that you are going to take on as a result of not being able to live in your home and having lost everything.

Greg Tenney 24:08

There are different kinds of coverage, like replacement cost value. You'll hear people talk about the RCV or ACV, the actual cash value. We all know that if you buy a new car and drive it off the lot, its value decreases, say 10%, when you drive it off the lot. That's called depreciation and that's the difference between the replacement cost value and the actual cash value. Most policies in Colorado are written so that you have a replacement cost value so your home will be restored to what it was right before this devastating loss happened.

Greg Tenney 24:46

Things like personal property. We have resources that I've built over the years. We have lists that come. Some of them are prefilled out to list items, like in your living room or your dining room—things that you don't necessarily think about—the end tables, the coffee table, or the couch. We have some of these things already listed so that they will spark individuals' memories. "Oh yes, and we had the bookcase over there." You're going to need to make a list of your personal property—all of the things that you own that are not part of the house and are not attached to the house—because those have to be replaced as well.

Greg Tenney 25:31

Trying to make a list can seem overwhelming at first. That's why we've separated it out. We go room by room with the sheets to help people. For instance, in your kitchen, you have all these small appliances, a coffee maker, and various things. You don't have to do it all at once but it is something that you need to put in your notebook so that you keep track of them. And as the days go by, you will think of additional things.

Greg Tenney 26:04

So many of us now have smartphones that automatically save our pictures someplace in the cloud. I don't even know how to access them or do anything with them. But I know they're there because it keeps telling me I'm out of memory. You can access those. Most of us would have to ask our kids, but get those photographs,

especially if you've had weddings, anniversaries, birthday parties, or any kind of function at your home where you may have had photographs taken. Ask friends and relatives for assistance with those kinds of things, because those will also serve as ways to jar your memory.

Greg Tenney 26:49

That's going to be one of your big jobs as a homeowner right now when you've lost everything—trying to recreate everything that you own. It's going to seem as though it's an overwhelming task. But if you take it, as I said, room by room, approach it slowly and methodically... And realize it doesn't have to be done in a week or two weeks. You have a year under most policies in Colorado to make these lists and present them to your insurance company. Once again, partner with your adjuster, because he or she is going to probably be in the best position to help you move forward on some of these things.

Dr. Jill 27:31

That's super helpful, Greg, because yes, when you just talked about that, it's kind of overwhelming to think about. It's like, 'Wow!' One thing that you and I talked about in my business was being underinsured. It sounds like you've had a lot of experience with that. What's your experience with the percentage of people who are underinsured and what they might be able to do about that?

Greg Tenney 27:57

There are several aspects to being underinsured. First and foremost, the best resource that you're going to have is to talk with your insurance company and discuss what your coverages are, because very, very often, your adjuster will be able to look into your policy. I can tell you that one year ago—there was a major house fire out in Pine, Colorado—the adjuster looked deeply into their policy and was able to find a 10% additional coverage for debris removal. Since the loss was half a million dollars and they were very close to their policy limits, all of a sudden, the insurance adjuster had found an additional \$50,000 in coverage to help them rebuild their home.

Greg Tenney 28:53

I know that we've all heard—I don't want to say horror stories because that's really not true—anecdotes from people about how they were rooked by their insurance

company. I want to comfort people and just let them know that, in the majority of cases, that is not the case. These people who are out there, honestly, are like you and I, Jill. They want to help people who are in the middle of this horrific loss right now. That's their job and they are the best equipped to do that.

Dr. Jill 29:26

Yes. I love the [advice to] partner with your adjuster. In my experience so far, I've been shocked. She's very much like: "Here's an idea that we can do." I'm like: "Wow, you want to really help me! This is great." I love that.

Dr. Jill 29:41

What about going back to the property? To me, there are lots of dangers. If you're walking around and there's embers or there's electrical... Clearly, our community has taken care of all the gas. I think gas has been restored and heat has been restored to most homes. But they methodically, over the [course of the] week, house by house, checked electrical and gas. But what are some of the hidden dangers around a site that's been burned, flooded, or damaged that you'd want to warn people about from a contractor's perspective?

Greg Tenney 30:13

When you've had a home that's completely damaged, I would say one of the biggest dangers that you're going to face, you've already touched on it... And I know, living through these last two years, that we are all so sick and tired of hearing about masks. But before you walk onto the building site, you're breathing in air constantly. Most of us are [taking] 8-12 breaths every minute. You have to wear a mask before you start sifting through these ashes. Today, the building materials that we use in houses are filled with so many man-made products. A lot of them use oil as the basis. Most plastics are derived from oil. When these things burn, they release incredibly toxic gases. I understand that they're not in the air at the moment, but the minute that you begin sifting through the ash and looking for those momentos from your life and trying to find the things that meant so much to you, you've got to be wearing respiratory protection because these things can be deadly.

Greg Tenney 31:32

We, who work in this industry on a regular basis, have to do it. I am legally responsible for teaching my employees how to wear masks properly and which

mask to use. The N95 particulate mask is probably the best thing that most people can do for themselves right now.

