

## **Podcast Series: Holistic Nature of Us**

### **Episode # 65 Meet: Tonya Pasternak, ND**

**<https://www.judithdryer.com>**

Hi I'm Judith Dreyer,

Thank you for joining me for this pod cast series "The Holistic Nature of Us".

I invite you to journey with me into a better understanding of the concepts behind our holistic nature and how that ties us directly to the natural world around us. My intention is to be your guide for this half hour as we begin seeing our world with fresh eyes, gaining more understanding and learning how can connect the dots in practical ways that we are nature and nature is in us.

I feature a broad range of guests deeply concerned about the environmental issues of our time and more, authors and educators, practitioners and others whose passion for this earth and for all species helps us create sustainable bridges of understanding. These folks are innovators, action oriented, creating solutions in a variety of ways that honor us and the planet's holistic nature. I am honored to share their stories, their projects, and their passions with all of you.

And today I'm delighted to introduce you to Dr. Pasternak. She received her bachelor's degree in cellular and molecular biology and her Doctorate in Naturopathic Medicine from Bastyr University. During that time, she participated in various independent research projects with a primary focus on genetics. To help expand the availability of naturopathic care Dr. Pasternak volunteered her time by providing medical services to the homeless population living in Seattle's tent cities. Today when working with patients Dr. Pasternak always seeks to find the root cause of disease and values talking time to educate her patients. She creates customized treatment plans for each person, utilizing a blend of nutrition, botanical medicine and cranial-sacral therapy. She is a member of Naturopathic Medical Associations on both the state and national levels and continues to

expand her knowledge by staying up to date on current medical advancements.

Welcome Dr. Pasternak to my show The Holistic Nature of Us.

DR. PASTERNAK: Hi, thank you so much.

JUDITH: Well today we're going to explore the field of Naturopathy and what I'd like to have you do is have you start with explaining or telling us about your journey into the world of naturopathy and how that's led you to becoming a practicing licensed physician here in the State of Connecticut.

DR. PASTERNAK: Great. Sounds good. I am grateful that I learned about naturopathic medicine and I actually did that accidentally when I was in 11<sup>th</sup> grade. I remember the day I was on the internet just searching for different colleges and ideas of what I maybe wanted to do with my future and I randomly came across Bastyr's website, which is the university that I ended up getting my medical degree at. And that was the first that I started learning and reading about naturopathic medicine. So that was when I first got introduced to it, with the field, and I loved it right away. So really it was from that point on that I decided to pursue this as a career.

JUDITH: Interesting. And that's out on the west coast so now you're back here on the east coast and you are a licensed practicing physician here in the State of Connecticut, which is not true for a lot of states. Isn't that true?

DR. PASTERNAK: Yeah, the licensing is different in every state, so some states we're fully licensed as primary care doctors, which is the case out in Seattle Washington and also the case in some of the surrounding New England states. We range by state anywhere from fully licensed primary cares to not licensed at all, in which case people who practice in those states are more along the lines of a health consultant. So just a lot of limitations to what they can do in certain states. Which is why I'm in Connecticut. I am actually from New York and New York is a state that is not licensed. Whereas in CT we are licensed so we can have greater rights to do with our patients which definitely helps to provide good care in terms of diagnostic lab testing, physical examinations, referrals to other practitioners, so CT is a good state to be in.

JUDITH: Yes, it is. I taught at WesConn for a number of years and Naturopathy was one of the modules that I touched upon in those holistic

classes. And what most folks don't realize is that your medical education is the same as an M.D. Where you vary is you go off into either acupuncture, Chinese Medicine, Ayurveda, Homeopathy, Botanical Medicine which our conventional doctors do not do. You have a different bag of offerings for your patients on a more natural level.

DR. PASTERNAK: Definitely, that's correct. So, it's not a one or the other approach. We really believe in integrating both types of medicine. Some people have seen that if they're seeing a naturopathic doctor, we are going to recommend stopping all conventional treatments but that is very far from the truth. So, we believe in the power of conventional medicine and it definitely has its time and place. In addition to that, or sometimes instead of that, there's so many other things that we can do to support the body as well and that includes physical medicine, homeopathy, nutrition, mind/body medicine, acupuncture. So, a whole host of those things that can be used in support to whatever a person is currently doing.

