

Dr Nicky Keay: Exercise 4 Woman's Health,

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SPEAKERS

Nicky Keay, Joyce Harper

Joyce Harper 00:01

Welcome to my podcast. Why didn't anyone tell me this? With my guests, we are discussing health issues, questions you may have and debunking some of the many myths around our health. And it's a great privilege today to be talking to who I can say I feel confident now saying one of my recent friends, we're doing a group project together, which we'll talk about, but Dr. Nicky Keay, we're going to talk about exercise for women's health. Now, Nicky studied medicine at the University of Cambridge. She was part of the international medical team that developed an anti doping tests for growth hormone. Nicky is an honorary clinical lecturer in the Division of medicine at University College London. She lectures and research in the areas of exercise endocrinology. She works mainly with exercises, dancers and athletes, and with women experiencing perimenopause and menopause. And as we'll talk about towards the end of this podcast, she's part of the team that we've set up this year at University College London developing the UK first menopause Education and Support Program. Nicky is also medical adviser to Scottish ballet, and she is author of the book, hormones, health and human potential, which we are going to talk about today. But as always, we're going to start with hearing about Nicky's journey to date and why Nicky, did you want to become a doctor and where as your interest in exercise, especially dance come from?

Nicky Keay 01:38

Well, thanks so much Joyce, for inviting me to come on this I'm really looking forward to discussing with you. So I'm actually being enjoying dance and enjoying sport and activity came first before I decided to be a doctor. I was taken to dance classes by my grandmother as it happened from the age of four, because she herself was a pretty good dancer in her time, she actually got invited to bind the neck de Valois to join the company, which went on to include the greats like Margot Fontaine. So I was already going to dance and I was doing lots of sport and exercise, both in and out of school, really enjoying this and it sort of occurred to me, even at that young age as a you know, as a youngster and my early teens, it's like, I'm really enjoying doing dancing especially and sport and activity. But I wonder what it is that I do this because I enjoy it, because also I want to improve. And so it was really a question in my mind, why? How can how does exercise we know we all know, exercise makes you fitter. But I've just so curious, I was just wondering, I wonder what it is that happens inside our bodies. And that's where we come on to medicine. I particularly I mean, I enjoyed all the subjects at school, I have to be honest, but particularly science because it's answered questions like this. Also, it seemed to offer the possibility to answer questions like this. And so

that's why I decided to study medicine because I wanted to find more more about what happens inside the human body what's going on. Always with a mind that I could then go back and apply it. What I would learn as a doctor to you know, dancers athletes, but also people in general to explain that question of what it is why is exercise so good for us and how does it influence our hormones and our health. By the way, Joyce have tell people a little story that I did actually I was considering or thinking imagining I could be maybe a professional dancer and I did actually do an audition for the Royal Ballet school when I was a youngster I didn't get accepted because I know that was like the top ballet school so I thought well I got to try. And then it was at that point I realized that actually I was I was probably more is better from the point of view of what I could achieve and also what I could contribute by studying medicine and then going back and and dancing and of course keep dance keep dancing throughout my my studies and and my life advice as I've gone on to do so that's a long winded way of telling you how come I ended up studying medicine being a doctor and why I've got this particular interest in the this relationship between exercise and hormones.

Joyce Harper 04:28

I love it that we have got a lot of overlap there because I started dance when I was little I did ballet and tap as well. I always would love to have been a dancer. I really really loved it and we used to do shows when I was little and I think that gave me my my urge to sort of talk in public and perform in public. No one in my family dancers or your grandmother I've seen photos of it was absolutely inspirational. So I also wanted to figure out how the body worked and how disease worked, etc. So when you were saying that that was really when I was about nine or 10 was in my mind, and that's why I became a scientist. So I still dance I still still go to dance classes when I can I still go everyone knows I think by now I go day raving every. It's it's wonderful that we have older people all these raves during the days, we can dance for hours on end. And I've told my kids that and I can't dance anymore. That's it. I'm, you know, I'm, I'm going to bail out of this life was it's such a huge passion of mine. But we'll we'll talk about exercise in general as well. I mean, there's so many hobbies that people could do. But exercise, as you've said, as well, it's not just about losing weight. It's not what we look like, it's about our long, while our short and long term health. And in your book, you talk about how important exercise is for women's health. So can we delve into that a bit more? Can we you tell us about the short and long term health benefits of exercising?

Nicky Keay 06:11

Well, I'm delighted to be speaking to a fellow dancer. Joyce, by the way, but But you just described it just there. The short term benefits of doing exercise, and we say exercising, we're including anything, the most important thing is enjoyment. So for us, it happens to be dancing. But for others it might be walking, it might be running, it might be swimming, cycling, you know, exercise is the most important thing is What do you enjoy, because that is one of the big short term benefits of taking exercise, the enjoyment the mental health aspect of it, you're you enjoy doing something you you can really throw yourself into. And potentially also this might mean being with other people with friends, I mean, the people in my ballet class, for example, they remember when I was pregnant going to class, and that's a long time ago, seeing as my boys are now in their 20s. So you get the idea that doing exercise is of course very good for you. In terms of your short term mental health, social health, and also absolutely physical health. So that's probably more the longer term benefits, I would say because by the way, when we talk about health choice, we should point out that health isn't just, as you say, lots of people think is just the physical thing. It's the physical health, it's the mental health, and it's the social health. And so exercise ticks all these boxes. So in the short term, like I said, you just get a buzz from going and doing something you enjoy. And often with friends that you can do this enjoy the same thing. But in terms of longer term health benefits. Sort of, well, if we split that maybe down Joy's a

little bit further into the next days and weeks, you are your hormones sprang into action, and they drive those beneficial adaptations, the exercise you've done. So if you go and do some dancing, and you get a little bit out of puff right, then actually, that's very good. Because then gradually, in the next few days, your cardiovascular health, your heart health will improve the strength at which your heart pumps and the blood goes around your bodies has great metabolic health. So you have better blood glucose control, and body composition, in terms of you obviously would prefer to everyone needs a little bit of fat, but not too much. And so it really favors, you know, the body composition in terms of favoring muscle rather than fat, for example. So those those take a little bit longer to build up. So those are the long term beneficial effects. And of course, we should also mention bone, shouldn't we even swimming, although it's not putting weight through the skeleton, still, you're using your muscles, and those pull on the bones. But all these types of exercise we're describing whether it's dancing, running, whatever it is, these are all going to be helpful for the short term, you just feel good, and want to go back for doing more. But also, certainly absolutely in the long term is keeping you fit, physically fit, but also mental mentally fit, I would say if I can put it like that, especially in dance, you have to pick up things quickly. And you have to maybe learn new techniques in other sports or things like this. So exercise is definitely top of the list for your both short term and long term health and also I think exercise choice we should really stress is something everyone can do. You know, even if it's even if you don't have to have lots of money or equipment, you know, even everyone is free to go walking for example, then that's a very good starting point. So I think that's the great really big advantage of exercise. It's open to everybody. There's not a starting entry point you can just go out and walk around the block and that's that's a good point. If you're not haven't done much exercise before or if you have got a particular passion like we have done Since then, absolutely, you know, continue to do that. And it will really benefit you from all points of view of your health.