Greg Tenney 31:53

The other thing that I would caution people about is that when you're going into your property—especially if it's been completely burned—if you have a basement or crawl space, be very, very aware of the potential for collapse. It's going to look like everything is fine, but you can't see underneath one or two feet of ash how badly destroyed the structural members of the floor or the crawl space system are.

Greg Tenney 32:21

The other thing is that for a lot of people whose homes were not destroyed, Xcel Energy went out and purchased 20,000 electric heaters. They were just giving them to people because they knew the gas had been shut off and they were trying to help "mitigate the damage." As property owners, we are all responsible for mitigating any additional damage and that means preventing the water pipes from freezing. That's one of the biggest things that happens after a fire, especially in late fall and during the winter. We've got no heat, so all of a sudden the pipes start to freeze. And you may not know they're frozen until the heat comes back on a week or two down the road. But then, now you have—

Dr. Jill 33:10

Then, Greg, we have flooding and mold.

Greg Tenney 33:13

Right.

And I know I've heard it on several news broadcasts that if we had gotten the snow 18 hours earlier, it wouldn't have happened. Even though it did happen and we didn't get the snow until we did, one of the things that we can be incredibly grateful for is that we got this moisture that tamped down all the ash. It wetted the debris. The ash cloud and all of these particulates that can be so dangerous to people's health are trapped on the ground right now, under the snow and by the water. It's one of the best things that could have happened because when we're doing demolition and cleanup on disasters like this, one of our major ways to combat the

dust and particulates is to continually keep the site wet so that we're not releasing the dust into the atmosphere.

Dr. Jill 34:15

Wow, this is so practical. I love it. Even in our building, we had no heat, so we dripped the faucets. We had the water running. Everything was fine. But can you imagine the devastation? You have all these burned homes and next door, you have this water... And even the ones that were doused with water, I saw that. I was like, "Thank goodness for the firefighters." But honestly, that home has a lot to deal with too because with that wetness and moisture—you and I know, I work with mold all the time and you do as well—there's going to be a lot of mold that's going to come in the next several months as well in these homes. And that worries me. Like I said, I'm going to do everything I can as a physician to educate people on mold.

Dr. Jill 34:50

I also wanted to quickly read [something I wrote], Greg. Ironically, I wrote an article before any of this happened on wildfire smoke and some of the stuff that's released. I have a list here: Acetyl aldehydes, acid gases, sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (that's from charred and burned woods), benzene, toluene, styrene, heavy metals, and dioxins. These are all super toxic things to your body. For 20 years, I've been testing patients' urine for toxic loads, and I already see these. I would not be surprised if our exposure, some of the stuff Ashley and I are describing in our community, and the air quality are because of benzene, toluene, and heavy metals. Literally, if I'm near my office outside, my lungs are burning, so I know there's stuff in the air.

Greg Tenney 35:39

And so many of those chemicals that you just mentioned are used in all aspects of building today, from the glue and mastic that we use to put down laminate floors or hardwood floors or carpet—all of these things. When they burn those gases and those chemicals are released into the atmosphere, they're going to be sitting in the ashes that people are going to have to sift through to try to recover a portion of their lives.

Dr. Jill 36:13

Yes. So again, if you're out there and anywhere near this, you want to be sure to wear those masks. Get the good filtration N95s or even the ones that have charcoal

filters for painters. Those are as good or even better. You probably know about this in the industry—I'm just learning so you can correct me if I say this wrong—there's particulate matter and we can measure that in air quality meters. And 10 and 5 particulate matter is the larger dust, pollen, and debris. Usually, it's visible. But there's a 2.5 micron; it's about the size of E. coli. Viruses are a little smaller than that. But this is pretty invisible and it can get suspended in the air. Right now, some of the stuff that we're breathing, Greg, would you say that's probably 2.5 [microns] or less that are suspended [in the air]? It's almost like the particulate in the dust gets the chemical on it. Do you want to explain a little bit about that?—because you talked to me about the blinds and the static and sometimes how that particulate can be where the chemicals attach. Is there anything worth talking about in that realm?

Greg Tenney 37:11

You're absolutely right. Gases are obviously different than particulates. Particulates are relatively simple—depending on the size, as you mentioned—to block using a mask. If you have a situation where you're fairly certain that these toxic gases have been released—like benzene, toluene, and xylene, and all of these things that are used in so many of our building materials—you're absolutely right that that's going to require a more advanced mask if you will, [like] one of the full-face respirators, which have a charcoal-activated [filter] and other filters that will stop these gases from getting into our bodies.

Greg Tenney 38:02

You also have to remember—so many of us don't think about this—it isn't just breathing. When you touch these things, they are also absorbed through your skin. That's why we recommend wearing a good, solid pair of nitrile or rubber gloves, because when you get these substances on you, they are absorbed through your skin as well.

Dr. Jill 38:29

Yes, thanks for saying that, because that's exactly it. So many of the new drugs, chemicals, and even natural hormones that we use are topical because our skin is a great reservoir to get things into. And at least washing your hands and everything before and after [can help]. It's kind of like COVID has us very well trained. But it's

more than that, because even those N95s aren't going to completely protect you from the gases.