JUDITH: So, the founding principles of naturopathy are to use substances if necessary, nutrition obviously could be a major factor, but to ignite the natural healing ability of our body, the intelligence that's in our body. Is that correct?

DR. PASTERNAK: Yes, that's correct. So many people think with Naturopathic Medicine it's just about using some natural in place of something manmade or synthetic, so that often is a part of it. We do tend to use things that are more natural based such as nutrition or herbal medicine but that is by far the complete differences between the two. So, a big difference with Naturopathic Medicine is that we practice based off a philosophy of our medicine and that philosophy is, many things go into it but a big part of it is believing in the healing power of nature and of our bodies. So, our bodies innately want to be well and they do have that internal intelligence to be able to heal given the right opportunity. So, our goal as physicians is to try to see what is happening with each individual that they either do not have to be able to be well or what if something that they have that needs to be removed in order to be well. So, it's all about treating the cause and finding whatever that deficiency or that obstacle is and trying to support or remove that so the body can do its job and continue to heal.

JUDITH: Now I love that approach too because I don't think our current medical model has taken into account to any great extent that there is a

natural intelligence to the body and as you said, it wants to be well and healthy. That's the primary operating system of our physical body, so to speak. So, Naturopathy supports that in various ways and the other thing that I really admire and appreciate about your discipline is that you take time with your patients to figure that out.

DR. PASTERNAK: Yes, yes it does require a lot of time. We have to investigate what's going on emotionally for a person, where they're living, what they've done for a past occupation because all of these pieces of information can really give us insight into what might be irritating their system.

JUDITH: Exactly and again, the medical model isn't quite there yet. Our current Western medical model isn't there yet. It seems to be time is money instead of time for healing and that's what I like about the difference between the two medical models in the broad sense. I'm not saying that that's true for every single person but in a broad sense that to me seems to be the difference.

DR. PASTERNAK: Yes I agree.

JUDITH: So now let's get into spring. You and I have talked prior to the interview about spring and I know my car was dusted with yellow pollen the other day.

DR. PASTERNAK: Mine too!

JUDITH: Of course, the rain washed it away. Could you tell us something about our biology and how we react to that and why is it bothersome to one person and not to another at this time of year?

DR. PASTERNAK: Sure, so again with the body wanting to be well we have our immune systems in place which is thankful for our survival and our immune system is supposed to be able to distinguish between something that is benign and not harmful versus something that is harmful. So, in that ideal situation our immune system is only activated to fight things that pose risk to our body such as a bacterial infection, viral infection, even cancer cells that get produced within our own bodies. In certain situations, such as the allergies that immune system gets a little bit confused and starts to create a strong reaction to something that is benign such as pollen or animals or food or kind of in a sense autoimmunity too where the immune system is

confused and thinks pieces of its own body are harmful. So really the underlying tie between all of those is a hyperactive immune response toward something that it should not be reacting to. So, if two people were to go outside one person who does not have allergies can breathe in all that pollen, you know enjoy the outdoors and have no response, which is the normal healthy response. Whereas that person who has that hypersensitivity is going to go outside and the immune system is going to be activated when exposed to those substances and create all of those annoying symptoms.

JUDITH: Yeah and we're seeing that today. I'm sure you're seeing that a lot with your client population too, complaining about the allergies.

So how do you approach that in general? How do you approach allergies?

