

## HORMONE RESET PROGRAM

With: Sara Gottfried, MD

### Class 1: Cortisol (Part 1)

**Jackie Wicks:** Hi, I'm Jackie Wicks with PEERtrainer. I'm welcoming Dr. Sara Gottfried. Dr. Sara, hello. I'm so glad you're here.

**Sara Gottfried:** Hi, Jackie. Hi, everybody. So happy to be with you.

**Jackie:** Yeah, and we are starting the first class, we're kicking this off, as you obviously just listened to, the PEERtrainer Hormone Reset Program.

Now, Dr. Sara's going to take us step by step and talking about how we can reset the hormonal balance naturally.

You know, just a quick recap, if you didn't remember, she's the head of the Gottfried Center, Harvard, MIT trained, faculty at the University of San Francisco, pardon me, UC San Francisco.

I want to talk about quickly some of the things that we're going to learn in the program. I want you to understand this is a checklist. So, the first thing which Dr. Sara talks about that you're not crazy, you're not a lousy mom, wife, entrepreneur. It's not a moral failing going on.

We're going to talk about how to fix these things.

Also, second thing, what's causing the top symptoms, because she studied 10,000 patients over the last 10 years to really identify this. We're going to talk about the best part, which is really the three-step solution on how to reset this thing.

And you know, I always want to know, OK, we're going to talk about all this, but what is this going to do for me? Why am I going to listen to this?

And the biggest thing is, obviously, it's going to help with the weight loss, help with the belly fat. And you're going to feel like yourself again. And Dr. Sara was telling me a little bit about why we don't feel like ourselves, necessarily, and how we do get back there.

HORMONE RESET PROGRAM

With: Sara Gottfried, MD

The first thing we're going to talk about in class one, and we're going to dive right in, cortisol. What is it? Why is it important? How do we fix this problem?

And so, with that, Dr. Sara, again, welcome. Psyched to start learning about this stuff and starting to really come up with the ways to fix it, more importantly.

**Sara:** Absolutely, Jackie. I have to say, what I want to do today is, I want to kick cortisol to the curb. We're going to talk about what it does, why it takes over your life, why it makes you feel overwhelmed, cranky, and maybe like a terrible parent, and lays down that belly fat that's so hard to get rid of.

I also just wanted to say one quick thing if I may, Jackie.

**Jackie:** Of course.

**Sara:** My family's originally from Texas. We have this saying there. Bernet Ann Brown talks about how she's a fourth generation Texan and lock and load is her motto. So, the way we used to frame Harvard is that she went to Harvard, but she overcame it.

So, I just wanted to put that humble opinion out there, that, yes, I'm trained as a physician scientist. But really, I'm here as a mom, as a woman, as someone who has struggled with these things and has figured out how to get out to the other side.

**Jackie:** Good point. Because it is true, sometimes you go to the physician office and you feel intimidated. And sometimes you don't even want to discuss some of these private things, because you feel like, oh, I don't, it's almost like telling the principal of your elementary school. So, I love when I can feel more comfortable talking about these things and not feel like I'm necessarily going to be judged for some of the mistakes I make.

**Sara:** Well, I think that's such an important point, because the tendency, especially when you have hormonal imbalances that are making you feel overwhelmed, the tendency is to feel like you're doing something wrong and it's your fault. Like, if you could just buck up, if you could just pull yourself up by your bootstraps, you could do this whole thing called life better. And the truth is, there are hormonal reasons that are making you feel that way.

So, that's what I want to turn around today, and that shame that we have, the reluctance that we have to show our vulnerability to look like women who have our act together, I just want to put that aside today.

HORMONE RESET PROGRAM

With: Sara Gottfried, MD

**Jackie:** Perfect. I know that we talked about in the first call, you talked about how you've discovered this, obviously, through yourself and through your patients. But really, those analogies that you used, the first one was the Charlie's Angels, here are the three things that have to support you, and here's what makes our weight loss harder, and us not feel like ourselves.

And obviously, the first one that you were saying was cortisol. I have to say, in my experience, of course I've heard about cortisol, but it's really from that ad of you're not losing weight, it's not your fault, it's the stress and the cortisol that's making your belly bigger.

But that's really the only thing that I've heard that I understand. What I'd love you to do is almost paint the picture of what cortisol looks like in the profile. You know, I'm 40-something, for the 60-something, and really talk about why this is affecting us so much when we're trying to lose weight and get ourselves back.

**Sara:** So delighted to go there. Cortisol is really interesting. For some reason, we have this idea that cortisol, that it's the stress hormone, I need to reduce stress. And then we don't go much further than that, because I think we just don't talk about it, we don't have the deeper conversation about what this hormone does.

I want to talk a little bit about the job description of cortisol, and not the incredibly boring conversation that's on Wikipedia, for instance. Because, oh my gosh, if you read that your eyes are going to glaze over within about 10 seconds.