Joyce Harper 10:09

Thank you. You've mentioned a few times, though mental health. So I think many people don't realize again, they think of fitness and they think of bodybuilders, I think of muscles and a six pack. But as you said, our mental health is so important. And with exercise, that there's many real reasons why exercise improves our mental health. Did you want to say a little bit more about mental health?

Nicky Keay 10:35

Yeah, well, I mean, it gives you that feel good feeling. So those are the short term hormones, of course, the endorphins, etc, will more precisely neurotransmitters, so that's why you feel good, you get that buzz. But also the going back to what drives the adaptations, or the response to exercise, it's these internal hormones, these internal chemical messengers, which absolutely, we are all aware that they will have physical effects in terms of your body composition, and that we discussed just now. But these hormones also, by the way, are really important for our mental health, they go into the brain, and help us well think more clearly, if I can put it like that. And we feel good, it's mood as well, because you're much more likely more likely to, to be able to think clearly cognitive function, you know, just being on the ball. If you're in a good mood, we all know that if you're feeling, you know, like a bit. Yeah, dragged down. Actually, if you go and do some exercise that gets the blood flowing, gets the hormones pumping. And so actually, it improves your mental health in terms of your mood, but therefore, also your, you know, your your brain power, if you will. So I think that you're really it's a really important point just to bring out there that the exercise is for the physical. Yes, we all know that. But actually, people maybe forget, it's also above the neck as well. It's really helpful. And although we admire the superficial appearance, you know, the six pack or whatever, that is literally superficial. But actually, it doesn't really that well. I mean, if you're competing in a body, building

competition, I accept that that is your objective, actually, for that, that superficial look, if you will, but actually exercise is so much more than that. It's also the internet, our internal health, especially our hormones, internal health, including, you know, our brain, our mental health as well.

Joyce Harper 12:33

And your book, you talk a lot about the menstrual cycle, and how exercise and hormones interact during the menstrual cycle. So before we go, we're gonna go into each cardiovascular and muscle things in more in more detail in a moment. But I wanted to just pause and talk about the menstrual cycle. And we've been doing a lot of interviews with young girls, about how it's making them feel. And obviously, during our menstrual cycle, our hormones are varying quite a lot. So what advice would you give to women about exercising during their menstrual cycle? Should they do it different exercises at different times? And can exercise help them during that that's the whole cycle?

Nicky Keay 13:17

Well, there's a lot of debate about I mean, the menstrual cycle is underpinned by these amazing fluctuations, I'm saying amazing because the choreography of the hormones during the menstrual cycle is second to none. It's fantastic, really intricate. And these hormones, especially the hormones that the ovaries produce, during the menstrual cycle, the estrogen and the progesterone, you know, these vary a lot, which is important because each individual woman her own, she's got her own personal variation. Although we see in the textbooks, there's a nice little graph that oh, this is how it looks. But that doesn't mean that every single woman will look exactly like that. There might be variations on the theme in terms of the timing of these hormones, the levels of these hormones, and crucially, the individual biological response to the fluctuations of hormones. So you're quite right. Some women will go through their menstrual cycle and say, Hey, I felt fine throughout it, there wasn't a problem, you know, but others will notice big differences like cramps during menstruation at the beginning of the cycle, or for example, premenstrual symptoms. So I think that what it comes down to saying is there is not an absolute rule book or blueprint for this, you should do this exercise here. This exercise there in your cycle. I know there are some menstrual monitoring apps that do that. They give out very generic advice. They say, You should be feeling fantastic. Now just before ovulation you can really do that strength training, which it might be true for some women if by chance that is Truly where they are in their cycle. And it is at an if their estrogen is rising at that time, and if their biological response is, as we know, happens in the petri dish in the lab, you see, so there's all these ifs and buts along the way. So I think my best advice, honestly, Joyce's to women is, you do go on your field. So you can glance at these menstrual apps or old fashioned days, write it down with pen and paper, when you're when you have your periods. And then you can kind of work out where you might be in your cycle. But ultimately, it's on feel, you know, am I feeling really good? If you're feeling really good, then great. You know, go for it with your exercise. But if you're not feeling so good, and a little bit sluggish and a little bit tired, then be kind to yourself, say, Well, you know, I was planning on going for, I don't know, a really hard swim, but actually, I'm not feeling so great. Today, I'm going to just do a walk, maybe. And I will put off that swim to another time. And if you are sort of flexible in your approach like that, I think I'm hoping that, you know, especially the teenage girls won't find their menstrual cycles, so problematic, you know, getting worried that, oh, why am I feeling so bad, and I've got to force myself to do it. And, you know, the menstrual wraps that I should be feeling great. And I'm not, it's like, you have to kind of have confidence and get to know your own body and listen to your own body. But certainly, in terms of those women who do have issues problems, as you as you mentioned, boys, you know, we know that the menstruation can produce lots of can produce cramps. But actually, there's good evidence and studies to show that doing some gentle exercise, at least during that

time can actually be really helpful in those cramps. So I used to find actually, that going for going swimming, for example, was helpful during then, because it's sort of elongated the body and stretches, it stretches it out. But there's also evidence to show that something gentle like Pilates and again, with a little bit of stretching can help during if that's a problematic time for you. And similarly for the in the premenstrual stage. So in that luteal phase, so the bit in the couple of weeks before your period, if you're feeling low, and mood, just a bit fatigue, then again, just doing some gentle exercise can again help because we've said already how excellent exercises for for your mental health and your mood. So I think that's my best advice. Go with, well go with the flow and how you feel and don't be, you know, concerned if others are telling you all menstrual apps are telling you you should be feeling great. And you're not. It just might be you that's fine. We all want to be individuals after after all, we're not clones. Where I don't know you're probably know that lovely quote Joyce from the Vice President Royal College of Obstetrics gynecologist she said, we need to treat women as individuals, not statistics. I mean, she was actually talking specifically about perimenopause. But I have to say it applies throughout the woman's a woman's life, because our hormones are so amazing and intricate and beautiful choreography. So we need to consider ourselves as individuals, not statistics.

Joyce Harper 18:26

Thank you so much, because I had I mean, I don't have a menstrual cycle anymore. But I'd been reading all these reports and suggestions and advice that women should be doing different exercises, as you said, in the middle of their cycle, they're supposed to be feeling amazing. And when they premenstrual they might not you know, they might want to do yoga or, or something lighter than, you know, something high impact. But you are totally right. We are individuals and we do a lot of work around that and the perimenopause. And I'd never thought about it's obvious but the exercise relation to our menstrual cycle, not all women are going to feel the same. And that's going to be an important message. Through our exercise. discussion today. We are all individual. And as you said, we have to listen to our own body, not the body of the woman next to us, or our sister or whoever we've got to do what works for us, which is brilliant advice. So let's go well, we'll come back to specific issues for women. And we'll come out obviously, so the perimenopause. But let's let's look at a couple of the key types of exercise. So we've got some worrying data about cardiovascular health for women, it being one of the biggest killers of women globally. And many countries, the top killers are heart attacks that are the top killers of women and we always normally associate that with men. And I just wanted to hit what you think we should be doing for cardiovascular Fitness. So what's the good, good things that women could do to look after their heart?

