

# Transform Your Life Through Intrinsic Happiness and Removal of Toxins

## Transcript and 10 Point Checklist Elissa Fisher Harris

Want to gain as much knowledge as possible out of The Optimized Geek? Read on below for a full transcript of this episode, as well as a **10 point checklist** that gives the next, real steps you can take for introducing these insights and optimizing your life.

*The* **OPTIMIZED GEEK** 

HOSTED BY **STEPHAN SPENCER**



**"Most people are conditioned to thinking, "When I have the job/when I have the wife/when I have all of these things, then I'll be happy," and really, it's the opposite. When you're in a predisposition to be happy, those things come much quicker."**

**ELISSA FISHER HARRIS**

# 10 STEPS YOU CAN TAKE TODAY

**Want to take charge of your health, wellness, and success?  
Here are 10 steps that can move you closer to your goals – today.**

- If you can't pull yourself away from work or social media, use the Cold Turkey App-you can program all of your devices to lock you out of specific apps at specific times.
- Start training your brain to be happy. For the next 21 days, write down three things that make you happy, and three things that you are grateful for.
- Read labels on everything that you use, from shampoo to cleaning supplies. Only use natural products, and keep chemicals out of your home.
- Check out Caligenix to get tested for a specialized health plan that is based on your DNA.
- Remember that your past doesn't determine your future. Elissa was homeless and Stephan was a foster child, but you can use your past to better yourself and to help others.
- Do you feel that your success is all luck, and you don't deserve it? You may have Impostor Syndrome-with work, you can change your mindset.
- If you're having your wisdom teeth removed, find out if you can keep them. Being able to extract the stem cells later on may be useful.
- Find happiness within yourself before you try to find career or relationship success. When you are already happy, the other parts of your life will fall into place easier.
- Test the water in your house. Even water that has been treated can have too many chemicals.
- Find an integrative medical doctor or licensed naturopath in your area to run blood panels and tests to find out your level of toxicity.

# Transcript

S: Hello, and welcome to The Optimized Geek. I'm your host Stephan Spencer. Today, we have Elissa Fisher Harris as our guest. I'm really excited to have her on. I've known her for several years now through an organization here in L.A. called METal. She, in fact, was just recently awarded last year as METal International Woman of the Year award and that's pretty amazing! It's the first award given to a woman in the 15-year history of METal. She also is a wellness coach and expert-not just wellness in the physical

**“She has worked in stem-cell area and integrative health.”**

areas, but also emotional and environmental so we'll talk on this episode about environmental toxins and things like that. She is a 25-year certified corporate wellness coach. She's also an individual wellness coach and a brand educator in the wellness and natural products industry. She has worked in stem-cell area and integrative health. She was the P.R. and marketing consultant for a well-known, integrative health and stem-cell clinic in Germany for seven years. She also served as interim CMO and then VP of Communications for CellHealth Institute, an advanced stem-cell therapy technology company. She's also played an instrumental role in the passage of California bill SB907, which granted naturopathic doctors



licensure in the state of California so that was a pretty big deal and she played a key role in that. She's a big proponent of DNA genetic testing. I have gotten my DNA tested through 23andMe-I'm a big testing geek. Elissa sits on the advisory board of Caligenix, a genetic-based health and wellness lifestyle company in Southern California. She's just done some amazing stuff! She's an active member of the L.A. Council for the National Women's History Museum. She's got an incredible story of going through severe trauma and stress and really turning that into the fuel to lead an extraordinary life and lead a bunch of people into their greatness and their wellness. Welcome, Elissa! It's great to have you!

E: Thank you so much, Stephan, for having me! Pleasure!

S: So, let's start with your story because it is so incredible. I mean, literally incredible-where you came

from. I mean, I had a story that I'm just starting to kind of let the world know about. I've done some TV appearances-a couple so far-about being a foster child for several years when I was teenager and for many, that's a surprise. I was on TV talking about National Foster Care Month-that was the month of May-and what people can do to make a difference in a kid's life. I shared some of my story and it was pretty surprising for people how I ended up as a foster kid. You have quite a story and I checked with you in advance of starting the recording that you're okay to talk about it and I thank you very much for your vulnerability and openness-that's very generous of you to me and to our listeners-so if you could just share your story of how you got to where you're at now.

E: Sure, I'd love to! First of all, I want to commend you as well because I think there's something very special about being able to come to that vulnerable place and feel like it's okay to share your story because it helps people connect with you and with what you're trying to do in the world to make the world a better place so I really appreciate you giving me the platform to do it and I also commend you on your sharing recently as well. It's kind of in a nutshell, I'm trying to run through very quickly because I'm 45 years old and

it's quite a long history, but initially, I talk about how I was raised. For the first 12 years of my life, nearly almost the entire 12 years, I was homeless as a kid. My mother was diagnosed as a paranoid schizophrenic. My father was, unfortunately, because of the circumstances had been coerced into drugs and alcohol. I, literally, lived in motels, shelters, and cars almost my entire childhood. I figured out ways to enroll myself in school-whatever town we'd end up in. Sometimes, my dad would enroll me and sometimes, I would do it, but I learned very quickly at an early age how to kind of take care of myself, take care of my younger brother, and figure out how to survive in an environment that was really unstable. It sort of started shaping the way I thought about life and my future. I grew up very fast and I really knew that I wanted to get out of that situation at some point and eventually, help other people. In that environment also, we did not have access to healthy food or good nutrition of any kind. We were living out of the car, obviously, and only could get food from food banks, fast food, and that kind of thing so it sort of set in early physical health precedent as well as an emotional health and talk

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about living in an unhealthy environment—living in not great places—was part of what started my foundation. I got out at 13. I was very lucky I was able to ask to leave and a family relative who I will be forever indebted to, my aunt and uncle, took me in. I started a whole new world there—working my way through high school, working my way through college, and then what really sort of propelled me into getting into, specifically, physical health, emotional health, and environmental health—I wanted to be a psychologist in college and I realized I was a mess. I was going to be able help anyone until I help myself so I started doing all these inner-child workshops, psychology, and everything you can imagine for my emotional health. Meanwhile, my body was having some serious health issues due to that kind of upbringing and I developed, in my 20's, what was very early stages of recognition of gluten and dairy allergies. My body was kind of going into an auto-immune condition. No one could figure out was wrong with me. I was putting myself through college and they were, basically, like—as you know doctors do sometimes when they're aren't sure what's going on—they say, “Oh, it's in your head! You're just a stressed college student. Go away and get some sleep!” That was my first introduction to finding



holistic health—what is now, evolved into integrative health. It was a chiropractic doctor who is a naturopath and dabbled in Chinese medicine and who basically said, “This is what's going on. Here's what you need to do,” and it changed my life. I was the sickest and the unhealthiest I've ever been. I was a vegetarian and I was a size 10—now, I'm 5'1 in height and I'm a very small person so that was a lot for me. I had headaches all the time and I couldn't digest food so that really impassioned me into wanting to become an advocate for people's health and well-being because nobody really knew where to go for it. Later on, I started doing that. I became a certified personal trainer and a nutritionist to sort of help put myself through college and sort of parlay me into that field. Later on in life and very tragically and sadly, as I was working in that field and becoming very involved in integrative medicine in the Naturopathic Doctors Association—what you just mentioned—I ended up losing two husbands to the same very rare cancer that only affects 10,000 people a year in the United States by the time I was 34. That was extremely devastating to me, as you can imagine. The first experience was, mostly, all conventional. We did do some integrative care at the end. The second one, having learned everything I