One of the things I think about with these hormones is, if I was on a bus with these hormones, what would they be doing? I feel like cortisol is the big guy who sits down next to you on the bus and takes up way too much space. Like, his big leg is up against yours, it feels totally creepy, and you're getting a little scared, you want to run away, that's what cortisol feels like.

I can tell you about the others, too. Thyroid is like the sneaky guy under the bus who's letting all the air out of the tires so that you feel like, oh, I just can't get this bus up the hill.

But cortisol has a couple of jobs. It's got actually a few hundred jobs, but the top three are that cortisol raises your blood sugar. It does that so that you can run or fight, but it backfires because women spend so much time feeling stressed out over sometimes major things.

HORMONE RESET PROGRAM

With: Sara Gottfried, MD

But often minor things, like I mentioned school lunches get me totally stressed out and raise my cortisol. When you have that high blood sugar, it raises insulin which is that fat storage hormone. It may make you leptin resistant. It makes you grow a muffin top, maybe even a cake top. So, that's one of the jobs of cortisol.

A second job is that it raises your blood pressure, and a lot of women don't see this until maybe their 40s, 50s, 60s. It's funny, I was telling you, Jackie, about my mother reading my cortisol chapter in my book "The Hormone Cure." And she's had high blood pressure for a long time and she said, "Oh my gosh, I never put it together that being a stress case is actually raising my blood pressure. I knew that stress could raise it, but I never put two and two together."

**Jackie:** And this is your mother.

**Sara:** And this is my mother, right! I mean, I've been talking about cortisol for, I don't know, 20 years. And then the third job is related to immune function. This one's a little less sexy and may not be relevant for everybody, but if you have trouble...

Say you have children, and you feel like you catch every virus they bring home, or you get sick or cut yourself and it takes a little longer to heal than it used to, that can be cortisol that's off. It can either be too high or too low, most of the time it's too high.

So, those are three main jobs that cortisol does that gives you a sense of what happens when this hormone is out of control, usually too high, that when you are making too much cortisol over a long period of time, you burn out production and then you have low levels.

**Jackie:** So, how do I know? If I have belly fat, my cortisol's probably too high, or how does that work?

**Sara:** Well, there's a number of different signs that I like to look for. As you described in that lovely introduction--thank you so much--I have looked at 10,000 women in the past 10 years to identify the top seven hormonal problems that they have. And number one is high cortisol.

We could do one of two things, and maybe you could tell me which would work better for our love for the people listening. I could either describe what it looks like at three

HORMONE RESET PROGRAM

With: Sara Gottfried, MD

different stages of a woman's life, or I could just throw out some questions that give people a sense of whether this is a problem for them or not.

**Jackie:** You know, I'd like both if you could.

**Sara:** OK [laughs] .

**Jackie:** Questions first. The questions, because then I think everyone starts to think, OK, does this relate to my life? And then when you paint the picture, I think that it can really help with the clarity of it.

**Sara:** I agree. Your wish is my command. So, let me just run through a few questions. Some of these are from my book, and I use questionnaires in my office all the time. I've got this virtual medical practice, and I've been using questionnaires for more than 10 years, refining them.

So, I'm just going to run through some questions, and I'd like for your listeners maybe to have a Word document open on their computer, or a pad of paper, and you can just make a tick mark if any of these are a yes for you.

Do you have or have you experienced in the past six months a feeling that you're constantly racing from one task to the next? Do you feel wired, yet tired? Do you struggle to calm down before bedtime, or do you get a second wind that keeps you up late?

Do you have difficulty with disrupted sleep, meaning that you wake up 1:00, 2:00, or 3:00 am? Do you have a sense of anxiety or feeling nervous, and it's really hard to stop worrying about things that are beyond your control? Do you feel quick to anger? Do you scream or yell?

Do you have memory lapses or feel distracted, especially when you're under stress? Do you have sugar cravings? Maybe you need a little something after lunch or dinner, usually of the chocolate variety. Do you have an increased abdominal circumference? So, this is your waist measurement. Classic is for it to be more than 35 inches. But, the whole idea here is the muffin top.

Do you have skin problems such as eczema, or thin skin? And, when I say thin skin, I mean both physiological and psychological. Bone loss, high blood pressure, high blood sugar--and, that was one of the signs I had when I was 32 years old.

HORMONE RESET PROGRAM

With: Sara Gottfried, MD

And then finally, some of these other things I've mentioned, difficulty recovering from injury, getting frequent colds. One other sign to watch for is pink or purple stretch marks on your belly or back. Those you actually want to take to your local doctor.

**Jackie:** Really. What do those mean?

**Sara:** Well, we're talking about garden variety high cortisol today, which is what I see in about... I did a survey of my patients looking at this and I found it in about 80% of them.

There is a medical condition called Cushing's Disease, which is where you have really high cortisol. It's usually caused by something like a tumor, or something going on in your adrenal glands, those cute little endocrine glands in your mid-back on top of your kidneys. That is an extreme form of high cortisol that you would definitely want your doctor to check out and diagnose for you.