Nicky Keay 20:07

Yeah, just to stress that point, Joyce about cardiovascular disease concerning them being on the increase? And also, I think I know we're going to talk about it specifically shortly. But you know, menopause if you ask most women, in fact, they did in a study and said, What do you think the main killer of women after menopause is, and they answered breast cancer, when actually it's swinging more and more in favor of cardiovascular disease. And it equals becomes to equal that as men, because of our female hormones are amazing things, by the way for our cardiovascular health. So what to do in turn, so cardiovascular health, yeah, absolutely super important to, you know, it's not just a protection thing, but why not enhance it, actually, if you cardiovascularly fit, then you're going to be able to pump your blood very effectively and efficiently throughout the body. So even when you're not exercising, you're going to have a good supply of oxygen and nutrients to your brain. So it's not just cardiovascular fitness, or exercise isn't just important, if you are looking to improve your exercise performance is your performance as well is your health overall, it's

really important. So the best types of so it's very important to do that, and what are the best types of exercise to improve that, and no surprise, it would be things that, you know, test out the cardiovascular system, so so called aerobic exercise, like swimming, cycling, dancing, of course, you know, all those sorts of things. And lots of those activities, or some of them are actually outside as well. So that's a really good combination. I love actually. I mean, running is one of them. But I have to be honest, I'm not a great runner, I don't particularly enjoy it myself. So actually, cycling for me is great, because it means I get outside, get to look around and get some fresh air. And I know I'm also giving my you know, giving my heart a good workout.

Joyce Harper 22:15

Yeah, I was gonna come back to that later. But exercising outside and exercising outside with friends. Again, they take physical and mental health boxes, and they're really, really good. So lots of I know lots of people that just walk and they say, Oh, well, I do lots of exercise, I walk. And I it was quite interesting, interesting when I first got my Apple watch, and was very aware that sometimes you might go on a really long walk. And then it says you've done 15 minutes exercise. And that's because of the heart rate monitor and needing that heart rate to go up to register it as exercise. So I just wondered what you thought about that, is it and I believe fast walking is great. And I know that the government a few years ago, what do they call it? Was it the active 10? I think they call it they were trying to encourage people to do 10 minutes a fast walking? Well, three lots of 10 minutes. So you did 30 minutes fast walking a day, rather than than our obsession with these 10,000 steps, which if you do it very, very slowly, is obviously better than doing nothing. But is that really good for our body overall, but certainly our heart if we're not increasing our heart rate.

Nicky Keay 23:34

Yeah, that's a very important point it because doing sort of a low intensity, long duration does have some benefits, you know, sort of fat burning and sort of metabolic health, maybe aerobic exercise, but you're right, if you're looking specifically for cardiovascular beneficial effects, and actually it is more the heart rate thing. So the key message here Joyce's I think mix it up, because the other thing to point out is that the body responds or more specifically, the hormones respond. And Dr. Adaptations are according to the type of exercise you do. In other words, you want light and shade. So if you are doing something that gets the heart rate up, make sure it does get the heart rate up. So a brisk walk or or, you know, a decent fast swim or something like that. And it can be within that block of doing exercise. So for example, I went swimming to the pool this morning. And yeah, I did a little slow wealth low warm up. Yeah, I just got the muscles going. So that was low. You know, aerobic, my heart rate probably wasn't very high. But then I did try and put in something a little bit faster to get the heart rate up. So even within the same exercise session, like you say, if you're doing some walking then you can absolutely do a little bit of a faster walk to get get the breathing rate up, get the heart rate up, and then And also having that lower intensity for the more aerobic type exercise. So I think that's the other key thing we should highlight Joyce's that I get accused often of training or doing exercise in the gray zone. So just doing it like neither easy nor hard, or just the whole lot is just in this sort of no man's land. So if possible, whatever your preferred exercises, and actually a dance class is great to this, isn't it joyous, because certainly ballet it's actually built in, you start off very slowly at the bar with slow movements. And then you get a little bit more intense as you come into the center. And then the last bit is like high intensity. And your heart rate definitely gets out when you're doing all the jumping. So maybe that's a useful thing to remind people of try and try and mix up the level of intensity of your, of your exercise, because your hormones will thank you for it.

Joyce Harper 25:53

And yeah, talking about mixing it up. So why is doing some muscle more improving our muscle strength, so important for women?

Nicky Keay 26:05

Well, I mean, number one, just from a functional point of view, we are going to have to lift up some heavy things from time to time, right. And so actually just having some strength, there is a good idea about the reason about doing strength work is so you can functionally do things without, you know, causing yourself an injury, but also muscular strength also in the terms of not just oh, can I lift up this heavy thing? But actually is is, are, am I engaging the muscles for support for for good posture. And actually, that's quite important when you are doing any sort of strength training, strength training, we should say maybe Joyce that, yes, there are some that like doing the free weights. I personally I don't anyway, so when we say strength, we should say there is this, there isn't lifting weights, free weights, or those machines you shouldn't see in the gym. Also, you can do resistance strength work with exercise bands, resistance bands, that's quite good way Pilates, some of those apparatus, those machines with the springs is also pretty good. You could also be doing strength work, actually, there's recent studies showing that bodyweight exercise, so holding the dreaded plank is actually useful as well. So whatever, when we talk about strength, it's any of those sorts of things, obviously, encouraging the muscles to engage and improve their function, and also really good for metabolic health. Because muscles are very metabolically active tissue. So that will help with glucose, blood glucose control, and obviously, body composition itself in terms of muscle versus fat. And these effects actually persist even after you stopped doing the exercise the strength exercise, so of course, when you're actually doing it, you're using those muscles. But then when you stop, then you still have this increased metabolic rate, as we say. So the muscles will basically suck up glucose and want more energy to restore and repair. So I think those are the main reasons why including some sort of strength work, whatever it looks like for you. That's, that's going to be really, really beneficial for your health.

Joyce Harper 28:20

I found with I've been kayaking a lot. I'm supposed to be kayaking this morning, actually. That's another story about kayaking. I felt you know, so my arms are aching by them. I feel I've done a lot of resistance at the end of that. So right, we've, we've got the, we've got the heart going. We've got the muscles are strong. You've talked a little bit about endurance. What about flexibility? And the importance of stretching?