**“I worked with cancer patients for ten years by default and created integrated cancer-care programs and refer people to a vast network of integrated health professionals”**

learned the first time, he was very much more open to doing integrative care, which actually gave him a prolonged period of life. Out of all of that, I got certified to do corporate wellness programs because I watched these men, literally, work themselves to a state of disease. I mean, I can't for sure blame that, but everything's connected as we know. Now, fast forwarding to now, I've been spending the last ten years really sort of getting into the nuts and bolts of health and wellness-how it affects people at work and how it affects people in their homes. I worked with cancer patients for ten years by default and created integrated cancer-care programs and refer people to a

vast network of integrated health professionals and so, that's kind of where I am today-natural products, the health of your environment, your emotional health, your physical health. All of those things integrated and creating a very synergistic, optimum, healthy lifestyle.

S: Right, and we're going to delve into a lot of these areas in the course of this episode, but one of the things I definitely wanted to have us talk about straight away is the topic that you had presented at a METal meeting last year on Impostor Syndrome. That was, really, an impactful presentation. I, unfortunately, wasn't able to make that meeting, but you've got rave reviews and you've really impacted some people in the audience. Impostor Syndrome is actually something that I've wondered if I have so let's kind of dig in to that-let's define it for our listeners, let's talk about what are some of the symptoms and the signs of Impostor Syndrome, and the treatment regimen or ways to alleviate or ameliorate these symptoms.

E: Yes, so the Impostor Syndrome, for people who haven't heard of it before, was actually something that was discovered by a couple PhD's in the 1970's who coined this phrase. What they discovered was is that, originally, they thought it affected mostly women and it's the feeling of successful people especially having the feeling this phenomenon of-my success is an accident. I'm really not any good at what I do and don't have the skills. I'm a fraud and at some point, someone's going to expose me. It's this fear that people have that really can paralyze them in their personal life and definitely, in their professional life. What I talked about, specifically, was the syndrome, which I've just identified, and then how we oftentimes, have to learn to walk the line between overinflated ego and humility to a fault-if that makes sense.

S: Yeah, but how do you do that?

E: Yeah. Well, before we talk about that-I mean, I wanted to make sure I mentioned that. This is something that a lot of people-very famous and well-known people-have admitted having. Maya Angelou, being one of them. Sonia Sotomayor, being one of them. Lee Iacocca talked about it in his book. Don Cheadle. This is something that a lot of people who are very successful are constantly in fear of. The reason I talked about it at METal-the organization obviously, primarily being men-was because, a lot of times people are so fearful of it that they almost let it consume them. They don't actually realize what the Gallup Poll people have recognized in the Impostor Syndrome-they're the people behind positive psychology. They actually feel like the Imposture Syndrome is your talent because it's the very thing that drives you to succeed. However, the reason I brought it up is because sometimes, it consumes us to the point where we hold ourselves back from success and we don't let it be our talent. It's kind of our talent in a way, but there are a lot of things that keep it from being our talent and more sort of debilitating to our success-if that makes sense.

S: Yeah, and the Gallup Poll people are really smart folks who have created this whole StrengthsFinder that I'm a huge fan of. I think I've mentioned this before on previous podcasts that I've taken the StrengthsFinder assessment. It focuses on developing your strengths rather than shoring up your weaknesses. I think there are 62 or 64 different strengths that identifies through the assessment what your top five strengths are and it's really helpful to understand those strengths so that you can further leverage those in everything you do-business, your career, your home life, family, and all that. How do we identify if we have Impostor Syndrome?

E: It's pretty significantly understandable once you see it. The first one and one of the most important ones is if you're a successful person, even if you have a multi-billion dollar company that goes public, you always feel like you don't deserve your success. That's a pretty significant indicator. The second one is, you are constantly worrying and in fear that you're secretly not any good and people are going to figure you out. The third one is, you actually set unrealistic goals for yourself, and then when you don't achieve them, you beat yourself up about it. There's a way at some point at which you need to learn how to set reasonable goals that you can meet and then feel good about it when you accomplish them. Another significant one, which is very significant, especially for women, is that they shy away from promotions, projects, and opportunities. You might feel more comfortable in your skill set-you actually might have superiors or people saying, "We think you're really great, we want to move you over here and see you excel," but you're so scared of being an impostor and moving beyond where you feel in your comfort zone that you won't allow yourself to advance. A couple of other things are: you often fear that you lack talent, skills, and etcetera; and again, with your success, not only do you feel you don't deserve it, but you often dismissed it as luck or timing. I've had a couple clients in the past who have been billionaires and who have, literally, chalked it up to just luck. They said, "It had

nothing to do with me,” or “I surrounded myself with smart people,” or something like that and they didn't give themselves any credit. The last one, really, is that you don't enjoy your success-not only do you feel like you don't deserve it, but you never really enjoy it and you never feel like happy about being there. I mean, you're glad you reached it, it's very short-lived, and you're on to the next thing, and

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you think you have to keep overachieving and proving yourself.

S: Yeah, a great bit of advice for folks is to celebrate your successes. Even if you just had a small win, take the time and just celebrate-even if it's as simple as jumping up and down and going “Woohoo!” It's really helpful for your brain and you

provide that reward that gets you motivated to do more of these successful things rather than just saying, “Oh, well!”

E: Absolutely!

S: Yeah.

E: Absolutely! That's definitely one of the key factors. It's retraining-you and I are both pretty versed in the happiness advantage and repatterning your brain to be in a better space in these areas so that's definitely one tactic you can do to help overcome the Impostor Syndrome, along with several other techniques that work.

S: Yeah. Let's talk about, just for a second, the repatterning your brain. Please elaborate.

