



CHAPTER THREE

Explore

The next major component of “owning your wellness” is exploring. This section will *explore* what other healing and wellness opportunities you have yet to uncover. How do you know that the changes you have made are working for you? How do you know when those changes are no longer working? What are your symptoms possibly telling you? What have you not tried yet? This is what I mean by “explore.” Maybe you need to do stool testing, hormone testing, or basic blood work to see what is happening inside. Lab testing helps you truly put all the health advice out there into the unique context of *you*.

Exploring where you are, where you have been, and where you need to go is where my guidance differs greatly from other health and wellness books. ***One of the main things I do with my health coaching clients is assess, reassess, and often course correct what we are doing.*** What worked

for weight loss in your twenties might not work at all in your fifties. And what works for your best friend might be horrific for you. Peer pressure and keeping up with the Joneses just

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OWN YOUR WELLNESS

don't work when it comes to evaluating what changes you should make (or not make) to feel your best.

As I settle into my midforties, I wish I could go back and tell my teen or twenties me, "Listen to your gut, girl!" Good Lord, I would have saved myself *so* many headaches and hard lessons if I had only just gone with my gut. This is true on the grander scale (dudes I should have never given my phone number to) and the smaller scale (not having that extra cocktail).

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What I didn't understand was that my brain and gut actually talk to each other all the time. The gut-brain connection is strong! You know that feeling of butterflies in your tummy when you are super excited? Or that wave of nausea that hits when you learn of something really shocking or stressful? That is your brain and gut having a conversation.

The mind and gut send signals back and forth via the vagus nerve.¹¹ This nerve is the reason that you can't eat when you are depressed or only want to eat when you are nervous.

Not only do the brain and belly talk about feelings, but they talk about other things like your overall health. When the gut tells the brain, "Hey, things aren't looking good down here," your brain gets the signal it might be time to get you to rest. In fact,

EXPLORE

your gut holds the key to your immune system! If your gut is healthy and full of happy, robust microbiota, the rest of you is likely feeling pretty good too. But when your gut is struggling to digest the wrong kind of foods (for you) or is riddled with inflammation from stress, the rest of you feels pretty crappy too.

Some people develop a bit of a disconnect between the brain and gut; they don't have very good conduction via the vagus nerve. There are many ways you can stimulate this nerve to increase its tone and strength. Things like gargling, humming, singing, chanting, and even laughing all increase vagal tone. Think about it this way, have you ever been a stress case trying to figure out a way to get the heck out of a gnarly situation and then suddenly burst into song?! No! When we sing along to our favorite tune or hum our way through doing chores, we are generally in a pretty chill state of mind. Your body equates that action of humming, singing, and so on, to

being safe and well. *If you want to do just one thing to help yourself feel better on a daily basis, start piping up in the shower or while you are driving in the car.*

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