Nicky Keay 28:50

Yeah, well, flexibility. I mean, from dancing point of view, that sort of come to comes with the territory. So but I know that lots of people don't necessarily include that when you're thinking what sorts of exercise should I do? I think most people would know about, you know, getting the pulse rate up cardiovascular. And also, we've had lots of people talking about strength being important, but actually flexibility sometimes doesn't get so much attention. But it's really important. What do we mean by that? We mean that if you are flexible until you can you have the ability to move your joints through the full range of movement, then actually that's going to make your movement itself mechanically better, rather than having a very restricted range of movement of your joints if you are very stiff. So definitely including some stretching is really important. The main things you can stretch are the muscles themselves. So if we think of a joint, let's take the knee joint. There's lots of muscles which are around the knee joint, but actually the things that are quite rigid are the ligaments and tear And, and so the tendons attach to the muscle to the bone and the ligaments stabilize it.

So obviously you don't be stretching those because otherwise you make the the joint unstable, but you can stretch the muscles. And that will enable the joint to go through its full, full range of movement. So that's why keeping the flexibility going, is really important. We all know as youngsters, you know, babies when they go fall asleep, and they're in that beautiful frog position where their knees flap down right flat on the side of the bed, we know that when you're really small, you have that flexibility. But obviously, as you get older, if you're not actively looking to include some stretching in your exercise, then things will literally stiffen up. But I think we should also remind people, Joyce, that stretching, there are two types of stretching, you should always do some sort of stretching, dynamic stretching before you exercise. So that means that you're not holding a stretch position. But you're, for example, when I went through this morning, I do some arm circling, just get the muscles and going and the blood flowing. And then when you do your static stretching. So if you've been doing a lot of walking or running, then you know, for example, doing the calf stretch, if you do that, at the end, when your muscles are already got lots of blood there, and then you're going to get the benefits of that static stretching. And that's when you have, you should hold it so the muscles can elongate. So stretching really important part of the recipe of all the types of fitness to consider an include. And also even within the stretching, there's different types of of stretching.

Joyce Harper 31:38

And as you say, if we don't use it, we're going to lose it and we will get stiffer and stiffer those weights and muscles, as we age will get stiffer and stiffer. And so again, the variation my ideal week is today I did body balance tomorrow doing body combat and body pumps, I've got a bit of cardio, a bit of weights. And then later in the week, I'll be doing some cold water swimming, what will come to different types of exercise in a minute. But going back to stretching, so you you said in your book that we need to hold a stretch for 30 seconds. And I've heard this so many times. But in all the classes I ever go to we never do that we're lucky if we do 10 seconds to be honest. So why is 30 seconds so important?

Nicky Keay 32:25

It just seemed like long time I know. You know you're like sometimes in ballet classes like we've done lots of work on Demi point. So we're using our calf muscles. And then our teacher said right, we're gonna do stretch. And she said, I'm going to tiny, she's a physiotherapist. So she doesn't know what she's talking about. She said, right, you got to hold it for 30 seconds, and she times less, and it's like this is going on forever. So it does seem like a long time. The reason is that the muscles, if you look at it at a microscopic level, it's like lots of little, it's like, lots of rows where they're all stuck out, you see, that's what muscle looks like under the microscope. So if you just do it cursorily, then the walls won't move. But actually, if you hold it there, then the muscle will relax, and it will allow it to elongate. So that's why just a cursory like, couple of seconds, just doing it as a calf stretch, it's not really a calf stretch, it's just, well, it's not, it's not really anything. So you have to give it that full duration of the 30 seconds so that the muscles can release literally, and you can elongated we know this just you know as you hold it, you do feel it. Oh, it's easing it's giving. And also the other thing we should make clear choices don't know about you. But in the 80s it was all the thing I'll bounce your stretch, it's like no, don't do that. So people bouncing their calf stretch, you know, going Bounce, bounce, bounce, don't do it, don't do it. Because the little oars in your muscles will sort of stick there and then they get jolted. And so actually you're more likely to tear the muscle doing that. So the magic recipe is do your static stretches, hold them for 30 seconds after your exercise, whatever it is when the muscles are warm and to give them that opportunity to stretch out and elongation and have a little rest let the rowers disengage for a moment.

Joyce Harper 34:11

That's a great way of describing it Nicki, thank you. I will reveal my my party trick at 60 I can still do this. But I always tell my friends I try not. I try not to do it. I think it's a bit embarrassing. I'm sort of dressed up you know, splayed across the floor in the split and I don't get up very elegantly anymore. I actually used to be a cartwheel in the spirits Well I I try not to but um but the letter oh my god

Nicky Keay 34:39

it's impressive.

Joyce Harper 34:41

Is it

Nicky Keay 34:44

I can't do the splits anymore. I can't do the splits anymore just to say I used to be able to do them when I was obviously a youngster but I have to say Joyce I'm I kind of almost don't want to try cuz yeah, as you say the getting out of it is often the hardest bit so I think I'll leave it to you.

Joyce Harper 35:02

Well know exactly that was going to say that then then sometimes friends tried to do it. And I say, please don't try to do it. If you if you're no, you're always you're 50 or six, and you've never done it before, please don't try this at home. So and actually, I can only I do it much better with one leg forward, my right there for the moment anyway. But let's, that's just my little, another little ditty for today. So let's also talk about balance. So as we age, those of us with elderly parents will know that something that happens very common is they fall and the data, but if a woman, older woman breaks her hip and certain other muscles, so bones is really, you know, it's really bad data, the chance of surviving and recovering is really low. So why is balanced, so important? And what can we do to improve our balance?

Nicky Keay 35:56

Yeah, I mean, as we get older, and the female hormones, especially estrogen declines, then the bones themselves become weaker, so you are potentially more prone to fracture. But of course, if you haven't got good balance, that this also contributes to the increased risk of fracture, not only are the bones weak, but if your balance is poor, you're more likely to trip over or lose your balance and fall over and break a bone. And as you said, the data is not great for the outcomes of that. And I remember that my grandmother and my sister came home from school and found her on the floor with a broken neck of femur, because she had lost her balance. Actually, as it happened, a bit of closing got stuck in a drawer. So yeah, there was a little bit of something. But the thing is, if most of us if we fall over from standing height, by the way, please don't do this at home either as an experiment, but most of us if you fall over from a standing height, you know, just a little stumble, probably you wouldn't break something. But it's also the innocuous fall from not very high up or not at a high energy impact. That's the real, you know, risk and something we want to try and prevent. And so therefore, balance is a key part of this. And at this point, I want to give a shout out to the excellent infographic from the Royal osteoporosis society, which is called strong, straight, steady, so strong, yes, we need to strengthen our bones with the strength training, for example, straight posture, if you've got good strong muscles, hopefully you'll be more upright. And then the steady thing that's the other crucial bit of this equation. So proprioception is means the awareness of where your body is in space. And, you know, hopefully doing ballet, I'm pretty aware of where my body is, if What if the arabesque right behind my head

or something. But you know, it's never too late to train things. This is the other thing. Most people say, Oh, well, I've never been very flexible. I've never I've never had good balance. So they kind of throw in the towel. It's like no, no, no, you can still do it. And in fact, I was doing teaching a delightful gentleman who had a stroke, and he was just coming up to 90. And it was like note, we can improve your balance for sure. Because we don't want you falling over. So even just simple things like holding on to something steady, like a worktop surface, and just making sure you can balance then you can transfer the your weight from foot to foot. Everybody can do that when you're waiting for the kettle to boil. And if you get really ambitious, you find that super easy holding on to something, you can shut your eyes and do it as well. So get your body train your body, your body will respond to you know how the X type of exercise you do. So it's always worthwhile keeping that keeping that aspect going. In terms of exercise. Yeah, absolutely. stability and balance. Super, super important.