E: There's a great book written by a gentleman named Shawn Achor and it's called The Happiness Advantage. He did this whole scientific research about how happiness is actually a state of being that brings everything to us, but most people are conditioned to thinking, “When I have the job/When I have the wife/When I have all of these things, then I'll be happy,” and really, it's the opposite. When you're already in a predisposition to be happy, those things

**“He did this whole scientific research about how happiness is actually a state of being that brings everything to us”**

actually come much quicker so they've found through positive psychology-he was part of the Positive Psychology Movement-that you can actually do exercises that repattern your brain over a 21-day period to have a predisposition to happiness.

S: What would that look like?

E: They say that you need to-for 21 days-you've got to write down three things that you saw that day that made you happy. You need to write down three gratitudes. You need to exercise and you need to

**“for 21 days-you've got to write down three things that you saw that day that made you happy. You need to write down three gratitudes. You need to exercise and you need to meditate.”**

meditate. It's very hard for people to meditate. In their mind, what they think, meditation actually is. Oftentimes, I tell people that meditation is what feels best to you and if you try to fight it, you're actually never going to get in that state. What you need to do is, even if you do a simple meditation, which a Navy Seal that I read about a long time ago called as The 4-4-4 Rule. That's four breaths in, four breaths out, and you do it for four minutes. It, literally, calms down your

autonomic nervous system and you're in a much better state to receive these kind of happiness reprogrammings. Those are some of the techniques that they, literally, have found that if you do consistently every day for 21 days, you'll reprogram your brain to a more of a state of being happy because you'll start noticing things around you that are positive instead of negative.

S: Got it! So, let's circle back to this Impostor Syndrome topic and let's say that we've identified that some of the symptoms apply, right? Let's say that I feel like a lot of my success was luck, or that I feel like I set myself up for failure because I set unrealistic expectations for myself and then I just let myself down. And I do that repeatedly, it's a long pattern. I identified the pattern and I realized that I need to do something about it. How do I solve this situation-this Impostor Syndrome?

E: Right. The first thing that's the most important thing you can do and it sounds very, very simple but it's to admit the behavior to yourself. I so wish you could have been there the day that I gave the talk because our mutual friend who founded the organization, Ken Rutkowski, who's an amazing person, has this great organization, and has this amazing radio show that he does all the time, allowed himself to basically, expose himself to all of his peers and all these people who have sort of kept him up on a pedestal when he admitted in front of everyone that he suffers from this. When you admit your behavior, it actually lets the lets go of the power that that fear has over you. It releases it and it makes you feel like, “Oh my God, it just lifted a five million ton of truck off of my shoulders!” and it opens up for

you to be able to receive all the rest of the techniques so admission is extremely important. If you can't admit it and you can't let yourself-like we talked about-be vulnerable, you're not going to be ready to repattern your brain or repattern your cells that store memory. That's the first thing.

S: Okay, so let's say that I resemble Ken's situation, right? I feel like some of my accolades or recognition is undeserved. So, yeah, I could admit that it applies to me as well. I think that I have at least some degree of Impostor Syndrome.

E: Well, you know, you might also have-I'm actually working on this project right now-and for men, it's very interesting. Some men will say to me, "I don't have Impostor Syndrome. I don't feel like an



impostor," but what they end up following that with is, "But, you know, I didn't cure cancer so who am I? What is my success?" No matter what it is they might have done, they still don't feel good enough and so, what I've decided is-really, it's not just about feeling like impostor, I'm calling it a Comparative Success Syndrome. I think men, especially, because men are geared towards winning. They're geared towards feeling like they're the success, the provider, and all this stuff. I think that, besides, feeling like an impostor, they really feel like their success isn't as great as somebody else's. Therefore, it's not good enough.

S: You know, that really resonates. More than anything else that you've described about the symptoms-that resonates. Because I went into biochemistry so first, I got a Bachelor's in Molecular Biology.

E: Wow, that's amazing!

S: From University of Michigan, which is a really good school. Then I went to one of the top five graduate schools in the country for biochemistry and entered a PhD program. This was in University of Wisconsin-Madison and I dropped out.

E: Wow!

S: I dropped out. I had the intention I was going to cure cancer or do something really important for our planet and for humanity and I gave that up chasing the almighty dollar. I love computers from a very young age. I had programmed bulletin board systems from scratch when I was a kid and taught myself not only basic, but also assembly language and even, machine language programming.

E: Wow!

S: I was an uber-geek so I ended up getting back into computers when I went to a conference in 1994. I met some guys from Netscape. I met Rob McCool who was the creator of Apache, prior to that Netscape Server, and prior to that NCSA Server so he was a pretty big guy in the internet space. I'd never heard of Netscape at the time so I was all enamored by that and I decided to quit my schooling and I took an extra couple months to finish off a master's degree so I have a masters in biochemistry, but I do nothing with and had done nothing with ever since. I feel sad about that still, but I kind of, like I said, chased the almighty dollar. I mean, I felt like it was more, not just lucrative, but exciting and I was kind of disillusioned by the whole academic track going to graduate school, and then becoming post-doc, and then getting your professorship, and then tenure, and all that sort of stuff, and making such a meager living, and being chained by these rules around tenure, and the different personalities, and stuff-it's just the politics of academia. So, I was disillusioned and I dropped out and I feel like I had this important mission and I just gave up on that.

E: Wow.

S: I don't really talk about that.

E: Do you feel like what you've accomplished now isn't as significant of an accomplishment to the impact of the world or yourself or whatever because you didn't follow through with where you wanted to go?

S: Yeah. I mean, if you asked me what percentage of my potential have I realized versus if I had gone down this track of trying to cure some major illness or something-I don't know, 3%?

E: Wow! But what you've done is so significant! So many people could go to school for years to learn what you already basically and intuitively knew how to do and have accomplished and yet, you still can't embrace that and feel good about it. See, that's what's so fascinating! Anybody who knows you—you're such an amazing person and everything that you have done is a huge contribution in some way. It goes back to how we think society defines success versus how we define success for ourselves. We put all this pressure on ourselves and I think that's why the Impostor Syndrome as a syndrome resonated with so many people, but why I've kind of taken it a step further, and you've basically confirmed it, is this Comparative Success Syndrome in a way is almost more intense because really, the underlying factor of both of them is this feeling of, "I'm not good enough. No matter what I've done, I'm not good enough. I didn't follow through it." or "This isn't good enough," or whatever.

