

A Little-Known Secret To Fix Your Vagus Nerve, Banish Constipation, Use Nicotine As A Biohack & Much More!

Ben Greenfield Fitness Podcast

Guest: Dr. Diana Driscoll

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A few months ago, I briefly mentioned on a podcast that I discovered that by taking a specific blend of nutrients to support my vagus nerve, I was able to completely get rid of morning constipation. Today, my podcast guest, Dr. Diana Driscoll, is the individual who actually designed that blend, and who knows a heckuva lot about the vagus nerve and its interplay with our bodies.

Dr. Diana Driscoll is an optometrist who had always been healthy - she was also a bit of an exercise fanatic who also geeked out with nutrition. But despite this history, she was struck down by an illness that few understood and was disabled for over a decade. Ultimately, she was diagnosed with something called POTS (Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome) - a disorder of the autonomic nervous system and was told there was no cure for this mysterious condition.

When her children also became ill and doctors had no answers, she formed Genetic Disease Investigators to formally study these conditions. Dr. Driscoll is considered to be “the patients researcher”, bypassing notoriously slow academic research institutions to get answers quickly. Twelve years later, she is now the director of POTS Care – the only POTS Clinic focused on searching for the underlying cause of POTS, and treating it at its source. She has received two patents to date, and is now not only helping patients who are ill -- she is reaching out to healthy folks who want to improve their quality of life and maximize their health, even into old age.

Dr. Driscoll graduated summa cum laude from both The University of Houston College of Optometry and The University of Texas at Austin. She is a geek, through and through. She is a member of the International Society of Neurovascular Disease, the American Headache Society, the Medical Advisory Board for EDS Network C.A.R.E.S, the American Optometric Association, the Tear Film and Ocular Surface Society, and served as a medical advisor for the Ehlers-Danlos National Foundation.

Her peer-reviewed medical abstracts include those involving vascular abnormalities in the fundus of POTS patients, the etiology of left ventricular diastolic dysfunction, and the use of acetazolamide in multiple sclerosis. She is the author of “[The Driscoll Theory](#)” and “[Your Eyes and EDS](#)”, and was the chief author of the “[Ophthalmology Medical Resource Guide](#)” for [Ehlers-Danlos National Foundation](#).

Dr. Driscoll is the recipient of numerous awards for patient advocacy and continues to donate her time to help others across the globe through her online forum and videos on YouTube.

Her work in chronic inflammation, the autonomic nervous system, collagen disorders, and organ dysfunction can help others live their best life, as well as have their best body and mind.

During our discussion, you'll discover:

-Diana's story and how she first became interested in her field of work...8:15

- Contracted a virus during a missions trip to Costa Rica, but she was unable to kick it
 - Difficulty breathing
 - Poor sleep
 - Racing heart
 - Poor digestion
 - Developed a tremor
 - Memory loss
 - Difficulty handling any type of stress
- Her kids began to develop similar symptoms
- Treatment included more exercise; but nothing worked
- Was disabled due to fatigue for over a decade

-The results of Diana's studies and research...14:15

- "Layers of discovery" over the course of several years
- [Diana's blog](#)
- [The Driscoll Theory](#)
- Abnormal inter cranial pressure
- Inflammation was a factor
- The exaggerated symptoms actually made it easier to discover the causes
- Genetics play a large role (her children experienced the same symptoms)
- Started by looking at the eyes (great window into systemic illness)

-A working definition of POTS...21:20

- POTS is not a disease, it's a symptom
- There was no specific diagnosis for her condition
- Dysfunction of the autonomic nervous system
- ALS/Parkinson's begin with POTS symptoms
- Astronauts get POTS while in space, due to the lack of gravity

-How dysfunction of the vagus nerve is correlated with POTS...24:30

- The abnormal inter cranial pressure is indicative of a poorly functioning vagus nerve
- When symptoms occur simultaneously (difficulty breathing, racing heart, gut dysfunction, etc.) it could be the vagus nerve
- Ileocecal valve is linked to POTS and nerve function
 - Vagus nerve controls the function of the valve
- Gastro motility linked to migrating motor complex (cleaning up digestive system)
 - Triggered by signals from the vagus nerve