DR. PASTERNAK: Yes, so we always want to tie a lot of pieces of information together. It's common for allergies to go along with some other conditions such as asthma and eczema so I always tend to screen for those conditions as well, even asking if it was back into childhood: did they suffer from asthma then, any skin disorders from when they were a little one, any chronic ear infections? So just additional pieces of information that can help me figure out when along their journey did they really start to develop this hypersensitivity. If a person says yeah I was born and I had really bad eczema right away and I suffered from chronic ear infections all throughout my childhood then it leads me to think slightly different causes such as maybe a food trigger or their specific microbiome from birth on because there's only so many things that are going to affect a small child in that sense. It's different if we go through that whole history and somebody says, no I was fine all the way up until I was 30 and then I moved to Connecticut and took a bunch of antibiotics and then all of a sudden, I can't tolerate the spring or the fall. So, figuring out when along their journey they got the symptoms and what changes happened during that time can help me pinpoint where the dysfunction happened within the body and then it's really a matter of trying to hone in on that and target that specifically.

JUDITH: It's interesting. I lived in a neighborhood in Danbury CT where several people came in from the mid-west. They worked for some of the big companies based out of Westchester NY. They might have stayed for like three years but most of them that came into CT from the Midwest all started to suffer from allergies and it was almost predictable if you came from the Midwest and you came to CT you might have that issue. So again,

geography plays a role into it as well as, you know, our immune system, correct?

DR. PASTERNAK: Correct. Yep it's all about what the body has been able to get used to. So somebody from the Midwest: their body can form a tolerance to the substances in their local environment and then if they get removed from that, it's almost like that immune system needs to be retrained for their new environment.

JUDITH: Hmm, interesting isn't it? So that gives us another aspect of approaching something like an allergy, a spring allergy, is to look at it from a couple of different focuses and that brings us to the center, which is us as a patient, you know? Interesting.

Anything else you'd like to talk about or share on that level with nutrition, those kinds of approaches?

DR. PASTERNAK: Yes, so something we often talk about in Naturopathic Medicine is the body can be viewed like a bucket. If our body is a bucket and symptoms add up and add up within our system, it's like that bucket is filling full of water. So, we can take that to a degree but if it gets too full the water is going to start to spill over, in which case that is indicative of a person starting to get symptoms. So often times people will say, it's kind of strange. I felt like I was totally fine and then it just hit me out of nowhere. So, it might feel that way to a patient but really when we look back, we can see that there were multiple different insults that kind of accumulated within the body until there was a final straw. So, in many different conditions, such as allergies, we want to think about how we can get that total body burden down or how can we get some of that water out of the bucket basically, so they're not spilling over, that water isn't spilling over and manifesting in symptoms. If somebody has seasonal allergies, really, their body is kind of on like histamine overload which is the chemical mediator that drives allergic reactions. We can start to think about what other areas of their life can we start to decrease that histamine load? So are they usually able to tolerate a little bit of dairy but they do know it makes them kind of stuffy and usually that's not an issue. When they're having spring allergies, when their body is too overwhelmed anyway it would be a time then to go back to those types of lifestyle factors to say, alright let's be a little stricter with your diet just so it's one less thing that your body has to tolerate. In the situation of allergies we can always do acute treatments to kind of put out a little fire

but we want to look more holistically to, to see other ways we can support the body so there's not so much of a burden on it.

JUDITH: You know that's such an interesting concept. When I studied Ayurvedic Medicine I learned about the principles of how a disease manifests and in that model and in the Traditional Chinese model, everybody looks for the root cause. The symptom often is, as you said the bucket overflowing but what's in that bucket to begin with? How can we get back to the root cause of what's causing this kind of symptom. And again, I feel it is a piece that's typically missing in our Western model approach. I have learned and I have seen, and I understand that there's a Naturopathic model you get some different results. You get, I think, deeper results because if I have a symptom over here and the bucket's really full and you help me look at what's causing the bucket to overflow I think I'm going to have better health in the long run. Do you feel that to be true?

DR. PASTERNAK: Yeah, definitely. It's about supporting the body as a whole, not just the symptoms like you're saying. So if we do that and we work to strengthen our system and kind of going back to what I was saying initially where we want to figure out what obstacles are in our way of being well the more we can get rid of those obstacles, the healthier we're going to be across the board, not just in terms of the one symptom we're trying to treat.

JUDITH: Yeah and I think from my experience that works. I have a history with my younger son. It was Naturopathic care that actually turned him around because we got into supporting him on a couple of different levels which brought him to a better level of foundational health and vitality, which I think is our birthright. I don't think we come in here to be sick necessarily. We have stuff happening because that's called life but inherently, we're meant to be well and I think you agree with that?