Joyce Harper 39:07

Thank you, Nicky. And we've talked about the menstrual cycle. So in my field, I've worked in fertility and the pre menopause for many years, and we see women and the men that trying to get pregnant and maybe having a problem and exercise has come up a lot. The advice is that they should be looking after their well being and they should be looking after their nutrition and sleep and exercise etc. Have you got any guidance about pregnancy? What if? And I think I think the exercise for the man is equally as important, but we'll just construct the women today. So what about if you're trying to get pregnant if you are pregnant? Have you gotten any advice for women around this time of their life?

Nicky Keay 39:57

Yeah, you're I totally agree with you Joyce that um You know, if you're looking to conceive, then taking care of your lifestyle in terms of your sleep, your exercise, and your nutrition is super important. And I'll tell you why. Because those three lifestyle things, or behaviors, if you want to call them that, those directly influence our hormones, and of course, getting pregnant, you're very dependent on the hormones and the menstrual cycle and ovulating, etc. So it's, it's definitely for every woman looking to conceive and get pregnant, absolutely. Taking care of those things, especially in it and including the exercise. And you're right, also for the man as well. But we'll leave that one for another day. So definitely, if that is, you know, if you are struggling to get pregnant, you know, doing some exercise, and just revising and reviewing what you're doing around your sleep patterns. And your nutrition, because we know these have a big, big influence on your hormones. So that's the getting pregnant. And then hopefully, you know, when you are pregnant, then in terms of what exercise can I do, and I agree. I mean, I'm sure you're the same that you know, when you are pregnant, you do, obviously you feel really responsible. You're just like, oh, I don't want to do the wrong thing. Maybe I shouldn't exercise or whatever. So I think, again, it goes back also to how you feel. So probably doing really high intensity in the early weeks isn't a good idea, and probably won't feel like that. Because if you have got, well, it's called Morning sickness, but I call it continuous day sick, nausea, you probably actually won't feel like doing that anyway. So actually, your body's trying to tell you something, the body's saying, Look, we're just sorting out the pregnancy, the implantation, we're just getting placenta going. Please don't do high intensity exercise. That doesn't mean you shouldn't do anything. So some gentle something some walking, that's, that's fine in the early pregnancy. And then thereafter, again, it does pretty much go down to feel. I don't think women should be scared about doing exercise. Definitely, we don't want to say that. But obviously Common sense dictates it's not a good idea to start to take out marathon running, for example, if you've never been done running before. So it's just keeping going what you are already doing. uncomfortable with, but not pushing it. So for example, I kept doing my full ballet classes a

week. And my friends, they all laughing and joking. It's like, oh, we remember when you came in, it looked like you had this enormous cannonball in you. And there you were doing the dance class. But inevitably, just naturally, as it became more and more pregnant, it's like, you know, I don't actually feel like I want to try and jump, I just don't want to, but you can do all the other things. So my best advice is, keep doing the exercise that you enjoy, or you're used to is not a time for taking up, whatever bungee jumping, I don't know. And don't don't. But keep doing what you're doing. Because that's what you enjoy. And that's what you're used to doing. So you're less likely to get injured. And you know, but just just listen to your body and actually going on perceived exertion how you feel, you know, if you're feeling really, really past and just you sort of thinking your body will tell you, I don't want to do this, then just listen to it at that point. That's the best way of monitoring how far you should push it.

Joyce Harper 43:29

Brilliant Nicky, you said the two things I would say which is listen to your body. And don't start something new. So we've had a lot of discussion about cold water swimming and being pregnant. And we are we've been trying for I think we'd been working on the document for about a year and a half. Obviously, there's very, there's no research on coldest swimming and pregnancy, we we would never expose a newly pregnant woman to that. So we have gathered together all the information we can and the advice absolutely is don't start it if you've never done it. That those that have been doing it since. Yeah, before they were pregnant. So again, some people might remember the Paula Radcliffe picture of her running when she was very pregnant. But again, she's always done it. So that's the key. If you've always done it, and you feel okay to carry on, then you can't but yeah, don't don't start. And it's certainly not something as extreme as cold water spewing out if you're if you've not done it before. So let's move on to the good old perimenopause and menopause and exercise now. I always say to everyone I exercise su my perimenopause. At the time. It was about 15 years ago, one of my students was doing a project on exercise and menopause. And it really helped me I really motivated me I mean, I was doing quite a lot anyway, I've always done quite a lot of classes and swimming and things but I took I said certainly took it up to another level. And I've really, I've felt it really helped. But according to the data I'd read, until fairly recently, the studies didn't seem to show that it really had helped some of the symptoms. But I think there's some more recent data out now that's a bit more encouraging. So what would you say for the pre menopause and post menopause women?

Nicky Keay 45:23

Yeah, definitely. I think one of the papers that caught my eye was saying that vasomotor symptoms, ie the dreaded hot flushes, that was improved in a study by doing exercise. The theory is the if you're doing exercise, your body has got to cope with the change in body temperature. I mean, why, why do you get hot flushes, by the way is because it's thought that the temperature regulation center in the brain just gets a bit confused and messed up. And so that's why all your blood flows to the extremities and you feel really hot. And actually, interestingly, there's a less blood flow, cerebral blood flow, less blood flow to the brain, which could actually be so hot flushes as a new thing. So maybe hot flushes and brain fog goes, there could be a reciprocal relationship there. Anyway, in this study, I'm talking about that they had two groups, the women that did the exercise, they reported less than 30 of their hot flushes. And maybe the mechanism is because as I say, the body kind of gets used to all reuse to all regulating body temperature. So that's definitely can help with symptoms from that point of view. Also, I would say from we've already said, How excellent exercise is for your brain health, you know, your mental health and, and well being. So I think just getting out and doing what you love doing what you've been doing throughout your life, like often my ballet class, it's like, okay, I'm just gonna go to my ballet class. And then I'm going to enjoy the moment and it just puts you

at your ease and and in a different in your familiar space, that is going to help your overall well being and therefore your symptoms, everything seems less. Doesn't seem so bad. When you come back from ballet class, it's like, okay, that, you know, I went off feeling not so good, but now I feel better. But also in the nitty gritty of the exercise, also, there are now quite a lot of studies actually showing that apart from the symptoms in terms of the health benefits of exercise, we've said there are two important throughout the life, but particularly this, this time, when your hormones are changing massively. The ovaries are retiring and also other hormones like growth hormone, which is a so called anabolic hormone, build up muscles rather than fat. These are all on the decline. But this is not all doom and gloom. Again, you can look at doing exercise, and studies show that this improves your metabolic health, in other words, blood glucose control and body composition. So there's plenty of good reasons why. Number one, if you're already exercising, absolutely try and continue doing it. But also if maybe you've let it slip, because I think that's the other thing. You know, we get busy, right? And it's like, I used to do all this exercise. And now I'm perimenopause. And now, you know, have I got the confidence to go back to doing this exercise? Absolutely. And in fact, you you'll feel a lot better for it from the point of view of your alleviating symptoms. And again, you know, the long term health benefits.