S: Well, it's even more than that. I'd say, it's like I'm carrying the weight of the world like I have this God-given talent and gift of this incredible brain and intellect that I have not leveraged and not utilized to the betterment of humanity to the degree that I could and it feels kind of guilty. Even though I've gotten all these books out, podcasts, sold businesses, built businesses, and blah-blah-blah, it doesn't feel nearly as meaningful as the idealistic path I was on.

E: Well, the interesting thing about that, Stephan, is that what we don't do is we're never in the present moment and what we don't realize is everything that we do in our life is a choice and it's a choice for that moment. You very well could someday go back to doing what you originally intended to do—that's great or, you may not. You may find out that you're going to be able to much better impact the world in some other area that had nothing to do with that, but there was some reason that you did what you did then in that moment for biochemistry that, really, at some point, it will link up and get you to somewhere else. It's really recognizing that everything we do in our life is a choice. When I talk about overcoming the Impostor Syndrome and this other syndrome is, one of the other things is, look to the present, look forward, and don't look backwards because we already read yesterday's newspaper. We can't go back and re-read that news and get something new from it. Listing the accomplishments that you've made sounds very rudimentary, but one of the other thing is to help you through these kinds of issues is to really write down your accomplishments and keep them with you. Look at them on a regular basis because it repatterns yourselves. They've done research where they've shown that your cells actually store memory and I don't know if you agree with this as a biochemist, but a lot of scientists are finding that. That's why post-traumatic stress is so difficult to get rid of. It's because they say that your cells actually store memory and there's they're figuring out how we purge that and how we reprogram these cells to get rid of these memories that are so visceral and really affect us. It makes my heart so sad because I've been in that place where I've devalued what I think my work has been. When other people have said, "Oh my God, you're so incredible and you've done all these things," I haven't given myself that credit and it has taken a lot—45 years—to get to a place where I can say, "You know what? I am good enough and everything I've done up to now is exactly what I was supposed to do and exactly

what I was meant to do and I can't go back and look at that. I have to keep going forward." It's harder for guys, sometimes, too because of all these other different pressures. Men and women have different external pressures and internal pressures so you should be able to give yourself such a great reward. Like you said, celebrate what you did accomplish then.

S: Right.

E: Right?

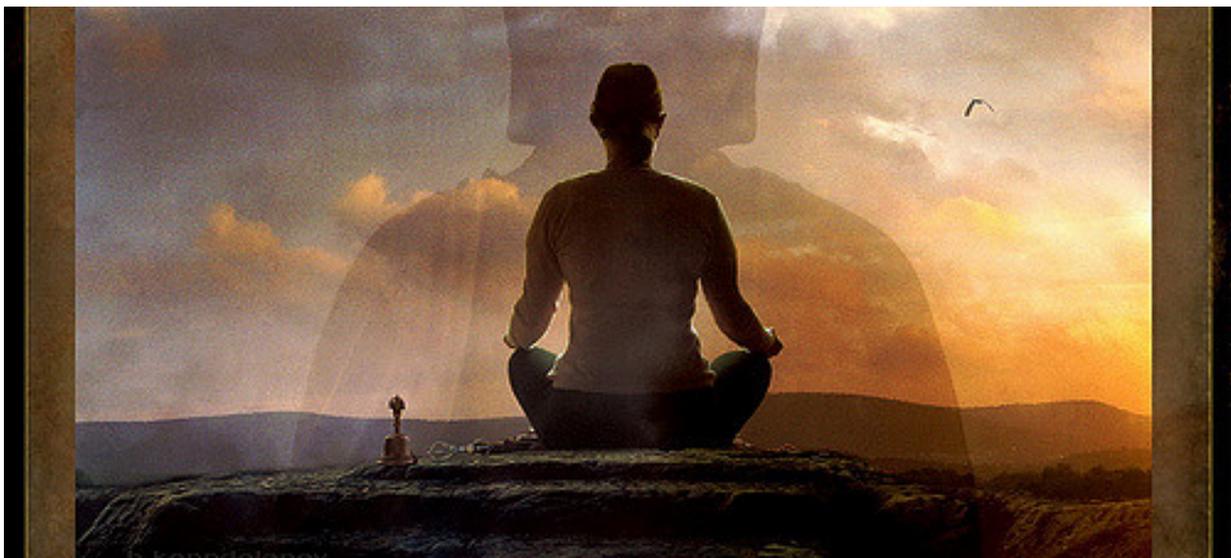
S: Yeah, and I love your point about the present moment versus the past. Actually, everything except the present moment is a projection.

E: That's right.

S: So, our view of another person, our view of the past, of the future, of our environment-everything is projection. The only thing that's real for us is the moment that we're in at this very second.

E: That's absolutely right. Yeah!

S: Let's talk about overcoming Impostor Syndrome and getting the kind of help that you need. Do you do something that you're going to want to go to a therapist for? Is it something that you want to read a



book about or watch documentary? Do you do some meditation, breathing exercises, or what sort of regimen would you prescribe?

E: Well, it depends on your level of how much it affects you so a couple quick rundown lists-I've talked

OPTIMIZED GEEK

about admitting your behavior. That also means being open in discussing it with people you trust because you'll be so shocked about how many other people feel this way that you'll suddenly feel like you have a tribe. I mean, that's exactly what happened when I talked about this at METal. So many people never realized that the person sitting next to them that they respected and revered has the same issue so admitting your behavior, discussing it with people you trust, look forward, don't look backward, write your list of accomplishments, be kind and patient with yourself because you're reprogramming your cells, and then recognizing to yourself every day that this can be my talent not my detriment. Those are some steps but taking it a step further, there are some great books on the market about it. A book written by Dr. Elaine Young was one of the first people to write about it. Again, mostly geared towards women but I think men could get a lot of benefit out of it. Definitely a learning to take meditation class, seeing a therapist-it depends on the level of severity and how much this grips you and how much you might find it affecting your performance at work or affecting your relationships or how you are also as a leader because that's one of the things I talked about. Really, you'll find this fascinating in the tech world. Some companies now who are CEO's and who are coming out and admitting this publicly are actually addressing this in the onboarding process of their companies. There's a great company I talked about at METal called Puppet Labs, up in Portland and the CEO openly-admitted that he struggles with the Impostor Syndrome every day. Now, this is a hugely successful company and they actually talk about it in the onboarding process to help people recognize if they have it or not and instead of throwing them out as a weakness, they actually give them these tools to succeed and manage it at work because they see their talent and they want to cultivate that as a talent instead of thinking it's a defect, which is very powerful.

S: Yeah, this is powerful stuff. Do you remember the name of Dr. Elaine Young's book?

E: Off the top of my head, I don't, but I think it's just called, The Impostor Syndrome.