Greg Tenney 38:56

You're absolutely correct. Particulate masks will not protect you against gases at all. Gases are not stopped by particulate masks, even an N95 or high-quality surgical masks. In that case, you need a gas-filtration respirator.

Dr. Jill 39:21

I'm glad you clarified. That's also one of the reasons—back to our air filters, the two companies that I'm partnering with and trying to give them to the community; and I'm open if any of you out there want to donate other ones—I want a filter that has a great HEPA filter that will go down to 0.3 microns, which is usually the smallest particle size. In our office, Austin Airs filter viral particles that are small. But also, as Greg said, you want a carbon or charcoal filter in there to do as much as possible with the VOCs—the volatile organic chemicals and compounds—which are fumes. And nothing but charcoal and some sort of activated porous substance. That's how you get those filters. That's why those big masks with the two charcoal filters on either side that painters use or that auto body shops use are the kinds of masks that Greg's talking about if you have an exposure that's going to filter out the fumes.

Dr. Jill 40:10

And I wonder, Greg... You may not know the answer to this; I don't know that I do. But as Ashley and I talk about the burning and the symptoms that we're having, we've done a lot of cleaning already and we have filters going. I wonder if some of this is more the fumes than the particulate. Any thoughts on what might still be left over in the air? Or maybe it's both?

Greg Tenney 40:28

Right now, it's so recent. You know how much cleaning your building owners have already done. You walk in from the outside and it's there immediately. You still smell it. It has not gone away. Some of it is being masked somewhat by some of the cleaning chemicals that they use. But when you walk in, you're still noticing it. This is not going to be something that is going to dissipate in a week.

Dr. Jill 40:59

Yes. The great news is that with Greg's help... And I am taking an abundance of

measures so that we can restore that for the health of our employees and patients.

Dr. Jill 41:11

In our last few minutes, Greg—we've covered a lot—any other thoughts or things that we haven't covered related to either people dealing with this or even the community in general?

Greg Tenney 41:22

Yes. Here's something. I want to, first of all, preface it by saying I am not, by any stretch of the imagination, a mental health professional or even particularly mentally healthy myself. [laughter] But as I sat here this morning, I made a list of a few things. As you said, we put together a brochure about replacing documents and resources that people can turn to at this point in time. Also, the after-the-fire handout that we've put together. I'm happy to give this as well. But these are some things that I would like to reiterate and get out there to people, especially for dealing with their children: The first thing is to limit media exposure. Don't let your kids watch 24/7 how horrible the disaster is. That's what sells news, but that's not good for your children or your mental health.

Greg Tenney 42:34

Focus on the positive things. Focus on each other—the fact that you have each other. Recognize and share your feelings. I don't mean to be touchy-feely but we all know what that means. Recognize and share your feelings, especially with the people who are close to you. Reach out to and accept help from other people. Be willing. Do things that you guys enjoy together as a family so that you can begin building new positive memories after the fact. I know this is going to sound crazy but be thankful. Be thankful that you have your family, because, in the end, that's what matters to all of us. Stay connected with your family, your friends, your church, and the community groups that you're part of.

Greg Tenney 43:26

Realize that recovery—physically for your home or offices, mentally and spiritually for all of us—is going to take time. It's not going to be a quick process. You need to do this on a day-by-day basis. And I know you will love this, Jill, because you told me before that this is one of your favorite words: Just remember the resilience of the human body and spirit. We can get through this together, and we can come out

on the other side stronger and better than we were, especially as our community pulls together.

Dr. Jill 44:08

Oh, Greg, what a beautiful way to end! I so appreciate you. I so appreciate all the time and effort you've already given to me, my clinic, and the community. In just a moment, I want to be sure that people can find you. We'll give them your website and email. But thank you! Thank you from the bottom of my heart! I really mean that when I said you're like an angel, you were an answered prayer for me. And I know you're going to be that for a lot of other people who are suffering.

Dr. Jill 44:33

Thank you all for listening. And I'm just going to repeat what I said earlier. You will have more details so probably by the time this is recorded for the podcast and YouTube, we'll have a lot more specific details. But right now, we're setting up a fund to donate air filters from two of the main companies that I work with to anyone in our community who needs them. That would include homes standing or homes gone, because the ones who still have homes and businesses standing need it just as much right now. If you want to be part of that donation effort, we would love your support. You can email cleanair@flatironfunctionalmedicine.com and we'll get you in touch with exactly how to set that up and do that if you're interested. Thank you for listening today.

Greg, thank you. How can people find or reach you? Let's get your email and website.

Greg Tenney 45:21

The easiest way you can reach out to me is via email. It's my name, Greg@TheRestorationGuild.com.

Dr. Jill 45:32

Awesome. Perfect. So email Greg at Greg@TheRestorationGuild.com. I'll be sure to put that in the comments here and wherever you're watching or listening to this. Thank you all again. Thank you for your prayers from afar. Our community needs it and we appreciate it so much. And yet, like you said, Greg, we're here, we're alive and for the things that matter, I am so grateful. Thanks again for joining us today.

Greg Tenney 45:56

Thank you, Dr. Jill.