Joyce Harper 48:31

Yeah, absolutely. I think I think exercise around pre menopause and post menopause is a win win, especially if you do it with friends. And, and well, we'll come on to, we'll finish up and different types of exercise that we can do. And you did mention bone health earlier, but obviously, obviously, the three big problems we worry about post menopause, and I worry about post menopause is cardiovascular health, which we've talked about dementia and Alzheimer's and also osteoporosis. So let's start with osteoporosis. So you know what can what can women do to help with osteoporosis as they age?

Nicky Keay 49:14

Yeah, so the bones are will decline in their bone mineral density because of the estrogen starts to go low after menopause. So that's, that's what's going on. So what can you do to mitigate that? Certainly lifestyle all the things we've discussed. Actually interesting study showing that sleep helps. Sleep always helps. The chief nourisher in life great feast. I love that quote from Shakespeare, nutrition, of course, you know, eating plenty of protein to prevent the muscles breaking down and also sort of to support the bone health, but in turn specifically of exercise to support your bone health. Well, it was that strong, straight steady thing I mentioned with the role of the process society. So this is where if you can You know, wait, while I'm going, how should I put it strength training, there is sort of a gradation of what you can, what you feel, are able and feel comfortable with doing, there is the straight up weight lifting, if you will, weight training, strength training. And there's a lovely study, I have to mention this study simply because of the name, it's called lift more. That's the name of the study, I've not even sure what the abbreviation is. And they found actually women who I think they were in their 60s or 70s, even in that group that they gave supervised. Weight training strength training to those women didn't lose height, their bones didn't squash down in their vertebrae. And actually, if anything, it improved. So definitely, that's the sort of the the top one you can do. But like I've admitted to, I don't really like doing that on some people simply can't, because maybe they've got injuries, they got bad knees, whatever it is. So yeah, that if you can, that's brilliant. But if not coming down the scale, the resistance bands that we mentioned, that's and you know, you don't have to have fancy equipment, by the way, going back to the weight training thing, you can get little handheld weights, or, you know, you can even use cans of soup, or whatever. So we can all walk around with some weights and do some simple things like that. Resistance bands are great. So it's all about loading the skeleton, putting some

stress through the skeleton to stimulate it. But if none of those things are possible, because you've recently have a joint replacement, I've got to replace my hips, by the way, but anyway, so I wasn't had to go in the studio for a few months. But during that time, I could still go swimming. And actually the muscles pulling on the bones as I was swimming. That was, you know, it's better than nothing. So I think that that's the real key message, I want to say Joyce about the bone health. It's one it's such an important thing to consider. You know, sadly, both my grandmother and my mother, I know, there's a family history of osteoporosis. So I, you know, I'm trying to do everything I can to prevent that. And it's doing as much as you personally can. But I think the so many message they're saying all you have to do weight training, if you can. Fantastic. But don't let that be put off. Don't think Well, I can't do that. So I won't bother do anything, find what you can do to load your skeleton because osteoporosis, also called the silent killer, brittle bone disease. That's the one that you don't want it to creep up on you and and to fall over and then that with a broken hip?

Joyce Harper 52:37

Yes, definitely. And the third one I mentioned was outside was in dimension. And going back to what we were saying earlier about exercise and mental health. I've read that there's lots of evidence that exercise will what can reduce the risk of Alzheimer's and dementia? Have you got any comments about that?

Nicky Keay 52:57

Yeah, for sure. I mean, part of it is I think the blood flow, it just, you know, gets out and gets your brain working. And we know that our time is doing those mental puzzles, and all those sorts of things. But actually, for me, my mental puzzle is going to about a class and trying to remember all the steps that you're given. But whatever that exercise is, most of it will involve your brain, you know, you've got to, you've got to run the right way, you've got to listen to instructions, if it's in a class, particularly I think that's in that group environment of the class. So definitely keeping the brain agile through exercise, you're ticking both boxes, physically, you're ticking. By doing exercise, you're ticking, physical health, but also, you're supporting your mental health as as well, like we said at the very beginning, and this includes cognitive function, and all that sort of thing. I mean, as we know, there is no absolute guarantee in some of these conditions. We don't fully understand the the etiology, the origin of them, but certainly we know that if you feel you're doing everything you possibly can, then in itself, that's feeling really good and empowering, isn't it? Right? I'm trying to do everything I can. And actually the psychological effect of that is pretty important when it comes to cognitive function.

Joyce Harper 54:18

Yeah, so we've gone through the woman's reproductive lifespan now with something that menstrual cycle and we've got to post menopause. So with the data the world data on women and girls exercising is is really a bad read. It shows that in every country, they've looked at women don't exercise enough. And I've heard so many people you mentioned at the beginning just trying to encourage people to move I think at school, we associate exercise with competition and games and some people might not be very good at that might not be their thing. So they've sort of parked it, which is a really bad thing to do, obviously, obviously, the earlier we start this, the better, but it's never too late. So how do you think we can try and encourage women of any age? To hopefully, obviously listen to your wise words about how this exercise will improve our health and our heart to our bones, and our brains? But how can we encourage women to exercise?