S: All right, we'll confirm that and will include a link to the book in the show notes so listeners, check out the show notes on [OptimizedGeek.com](http://OptimizedGeek.com). We'll include links to all the different things that we've been discussing.

E: I'm sorry, it's Valerie Young, not Elaine Young. Valerie Young. It's The Secret Thoughts of Successful Women and it's about the Impostor Syndrome, but men can really get a lot of value out of it as well.

S: Perfect! Okay, so this has been a really powerful segment here. Let's transition now, I'm going to take a deep breath and...

E: You're going to begin to love yourself and your accomplishments. You're going to feel great!

S: I'm working on my list right now. Let's switch gears and move over to environmental toxins and some of the things we can do to kind of ameliorate the situation there because we're exposed to a lot of nasty stuff.

**“the products you use on your body and in your home are actually environmental toxins.”**

E: Yes, so a lot of the issues right now that are kind of affecting people that seem to be pretty generic like pollution or what-not, people are finding that-I'm going to delve into a different area-the products you use on your body and in your home are actually environmental

toxins. We're not just talking about pollution or what's going on in the environment, specifically outside of where your controlled area is, what I like to help people recognize is, all of those things out there that you can't control, you can within your own walls and what you put on your body and what you put around your body is extremely important to your overall health and well-being.

S: Are you talking about the shampoo we use and the cleaning products that we use in our kitchens, in our bathrooms, and on our floors? Let's get some specifics here because I know that, for example, most of us listening here are going to be using some sort of vegetable oil that's probably pretty unhealthy-you know, one of these clear liquids...

E: Right.

S: If it's clear, you can see through that it's not natural, it's been bleached. That Canola oil that looks so pretty is really nasty stuff.

E: Yeah. One of the things that I do as I work in the natural products industry and also doing brand education, I talk about how your skin is the largest organ in the body and it's permeable so what you put on your body, in terms of shampoos, lotions, soaps, and things like that, if you put products on your skin that are chemically-based instead of natural-based, depending on the size of the molecules, some of it can pass a blood barrier into the bloodstream. Others can just really irritate the skin and then that goes along with the things that you clean your home with-it even goes as far as some of the furniture

manufacturing companies. Some furniture manufacturing companies will put coatings on chairs, sofas, tables, and things that's actually toxic and that are chemicals that give gas off and you get that gas into your bloodstream through breathing it in or being around it.

S: Yeah, I actually had that very issue with a cat-scratching post that I bought off of Amazon that was so highly-reviewed. It was a top-seller and it took a couple months before our cat would come near it. She kept using this old, used-up scratching post instead until finally, it gassed off enough of the toxins that she uses it all the time. She loves it, but I could smell it. It smelled nasty like a factory!

E: Right.

S: Not good.

E: I mean, that's very harmful to people-to their blood, to their heart, and to their liver. You absorb all these things and I remember seeing a study-I wish I could find this study. I looked everywhere for it, but I saw it in 2007 in Sweden somewhere-Sweden or Switzerland. They took the blood of newborn babies that, literally, at birth, they tested their blood for chemicals and they found traces of 50,000 different chemicals in the blood system at birth. Now, that's in utero so that should tell you how much we absorb from our environment and, again, I don't want to fear anybody about all of that because there are just some things we can't control, but what you can control is, what you decide to put on your skin and in your homes because in addition to that what I really like to help people understand is, it's not just about your body but everything that you put on your body washes down the drain into the water table and actually goes out and affects our entire food chain. I found this-you'll find this fascinating-US Geological Survey a couple years ago did a survey on about, I think, it was ten water treatment plants in the United States. Testing the water after it's supposedly been treated, okay? And we're talking about everybody's water coming out of your sinks and wherever. They found in one of the water treatment plants-I think it was in Oregon, near the Columbia River-that there was the equivalent of 400 Benadryl's coming out and being dumped into the Columbia River Gorge after it had been treated. It really makes you realize how strong some of these chemicals are and that we have a responsibility not to ourselves, just ourselves, but we can help impact the environment if we make conscious choices about the products that we use in our home and our bodies to keep our physical health as a personal through our skin, but also how we impact the environment because your fish are eating in that water and the people are eating that fish-it's a whole cyclical thing, right?

S: Yeah, scary stuff and then we have our air quality, which, oftentimes, the air quality inside our homes

homes is even worse than the air quality outside.

E: Yes, absolutely!

S: I'm in LA!

E: Me too! There's a great research right now that people can Google on the internet-NASA did a study on specific species of plants that actually will help eat up indoor air pollution, which oftentimes, they find is even worse than the pollution outside, so depending on the air quality inside, a lot of people don't check filters and if they're in buildings and there's all kinds of stuff going on like dust, mold, and whatever. NASA discovered that there are specific species of plants you can put in your home or in your office that will actually eat up the indoor air pollution, which I thought was pretty cool.

S: I think the money tree is a good plant for that.

E: Plus, psychologically also, it makes you think you're going to have abundance, which I love. So yeah, to that point, you're talking about air and all the other environmental toxins, people can actually seek out an integrative health care professionals, whether it's an integrative medical doctor or a licensed naturopath, they can run specific blood panels and tests on people to find out what level of toxicity they might have already in their blood or in their cells and they can they can make specific programs with certain supplements and certain different things that could help reduce that and basically, chelate that or get that out of their body. That hasn't been 100% scientifically-proven anywhere. There are some studies floating around and things like that, but the testimonials that people give after having gone through these kind of protocols, regimens, and being proactive have been pretty powerful.

S: Right. What would be a testing regimen that you might recommend? I am going to throw in a disclaimer here that this is not a medical advice. You're not a physician and I'm not a physician. Seek medical advice from your physician before taking any of these ideas and applying them in your life.

E: Absolutely! We're not here to diagnose or treat anything. We're just here to give information that people can go seek out from licensed professionals. In the traditional medical world, there are toxicology tests that they run all the time. They run it in blood or urine or saliva or mucous membranes. They might check the stomach various ways, but there are also other tests that integrative health care

professionals often use to detect if your body has any level of heavy metals from mercury in amalgam fillings or lead from eating a lot of fish that have had lead in them-or mercury rather-and that kind of thing. They'll be pretty specific and tell you what they think you need. A lot of times they're covered by insurance, but some of them aren't. A lot of that's changing now because integrated medicine is becoming much more widely-accepted, even at traditional medical schools than it used to be. There

**“integrated medicine is becoming much more widely-accepted, even at traditional medical schools”**

are departments now for integrated medicine in some of the top universities around the country so they're realizing that there is some validity to not just your general basic CDC tests that you run, but these other kinds of tests like micronutrient tests to test if you're absorbing vitamins and minerals

and all these different kinds of things that are very helpful to people when they're not feeling optimized in their life.