DR. PASTERNAK: Yes definitely.

JUDITH: All right so do you have three tips that you can share with our listeners? Something that they can apply on an everyday level that's very practical?

D: Sure. This one kind of sounds obvious when I say it out loud but maybe not something people think of regularly. So during allergy season, like you said with your car you go out there and it's covered with yellow pollen

which our body can get on the skin too. We're obviously not going to be covered like your windshield will be but on a more microscopic level there's definitely those allergens on our body after we come in from the outdoors. So, something quick and simple a percent a person can do is just make sure they're **washing their hands, washing their face, even washing their hair** if their allergies are really bad and they've been outside all day just to get that small trace off the body. Otherwise, they're going to continue reacting to it. So, a little bit of a hassle but you know unfortunately we have to go those extra steps when people are symptomatic like that.

Another thing along those lines is to do a **Netti pot**. This is essentially doing the same thing, more on an internal level, so in the nose versus just on the skin for the same reason. So, as we breathe in, those allergens are getting stuck in the nostrils and that can be a source of that product irritation. So not everybody loves Netti pots but they're something you can get used to. It's just a matter of flushing water through one nostril and having it come out the other but that's a great way to kind of get that cleansing action.

And then also keeping **windows closed at night**. So, this is another thing that's kind of a bummer when it's finally nice out but whether it's just the spring or the fall season when the counts are high, having the windows open there's more chances of those allergens coming in and settling in dust or even on somebody's pillowcase. So just keep those closed and also if somebody is reactive to mold, which can be a really irritating time right now, especially with all of the rain that we've had. If it's really rainy out those mold spores are kind of a higher concentration as well. So making sure if you're reactive to that, also keeping the windows closed and doing all you can to keep the house free and clean.

JUDITH: Hmm, those are great. They're very practical tips and I think anybody that's suffering from allergies at this time could easily apply that in their daily lives, including the Netti pot. I know folks that do use that, and they do get results with the Netti pot, especially at this time of year.

DR. PASTERNAK: Yes, they can be really helpful.

JUDITH: Is there anything else you'd like to add before we give our listeners your contact information?

DR. PASTERNAK: Well with our clinic we do integrative medicine, so we are primarily a group of naturopaths here, that's how we started, but we've

tied in a lot of other types of medicine as well. We do nutrition, acupuncture, IV therapy and we also have Primary Care Physicians in our office. We try to blend the best of both worlds depending on what each individual need. As I said earlier it's not meant to be a one or the other approach. There's positives and negatives about all sides of medicines so we just really try to find the positives and make the best treat plan for each individual.

JUDITH: That's great. Could you give us your contact information for your clinic?

DR. PASTERNAK: Yes, our clinic name is Collaborative Natural Health Partners. We're on East Center Street in Manchester, Connecticut. You can just search our clinic name and our website comes up. On our website we have a ton of information. We write blogs pretty consistently that can all be located on that site just to provide small bits of information to the community. We also host a bunch of classes here at our clinic. Some nutrition classes, some hypnosis classes, herbal medicine making, so those are constantly updated too on our calendar on our site.

JUDITH: Wonderful. All right. Well thank you again.

DR. PASTERNAK: Thank you!

JUDITH: Yeah, it's been my pleasure to have you today. I know I always feel inspired by my guests and your practical tips and advice are certainly very helpful for this time of year. So, thank you Dr. Pasternak for joining us.

DR. PASTERNAK: All right, thank you.

This is Judith Dreyer. I'm the author of "At the Garden's Gate", book and blog. My book is available through my website [www.judithdreyer.com](http://www.judithdreyer.com) as well as several distribution arms such as Amazon, Nook, Goodreads and more. I'd like to remind all of you that a transcript is available for each podcast. And please like and share these podcasts. Let's get the word out and support each other.

And remember, **now** is the time for practical action and profound inner change so we value our world again. Enjoy your day.