Nicky Keay 55:31

Well, I think you're right, it goes back. Joyce goes right back to those young age groups. And by the way, I was one of those school children. I hated hockey. I didn't really like netball. But I did, like, I did like tennis. And I did like swimming. And I did like doing my belly outside. So I think it's, you know, that young age, identifying something that you like doing is it goes back to what we were saying the beginning, it's something you enjoy. And it might not be everyone's cup of tea doing those competitive sports skill. Yeah, some of them weren't. That wasn't my favorite either. But, as you say, at least get in the habit there. But then moving on through life, actually, I would say this is a great opportunity. Because then as you say, maybe you've parked that. And then I've got lots of I've worked with lots of masters athletes who said exactly what we've just been talking about that as school, they didn't like hockey, but then it was later on, they thought well, actually, but I can, but I quite like running, I quite like cycling, and so and then they started to take that up at a later age. And then they found they were really good at it, and they enjoyed it. So don't be scared that old just because you didn't like a school sport, that doesn't mean, you know that you wouldn't enjoy something else. So it's a case of sort of keeping it on the boil. And also, I think that social aspects really important. Sometimes that can really motivate you. If some friends are saying, Look, I'm gonna go and try cold water swimming or something. It's like, Well, why not? Why don't you you know, give it a go. It's never, it's never too late. So trying to be involved in exercise, but also, in general terms, like you said, activity. I mean, unfortunately, today's world, especially with COVID, you know, when we have the lockdown, everyone's working from home sitting at desks all day. You know, it's just being active overall is really important. I think there are studies showing that, of course, doing exercise, going for your swim or dance class, or whatever it is, is very important. But then, if even then if you're going to spend the whole of the rest of the day, with the bottom parked on your chair, you know, it kind of, I mean, it's good that you've done some exercise, for sure. But actually, whilst you're sitting on your chair, having enforcing breaks, and I know again, you can get engrossed in work. And then you find yourself stooped over the computer, you know, the one is like, Oh, my God, what's happen to my posture, and anyway, so making yourself get up and walking around a little, or walk around the block, or walk around your house, or whatever it is, that's really important, because it actually it will help not only your body and your movement, but actually your brain, because your brain also needs brakes as well. And also sight as well. You know, when you've been staring at the computer screen all day, then it's not good. So, so absolutely, you know, explore different types of exercise. It's never too late. But also try and review your, you know, your work patterns. I mean, there are some jobs I know which automatically you have to walk around, you know, like if you're a teacher, or if you're a doctor walking around in the hospital, but quite lot of everybody's job nowadays is sitting down at the computer. So it's not being lazy and whatever, just to take a 10 minute break just to do a little walk I think that's really important ideally outside if you can to get some to include some fresh air as well that will really will help your productivity and your work as well.

Joyce Harper 59:06

You're reading my brain. For me, when I really noticed in lockdown, I was that person going through an exercise class or doing an exercise class at home in the morning, and then sitting for the rest of the day, the same position and I got my back went first. And then I sorted them out. And then my knees went I had a lot of trouble with my knees and it's just, you know, I think I think maybe it might be even worse during during a class and exercise class at 10 o'clock and then sitting for the rest of the day you it's so hard for our body to do that. So really good. Exactly. That movement we have to do needs to be all day and I think for all of those working at home. I think we absolutely have got to address this and we do we get stuck in the clock. Just goes to God, you know, so quick when I owe him time. And I haven't done it. I live in a beautiful village. It's gorgeous out there, especially at the moment, the colors and everything are amazing. I am going to try and

force myself. And it's not easy because we just get stuck to do a 10 minute walk. So I'm going to do it after this. I'm Nicky, I'm listening to you. I'm gonna, and as I'm gonna do, I'm gonna go do a terminable exercising outside is a win win as well. I know it's not nice if it's raining. People have this terrible view than in England. It's always raining. And it's really not. You just remember when it's raining, when you see the blue skies, beautiful blue skies today, you know, get out even if it's raining, just put some extra clothes on. So if you're not doing it too much, no, yep, it's something you can definitely do on your own. But if you've got some friends that are working at home that live near you, let's say, Take half hour off, and let's go and go for a walk. It's that's a win, win win. And, you know, tick, tick, tick, and as you say, will increase your productivity. So moving all day, outside getting outside if you can, and you'll get some friends along for sure. So just just to finish off, we've talked a lot about exercise, but obviously for our well being and for our women's health, our you mentioned sleep and nutrition, as well. And you mentioned this in your book. So maybe, maybe just the last thing about you mentioned sleep already and anything else about sleep, and also about what we're eating what we're putting in our stomachs.

Nicky Keay 1:01:46

So the thing is, I'm going to ask, actually, quote, Hippocrates. Hippocrates said 2000 years ago, he was onto something this chap, he said, if we could do every individual, just the right amount of nutrition and exercise, not too little. And not too much. We would have found the surest way to health. I mean, what wise words. So we are talking about lifestyle. Now the interesting thing about Hippocrates, he said this and it makes absolute sense to us was like, oh, yeah, of course. That's right. But why is he right? And it's because of the hormones because our hormones are programmed from evolution to keep us healthy. Right? Okay, homeostasis, everything nice and healthy and stable inside our bodies. That's what they will do. But they respond to what we do on the outside. So if we sit all day, if we eat probably excessive food, maybe because we're sitting all day, so we don't, you know, and our sleep patterns are not good, then this is going to impact your hormones. And the hormones direct the direction of our health, physical and mental health, whether it's going to go good or bad, if you see what I mean. So, absolutely, exercise is one of these key things, but it's in combination with nutrition and sleep. That is the recipe for healthy hormones. And if you have healthy hormones, you will have overall health and well being. So top tips for exercise. I think we've done that Joyce. But in terms of top tips for sleep, why sleep and the pattern of your sleep more precisely is so important is because all your hormones have their own internal biological clocks. So you want to try and get synchrony with your internal clocks. If you have a mismatch, then you can develop what's called circadian misalignment, which is metabolic syndrome, which is a big risk of type two diabetes and cardiovascular disease because you are pushing against the hormones, and there's only going to be one winner in this situation. So sleep actually is pretty crucial in addition to your exercise, and you know, going to bed at a regular time actually setting an alarm. This is my top tips for good sleep, right. So called sleep hygiene. So actually putting an alarm on for going to bed. And not I know I'm guilty of this myself. I don't know about you guys, but I am I'm really bad. You know, looking at the computer or an email or I can look at that, like 10 o'clock at night. It's like don't do it. Okay, don't look at that all your phones because the light emitted from those screens, they impact the production of the sleep hormone melatonin. So getting to bed at a regular time. You know really sets such you up, probably for a good night's sleep and coordination with your internal hormones. Going back to my grandmother, why otherwise, as a slight aside, she always used to say oh, yes, it's the hours of sleep we get before midnight. It's really important. And are you To think literally, Oh, this isn't a wives wives tale. And then lo and behold, I think was sometime last year or the year before. Recently anyway, a paper came out saying exactly this, that it is that regular bedtime, you know, ideally before midnight, that is so important for hormone health, and therefore, what overall health so thank you to

my grandmother, not only for dance classes, but her wise words of wisdom around sleep. And then the nutrition, of course, you know, in general terms, again, it goes down to the individual. We're all have different energy requirements, because we're all different. You know, even in women of the same age, we'll be different body compositions, we will have different levels of activity, you know, so, again, try not to compare yourself with, especially stuff you see on social media. It's like, oh, look, this person is eating this. And this is how they look. And you think, Oh, well, if I do that, they'll look like that. It doesn't translate, I'm afraid. So nutrition, it just goes back again, to common sense, and might what my grandmother used to say, the breakfast is a really important meal of the day, and having those regular meals. Really super important, because regularity is what your body likes, because then you're in sync with your hormones. So those are some basic, you know, without we can't go into specifics, because everyone's individual, but again, everyone I'm sure, can try and make sure they're getting fed at a good hour, every day. Of course, we'll all have the occasional time when we're late, that's fine. But in general, trying to go to bed early, not looking at computers, and in terms of nutrition, to make sure you are eating in a regular fashion covering all the food groups. Again, we know it's busy, life is busy. And you know, you can mean to have lunch at a time and then you'd get carried away. And then it's like, oh, no, it's really late. But again, trying to you know, make it a little bit more, a bit more of a routine for your body, your hormones, and therefore your health will definitely thank you for it.