S: Right. You can get your gut biome tested. I recently did that with a company called, uBiome. It's [uBiome.com](http://uBiome.com). You can get your genetics tested like I did with 23andMe. What sort of genetics test would you recommend?

E: You mentioned that I'm on the advisory board for this company here in L.A. called, Caligenix. They have a specialized lab that they use that actually tests-what I love about it is, it's not just 23andMe telling you what your genetic basis is-this company actually, based on your DNA, will spit out a proverbial booklet that is everything that you should do for your health and well-being based on your DNA-based on you as an individual-so that's the kind of sleep that is best suited for you, the kind of diet that's best suited for you, and the best kind of exercise because some people will go out and think they need to do some major intense exercise regimen, but really they may actually be creating a pro-inflammatory response because they're exercising too much and they might have to, maybe, do other kinds of exercises. Caligenix has a great program because they will spit out this booklet telling you everything-even how well you metabolize alcohol or chocolate or caffeine-and then they can give you a program based on what that specific report is. Which is very cool.

**“that is everything that you should do for your health and well-being based on your DNA-based on you as an individual-so that's the kind of sleep that is best suited for you, the kind of diet that's best suited for you, and the best kind of exercise”**

S: Yeah, that's awesome!

E: Yeah!

S: I'll definitely look into that. Another test that I have done a while back now was Immunolabs. I had myself tested for food sensitivities and allergies. It was a blood test so I got my blood drawn and it was shipped to their labs and then I got a report back. It was surprising, all the things that I would have food sensitivities with-eggs, almonds, and a lot of things that I would regularly eat. It also gave you this kind of scale of "+1, +2, +3, +4" so the bigger the number, the more reactivity that that food provided in your system. There's a lot of tests and we just kind of fly blind. Well, I feel pretty good and I don't feel sick, but the absence of symptoms or the absence of disease is not wellness and it's not health.

E: That's absolutely right! You know, it's funny you talk about that with foods too because one of the most interesting things that people don't realize is-I mean, there are integrative doctors who can do supplementation programs and things like that, but truthfully, at the core of our health, food is medicine. It can either be medicine or it could be toxic. I mean, there are a lot of different belief systems out there-The Blood Type Lifestyle where Dr. D'Adamo did a ton of research that he parlayed off of his father's research in the 1920's where they found that certain blood types will assimilate certain foods in ways that are, what he calls, medicinal or are as toxic. If they're being metabolized as toxic, you gain weight, you develop health issues, you don't sleep well, and all these different things. I'm fascinated by the fact that people can now finally do the DNA testing like you did to really substantiate whether a food is harmful or helpful to them. Did you find a difference when you stopped eating certain things that your DNA said weren't good for you?

S: You know, actually, I still eat those things. Some things I've cut out of my diet. One big thing I've cut out of my diet, which wasn't something that came out of a genetic test or a food sensitivity test, was sugar. It's really hard to cut that out of your diet. I mean, I cut out sugary, packaged goods and desserts. I don't eat desserts anymore. However, you'll still get sugar in things like ketchup and sauces so it's really hard to completely escape all the added sugar, but I've drastically reduced that. I definitely feel better and I know that my body is doing better because of that, but as far as certain things that were on food sensitivity test as high reactivity, many of those I still eat. But you know what happened is, I didn't talk to the doctor. So, you get your results and then you're supposed to dial in to this kind of a debriefing call with one of their doctors and I didn't do that. So I didn't fully take on board. I was just like, "Oh, that's interesting!" but I didn't make the necessary lifestyle changes because it didn't seem real enough. Maybe if I would have had that call.

E: Yeah. You don't know what he would have told you, but it's not uncommon. I mean, most people will not make a significant change like that unless they are just at their wit's end, they don't feel well,

they've got some rash that no one can figure out how to get rid of, and they are just not feeling at their best. Oftentimes, sadly too, it takes something very severe for people to change their lifestyle to happen, but if you're feeling okay and you're feeling optimum, I mean, even if your DNA says that, there are a lot of different belief systems out there about health and well-being that at some point, not being with the strict lifestyle will lead to something horrible or what-not, we don't know that that's true. I mean, there are very healthy people who live very strict lifestyles and still get illnesses and we don't know why so there's no reason to beat ourselves up about it. What I like to say to people is, moderation, to me, is the key to sustainable well-being. You do everything you can to try to be healthy in every area of your life, but sometimes, you just can't. Sometimes, we can't make that choice or sometimes, it's just very hard, and as much as you possibly can, it's a good idea and especially, if you're feeling good-that's the biggest indicator and what-not, but if you're making choices that you know are really harmful and you shouldn't do, that's still your choice. Like I said, everything we do is a choice, but you always have to weigh the pros and cons of all kinds of things and not live in fear and not beat yourself up about it either.

S: Right. Because actually, it's creating all that internal stress. Eating something that you know is bad for you and not enjoying it is so much worse than just enjoying the thing that you're taking-like a little bit of a break from your strict diet from, right? So, I'm going to have a dessert because it's a holiday and I need to celebrate that and be happy with that choice and not feel guilty and create all these stress responses in my body while I'm taking that food in.

E: Absolutely, Stephan! That's such an important thing because they already have science that proves that those kind of stresses can affect the body just as badly so why put yourself through that? It's a very good point.

S: Yeah. Let's switch topics again because I really wanted to cover stem-cells and stem-cell therapy and that's an area that you've had a lot of exposure to from several companies that you worked with in that space. Could you kind of define for our listeners what exactly is stem-cell therapy and how does it work?

E: Well, the company that I work with in the States didn't actually have a therapy. They had a supplement that was designed to create better stem-cell health production or better production of stem cells because you know your body cells are the things that replicate themselves and they die off and they replicate again, but everything comes from stem cells and you want to have the healthiest stem cells you possibly can in order to have good body cells. The analogy we used to use was, if you take a photocopy and then you make a photocopy of the photocopy of the photocopy, you start to get

degradation of that copy so you want to make sure that all the copies you're making are high-quality copies coming from stem cells-that was that company. In Germany, what they did, and unfortunately, the head doctor of that clinic passed away several years ago so the clinic is no longer there, but they were using some really innovative stem-cell kind of therapies in partnership with, I believe at the time, University of Austria and they were using fetal stem cells from sheep. The idea about stem cells has a lot of controversy, as you know. Embryonic stem cells being the greatest controversy because they're not coded yet to any specific thing so who knows what could happen with them, right? They could morph into something you don't want them to or they could morph into something that you actually want them to become to fix whatever the problem is. When you get into fetal stem cells, they are already coded for a specific kind of thing in the body, whether it's the liver, the kidney, or whatever it is. They were using injections of stem cells, along with other kinds of therapies, at the time that were integrative like oxygen therapy, hyperbaric treatment, or what-not. It was a very unique clinic and there were a lot of people there that showed up sort of not having any answers to any of their conditions-it wasn't just cancer. They found that this actually helped a lot of their illnesses. It was really fascinating to watch and be able to see the kinds of things they were able to do versus the limitations that we had in this country in terms of what we can do with our stem-cell research.