-The nicotine-induced method Diana devised to repair the ileocecal valve...30:10

- A kidney stone turned up 3 days after being cleared for kidney stones
- The doctor confirmed the ileocecal valve was problematic
- A surgeon refused to open the valve
- Two parts of vagus nerve: preganglionic (extremely long) and postganglionic (extremely short)
- Diana tried to stimulate the postganglionic nerve
- The vagus nerve is a nicotinic acido cholinergic nerve (nicotine is the imitator of the vagal neurotransmitter)
- She put a nicotine patch over the side of the ileocecal valve
 - Within hours, the symptoms began to subside
- This changed the way Diana viewed the cause of the problem:
 - It wasn't an autoimmune condition affecting the receptors
 - It was either a preganglionic vagus nerve or a neurotransmitter problem
- Ultimately nicotine was not a viable long-term solution

-The long-term solution Diana used to address her problem...40:10

- [Parasym Plus](#)(use code GREENFIELD for 10% off on all products)
- Established goals:
 - Use supplements already deemed safe by the FDA
 - Wanted it to work in spite of genetic issues
 - Stimulate postganglionic nerve just as nicotine did
 - Cross the blood-brain barrier to help cognition
- Vagus nerve problems can be mistaken for acetylcholine production issues and vice versa
- [CHAT gene](#)provides instructions for making a protein called choline acetyltransferase
- It needed to account for nutrient malabsorption
- Finding the right balance between stimulation and overstimulation of the vagus nerve was a challenge
- Parasym is not a stool softener or a laxative; it allows a normal bowel movement by making the vagus nerve work properly
- Primary ingredients: Huperzine, Acetyl-L-carnitine, Alpha glycerylphosphorylcholine
- [Onnit Alpha Brain](#)(use BEN for a 10% discount)

- Diana was able to acquire a patent because of the unique blend (and balance) of ingredients; it's not just another nootropic

-The importance of the eyes in discovering vagal nerve issues...51:50

- Pupil size is an indicator of the condition of the autonomic nervous system
 - The sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems are out of balance, resulting in large pupil sizes
 - High sensitivity to light
 - Pupils responded more consistently than HRV

-How to test for acetylcholine problems...55:00

- - Need to look for symptoms; there's no codified way of testing for problems
 - Genetic tests can identify issues to a limited degree
 - BravermanTest.com
- BoundlessBook.com

-The amount of time one can expect to use Parasym...58:00

- Some will always need help
- Feeling "good enough" can be deceptive
- Vagus nerve is the anti-inflammatory pathway of the body
- Reasons typical stimulants of the vagus nerve won't work:
 - Damage to the nerve
 - Genetic issues
 - Some inflammatory psychochines block the release of acetylcholine

-The current direction of Diana's work and research in light of her discoveries thus far...1:03:00

-And much more...

Resources from this episode:

-[Parasym Plus](#)(use code GREENFIELD for 10% off on all products!)

-[Huperzine](#)

-[Tianchi](#)

-Diana's blog at PrettyIll.com

-The POTSCare.com website

-Book: [The Driscoll Theory](#) by Dr. Diana Driscoll

-My podcast with Dr. Sarah Myhill "[The Ultimate Guide To Beating Chronic Fatigue With Specific Vitamins, Minerals, Biohacks & More – A Conversation With Dr. Sarah Myhill.](#)"

-[The LUCY nicotine gum Ben chews](#)

-[Onnit Alpha Brain](#)(use BEN for a 10% discount)

-[Qualia Focus and Qualia Mind](#)

-[BravermanTest.com](#)

-[BoundlessBook.com](#)

-My podcast on "[32 Ways To Support The Vagus Nerve](#)"

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Do you have questions, thoughts or feedback for Diana or me? Leave your comments below and one of us will reply!