Joyce Harper 1:06:59

Thank you, Nicky. And I must say that quite a lot of my friends go to bed at nine or 10 o'clock. That I think it's something people often don't talk about. But but they, when I've asked them they do and and I never set an I take your point about sending the alarm in the evening. I never set an alarm in the morning I've well very, very rarely. I know, I'll be up. So I don't send an alarm. So I wake when my body needs to awake. And on a boat as you're aware the cats wake me up. But they're not that often. But but not, not when my alarm wakes me up. So I'm Nicky, I'm sure in your career, you have talked and help so many people. With all the topics we've talked about today. Have you heard people say to you? Why didn't anyone tell me this? Why didn't I know this before? And if so what was the main thing they asked? Or said?

Nicky Keay 1:07:53

The main thing they comment on is the beautiful choreography of the female hormones. It's like, oh, I didn't realize that I didn't realize that that's what was happening in my body with my hormones during the menstrual cycle. And I didn't realize that's what happened to my hormones. As you go through this amazing journey, this female hormone Odyssey as I describe it, but specifically, if I want to if I'm allowed to give one thing, I would say sometimes the most common thing is a woman saying I didn't realize that these types of hormonal contraception suppress all the production of my internal hormones. And that actually is, well not surprising. But really concerning. And until recently until since only since last year, I got nice to change the guidelines and says and to say that if a woman presents and her periods have stopped, she's not pregnant, right? But she's got an imbalance in her lifestyle behaviors around the sleep, the nutrition in the Act and the exercise. So her periods have stopped. Then the tendency was just to put this woman on hormonal contraception, the combined oral contraceptive pill, because it made everyone feel better. Because she would have a withdrawal bleed, it's not period, the doctor would feel they've done something but it does nothing for bone health. So actually, that is probably the most common comment I've had from people. I didn't realize that. And I wish I had known that. So they go

Joyce Harper 1:09:26

Yeah, yeah, it's certainly weird. Like we're always learning always learning more things. So, Nicky, you you do so much you're very very active. So what on a on a day to day basis? What motivates you to do all the great things that you do?

Nicky Keay 1:09:47

It's mainly because I you know, I find it very rewarding, like, explained to people. This is what's happening and giving them advice. And although I'm a medical doctor less than less than the time I'm actually having to suggest medication, which is I think, a good thing. Because, you know, it is it I've come to realize that these lifestyle factors, our choices, the balance of our lifestyle is so, so influential to our or hormone health. And so that's what really gives me satisfaction or, or pleasure, being able to explain that in terms of in terms that people can understand and implement. And then they come back and they say, okay, my periods have restarted, or I don't know, whatever it is, I'm feeling much better, I'm able to do this. And, you know, thank you so much for explaining that to me, in a way that I could actually achieve something. And, you know, do it for myself, it's empowering to have information to do it for yourself, rather than, as often happens, if you see a doctor, you sometimes think they're going to give you, you know, a magic prescription for a magic pill and everything well, but actually, it's much more satisfying, to have sorted out yourself through some, some directed advice from me. So that's, that's really my motivation to see that, you know, these explanations and support can really help people reach their full potential. You know, as I said, the title of my book, that's everyone's different, but whatever that is objective for you. Everyone deserves to you know, get the most out of their life and live it to, to, to their full.

Joyce Harper 1:11:32

You certainly are empowering women. It's, it's wonderful. So what makes you happy, and where is your happy place. So this might not be anything to do with work at all. I'm writing, you know, I'm writing a book about good health and happiness. And I want to try and see how we can ensure that every woman is happy. But so I'm asking everyone what makes them happy, and where's your happy place?

Nicky Keay 1:11:56

I think you might have guessed it already. It is actually what I if I'm allowed to think I'm definitely, I'm in my happy place when I go to my ballet class. Because I'm going to see all my friends that have been my friends there for, I don't know, 30 years or something. So it's like, Oh, I'm gonna have a catch up with them and say hello to them and see what they're up to. But also that, because it's totally different, I have to I have to forget, work and everything, because otherwise I won't be able to take in those steps. I know I've had that went, I've had something on my mind. And it's like, no, I need to put that away because I need to really focus and enjoy. And I need to listen to the music. So that is when I'm just like, that is my sacred time and my ballet class. I'm doing it for me and with my friends. And it's great. But the other thing that makes me really happy, of course, is, you know, family and friends. And that's so important, those social connections. And, you know, I'm fortunate I've got two lovely grown up boys. And even though one of them is in New Zealand, so he's a long way away and doing a PhD, we're gonna go and visit him next year. But, you know, having our family catch UPS when the Virtual Family catch UPS is just like, that's really lovely. And when we are all together, so I think those are my two, the times when I'm happy and when my body class and then, you know, with my family having a laugh and a joke at that that's, you know, laughter That's always very important.

Joyce Harper 1:13:28

One of my lovely Sons has just rang the doorbell. But he's coming in, he's going to tell him to be quiet. And the very last question is, what advice would you give your younger self?

Nicky Keay 1:13:50

Well, I think actually all the things that I learned and set out to learn and understand about the hormones. Maybe I should, myself, you know, in retrospect, it's like, yeah, I probably well, I was over it. I was overdoing it with exercise. I was very fixated about my weight and my shape. And actually, it's like, hold on a minute, look at the bigger picture here. What are your priorities? But never having said that, you know, on the other hand, having navigated that it's like, you know, your life is a series of experiences and so I guess I did learn from that myself, and hopefully made me a bit more empathetic to it's all very well as talking about the theory or you know, we advise good to do this and that but actually empathy and understanding because I was there myself, even if you know all the theory and it's all logical and you get it actually putting that into practice. Is is the is the most challenging. So I'm hoping that yeah, as I say that that that's helped him in my in my current work and empathy for for people I work with and helping them navigate that. What can be a tricky, tricky journey?

Joyce Harper 1:15:17

Fantastic, Nicky, that's brilliant. It's been so good. We've been working together for about eight, nine months now but it's great to see how many things we have in common you you literally said everything. I would have said the same way it was. It was amazing. So thank you so much and everyone needs to watch out next year. We will be with our wonderful team at UCL. We will be doing a lot of work. We've done quite a lot already around our UK menopause education and support program. And yeah, tune into Nicky she's on lots of platforms and things doing lots of great work encouraging us all to exercise and I'm going to go for a walk in 10 minutes. Thank you, Nicky. It was really great to talk to you.

Nicky Keay 1:16:04

Thanks, Joyce. My pleasure. Great.