S: Right, so did they also take stem cells out of the patients? I guess you can get stem cells even from adipose tissue now.

E: Yes, you can. They didn't do that there, but that is what's happening now in today's world. First of all, everything I ever learned-and if anybody ever wants to counter this, this is great because I'm a sponge and I love to learn-but everything I ever learned in the field is, even your own stem cells are considered by the FDA a drug. There's a lot of issue of giving your own stem cells back to you. I know that there are adipose stem cells and there are hyper poetic stem cells and all these different varying levels of stem cells that you can get from the body, from the blood, and from the fat in the body. I know a lot of people and a lot of different medical groups are experimenting with them in terms of, especially for injuries like they're taking stem cells out of the bone marrow in the hip and they're injecting them into knee injuries or hip injuries and things like that in place of surgery. Is it all legal I don't think it's considered legal yet. I think that there are specific ways that they're able to get around it. Like I said, we never did any therapy. We were just doing supplements on that and then helping educate people about what was out there, but I think that there are different levels of people who'd be able to get around it and how they're able to actually administer it these days.

S: Go to Tijuana, for example.

E: Well, no, no, it's actually being done in the States. There are orthopedic doctors in the States who are able to do it in some way. Honestly, I can't remember how they're able to do it, but they are

able to do it. I know a lot of athletes are getting it done and whether they're getting it done legally or not, I have no idea.

S: Got it. Let's say that you get your wisdom teeth extracted. Before they throw out those wisdom teeth, you want to research this because, apparently, you can save those wisdom teeth-you can get the stem cells extracted from the wisdom teeth and I don't get it.

**“you can save those wisdom teeth-you can get the stem cells extracted from the wisdom teeth”**

E: Yes!

S: I wish I would have known that when I was 19 and had mine extracted.

E: Well, it's not too late though. When I was with the Institute, one of the other components of business we did have was, a stem cell collection partnership. What people don't know is that, the stem cell, which you talked about in the tooth, is perfect because that's actually now, stem cells that you can use as an adult. What I learned in all of my work was that, when people save the umbilical cord stem cells from their child's birth, that's only usable up to a certain age and then at that point, you can't use it anymore into your adult life so that the younger you are that you start storing and saving your own stem cells and eventually, when everybody catches up, the FDA, and all these things happen-this is what the stem cell collection companies are saying-you'll be able to use your own stem cells to fight off illness or even, what they were saying is, for rejuvenation like if you're just kind of breaking down and your body isn't healing the way it used to or recovering from exercise the way it used to, you should be able to use it. That's the theory so it's not too late, apparently, at any age, really, to store your stem cells. They do start aging after a certain period of time, but you're totally correct-the stem cells from your teeth are more adept to you as an adult versus your umbilical cord stem cells.

**“when people save the umbilical cord stem cells from their child's birth, that's only usable up to a certain age and then at that point, you can't use it anymore into your adult life”**

S: Yup, so save that tooth!

E: Yeah, exactly!

S: Okay, we're running short on time, but I know you wanted to talk a little bit about work-life balance so let's delve into that last topic and then we're going

to have to wrap.

E: Okay, no problem. Thank you so much for having me again. So, work-life balance-one of the areas of my skill set is working to help people do corporate wellness programs and people be able to live a more balanced life in their work life. We are working harder than we ever have before, but we're not necessarily working smarter. Harvard Business Review last year did a survey where they found that white-collar workers and salaried workers are working anywhere from 50-65 hours a week and some even more. That's just a lot of work. Now, there's this whole thing you talked about guilt and if I'm not working as hard as someone else, I'm going to be perceived as the weak link or I'm not going to be advanced at material, or I'm not going to get everything done or anything. Scientific research has shown that if you do not maintain a work-life balance, you're at a greater risk for depression, for heart disease, for weight gain, and for not sleeping more than six hours a night-all of these things that will not only impact your physical health, but they found that it will actually-and your emotional health that it will impact your productivity at work. It will actually keep you from achieving these goals as quickly or as effectively because your ability to make cognitive decisions lessens and your ability to interact with other people in a positive way can be affected. I just recently spoke on a show about a new phenomenon that's being talked about, which is called Career Compulsive Syndrome. They are, literally, finding that people almost get an addictive rush to working so hard that they can't take a moment away to take care of themselves and then they end up having some pretty negative effects in the long run.

S: Yeah. This happens a lot of times with me and not having boundaries for when I'm going to stop working on the computer because I work from home and it just makes it really easy and the boundaries are very fuzzy but okay, I'm putting the laptop away now for the night, right? Or, you got your phone and you could be doing e-mails or even if you're just in line somewhere like in the grocery store, you're waiting at the checkout, you just keep checking the e-mails, your Facebook, and everything-it's really bad for you. It creates urgency addiction and does not bode well for your work-life balance.

E: Not at all. Or, your relationships. I mean, people's relationships-they're finding that the divorce rates are higher. They're having interactions with family and kids that are just not quality time. If you can't find that you have any kind of control over getting yourself away from the computer, the most important thing I talked about, which is the number one thing people can do is unplug, but what you're saying, you're having a difficult time doing. Even if it's for thirty minutes a day, put that phone on silent and put it in the drawer, close the computer, and go do something for you-for regenerating your own nervous system again. It's the most important thing that you can do and some people, just like you said, they make it so difficult for themselves, but there is an app out there called, Cold Turkey, and you can

actually program your computer and all of your devices to lock you out of specific apps at specific times of the day if you can't just make yourself pull away.

S: I love that! Cold Turkey.

E: Yeah.

S: Okay, I'll have to check out that app.

**“It helps you have better focus on your tasks and it helps you stop-like, it makes you get up from your computer. I think Apple does that too. There's an app in Apple that actually times you so it makes you get up from your computer and walk around and do other things.”**

E: Yeah.

S: Any other apps that you'd recommend that would help with work-life balance or changing unhealthy habits?

E: One of the most important things people need to do is, get enough sleep. The CDC, actually, in 2014 stated that they thought that that was going to be the next public health epidemic-the lack of

sleep. The most important thing you can do is to download a couple apps that will help you learn to have better sleep and better quality sleep. I think-what's the one I just heard about the other day? Oh gosh, I have to tell you. It's called “something” beads and it actually puts you into a better REM sleep. You have to wear earphones with it and one side of the ear does a certain kind of sound wave and the other side does another kind of sound wave so that it helps get your brain acclimated to being able to go into a much deeper and much more sound sleep so even if you don't sleep as long, your quality of sleep is better. I will remember that and get back to you on that because I can't remember what it is. There are a couple of other apps: Focus Booster, is one of them. It helps you have better focus on your tasks and it helps you stop-like, it makes you get up from your computer. I think Apple does that too. There's an app in Apple that actually times you so it makes you get up from your computer and walk around and do other things.

S: Okay. There was a whole methodology to time management that a lot of people subscribe to. It's called Pomodoro. You have a Pomodoro timer and there are Pomodoro apps that will be a virtual timer

on your phone or you could get an actual timer that sits on your table or your desk. The idea there is, you take a break every hour. Let's say, you work for 20 mins or 45 minutes or something like that, you have to take a five-minute break or a ten-minute break or whatever it is.

E: Yeah, and you know I'll tell you because I know we need to wrap, but I always like to throw this out there because it kind of blows people's minds when I tell them this: We have laws in this country that are put in place so that people are supposed to get up and take breaks, right? It's a law that you have ten-minute breaks. Obviously, for salaried employees, it's a little different, but you have to be able to manage your own time. What I tell people is, the only group in this country that really takes advantage of this break-these breaks that are mandated-are people who smoke. It's fascinating to me! And this is not to insult anyone who smokes, it's a life choice, but that's been something that's been deemed as an unhealthy activity yet, they're using that break that supposed to be designed for well-being to supposedly do something that's unhealthy and yet, they are taking their breaks so that's a good thing. It's always fascinating to me that people have something that is given to them and put in front of them and even, mandated and they still don't realize that they need to do that. They need to take a moment where they step away and reenergize and they'll be better when they come back.

S: Yup, absolutely! Taking a break and doing some deep breathing or some meditation for a few minutes can really recharge you. Another app that I'll mention for creating new habits is called, Way of Life. I've been using this app. It's a great one!

E: I was just going to mention that. It came to my memory! It's supposed to be great. I actually, personally, haven't used it. Have you find it effective?

S: Oh, yeah! I've established a bunch of new habits using it. It's really great. You just mark whatever times in the day-for me, I'd mark at night which things that I'd followed through on so it creates new habits for myself like journaling, gratitude meditation, and that sort of stuff. There are some sleep apps so back to sleep for a moment, Sleep Cycle is an app, but I don't use that. I use Zio. They no longer exist. The company went out of business, unfortunately, but I still have my Zio and it still works. I mean, you could probably find one on eBay. It's like a headband that you wear at night and it will tell you how much deep sleep you got, REM sleep, light sleep, and it shows the trend over the course of the night. My understanding is, the most important metric is the deep sleep so at my age, I should be getting an hour, but if I only got 40 or 45 minutes, that's not great. You can't really tell that any other way. I mean, sure, you could use an app that kind of detects how much movement you have on the bed, which is an indicator of what type of sleep you're in at that moment.

E: That's right. Absolutely!

S: But it's not perfect whereas, if it's actually monitoring your brain, it's much more accurate.

E: Yes, absolutely! That's a great app. I love that app! There's one other app too for stress. Oh gosh- Stress Tracker, I think it's called? It lets you track the things in your life that are major stressors and figuring out how to not let them trigger you into a state of stress. That's a pretty interesting app.

S: Oh, nice! I'll have to check that one out.

E: Yeah.

S: Cool! Okay, and there's one thing that you said before we started recording that I thought was really profound and it was about the way that you look at your body as a vessel. Do you want to kind of share that with our listeners?

E: Yeah, so your body is, literally, the only body you've got, obviously. We think about all these things we want to do in our life and achieve and all these things we want to want to do and everything that is so important to us, but we don't recognize that our body is our vessel. I often tell people that people take better care of their cars than they do their body. You give your vehicle constant maintenance checkup, you wash it, and you take care of it, but oftentimes, people don't give that same kind of level of regular care to their own body. It is your vessel. It is the thing that will lead you everywhere you want to go-same with your spirituality or your emotional well-being. It's all connected so it's important to take care of that vessel. The old East Indian adage is: "My body is my temple," and it is.

S: Yup, so true. I've been taking Kabbalah classes this year and last year and they talked about the vessel and how the vessel is storing the light of the Creator, that we share that light with others, and how to shine more light. I love that terminology of the vessels. That really resonated for me when you were talking about our body being the vessel.

E: Oh, great! I'm glad!

S: Yeah, so this has been a great episode. It went in a kind of a different direction than I expected. I didn't imagine I would really connect so much with the Impostor Syndrome piece, but yeah, it's powerful and it makes a lot of sense.

E: Thank you. I'm glad it was helpful for you and I hope for other people too because those are the things that really do keep us from feeling you know-your title is Optimized Geek and ultimately, we want to be optimized in our physical health, our emotional health, and our environmental health-our well-being across all those channels. The Impostor Syndrome and all these things we deal with-that's a little bit a part of it, plus all the things we've talked about so managing all of that is very important.

S: Yeah. We have to treat our body with such care so much more than just a car that we're worried that we're going to void the warranty because we're not getting the oil change done in the timely manner or whatever and our bodies are the one thing that we're going to carry with us our whole lifetime.

E: That's right.

S: All right, well, thank you so much, Elissa. Thank you, listeners! Be sure to check out the show notes for this episode for various links and recap of the different topics we covered, as well as download the transcript and the checklist that we're going to create from all of the different topics that we discussed. Until next time, I'm your host, Stephan Spencer, Optimized Geek! We'll catch you next time! In the meantime, put the stuff into action because it's really going to change your life. Talk to you soon! Oh and one last thing is, how would somebody reach you if they wanted to work with you or they wanted to learn more about the wellness services and consulting coaching that you provide?

E: I also do speaking just so people know I can come out and speak to various groups about all these different areas of health and wellness. They can go to [HealthyLifeGuru.com](http://HealthyLifeGuru.com) or email me personally if they want to get a hold of me: [Elissa@HealthyLifeGuru.com](mailto:Elissa@HealthyLifeGuru.com).

S: Perfect! All right, thank you so much and thank you, listeners!