So, we want to be careful to separate the information/education that we're talking about today from medical advice because I can't give our people medical advice. That's a more extreme form of high cortisol. Very rare that conventional medicine recognizes.

Most conventional medicine does not recognize this more common kind of high cortisol, what I call the "hot amygdala," sort of women who get stressed out pretty easily or overwhelmed.

**Jackie:** When we were doing that checklist, how many that we've checked yes to should we have a pretty good gauge on the fact that, "OK. I'm definitely struggling with my cortisol levels"?

**Sara:** Five or more, I think it's a slam dunk. You have high cortisol, let's go immediately to some of the lifestyle changes. If you have three to five, I recommend that you ask your local doctor to do some testing for you. You can test your cortisol in the morning. And, if your doctor isn't willing to do that, you can also test on your own. There's some home tests that you can do.

**Jackie:** Let's say, I'm listening to this. I definitely wake up at 3:00 am, or 1:00, or 2:00, or whatever that is. And, I definitely have some there. We were talking a little bit about the profile. What does the visual profile look like of someone who's 40-something versus someone who's maybe 60-something?

HORMONE RESET PROGRAM

With: Sara Gottfried, MD

**Sara:** Well, I always like to start with, what's the perfect hormonal specimen here? And then, I'll go to the 40-something. So, when I was in my 20s--I'm curious what it was like for you in your twenties too, Jackie--I was focused on my career. I was focused on finding a life partner...

**Jackie:** Me too.

**Sara:** I wanted to get married and have kids.

**Jackie:** Yep. Exactly.

**Sara:** I'm setting up my nest. My hormones were pretty optimal even though I was going through my medical training and working way too many hours. I was flexible and accommodating. I didn't fly off the handle. Rarely before my period, I would do that. I had a gold fish and little else to be concerned about. I was pretty free and unburdened.

**Jackie:** I was in venture capital. I was an entrepreneur working constantly. But, I was very adaptable.

**Sara:** Yes.

**Jackie:** I was really able to roll with things pretty easily.

**Sara:** Yeah, so women in their 20s are the perfect hormonal specimen. We know this from good science that 24 is the ideal age. You're adaptable as you said. You're accommodating. And, you roll with the punches. And then, at some point, in your thirties, for me it was age 32, for others it's age 35, you start to have your ovaries starting to sputter. And that leads to the very start of perimenopause.

A lot of people think perimenopause doesn't happen until you late 40s. But, there are actually subtle signs that begin on average at age 35. And, it includes some of these questions that we talked about. So, you start to feel like you fly off the handle more easily. Sleep becomes more of a challenge. Your children really change things. Honestly, I could work 120 hours a week for about 10 years. It wasn't until I had my first kid at 32 that I really started to feel the effects...

**Jackie:** I had my first child...

**Sara:** ...after I had my first child.

HORMONE RESET PROGRAM

With: Sara Gottfried, MD

**Jackie:** So did I. I had my first child at 32. But, of course, I didn't have your background. So, I just thought, "OK. I'm now in my thirties. Things change."

**Sara:** And, that's what we do, right? I was fortunate in that I had this medical training. And, when I was 32, depressed, strung out, burning the candle at both ends, trying to work and be a mom, in couple therapy, no sex drive, I looked to what is going on medically. I'm a hormone expert. What is going on with my hormones? How can I bio-hack this? How can I turn myself into a guinea pig and figure out why I feel so bad at such a young age? But, most women don't have that, right?

**Jackie:** And, is the muffin top, that muffin top that starts really in the 30s that just was completely nonexistent, is that almost the biggest visual clue that something is going on?

**Sara:** It is the red flag.

**Jackie:** And, I think a lot of us experience that. Some of us, of course, have had weight struggles for long periods of time. But, you completely see someone in their 30s, and you know the muffin, it just doesn't really happen with a lot of 20-year-olds, or younger.

**Sara:** It doesn't happen. You see all these 20-year-olds rocking their low rise jeans. And then, at some point in your 30s, it just like "Oh, my gosh. I can't wear those jeans anymore. They feel like sausage casings." And, it's not you. It's probably cortisol.

**Jackie:** Wow. OK.

**Sara:** And, the other piece that goes with it is the sugar cravings. So, I started to hear jungle drums when I was 32 in addition to the muffin top, I had these sugar craving that were out of control. I wanted chocolate. I wanted a glass of wine pretty much every night. That's when you start to have these cravings.

**Jackie:** So, I'm sure so many people can relate to this. What's the picture of cortisol imbalance, I guess, if that's the word I'd be using?

**Sara:** Yes, great question. I've figured out to biohack my cortisol. It took me about three months to do it, and I think it's really valuable to say, OK, for someone who's in their 40s- -I'm 45 now--this is what it looks like when your cortisol's in balance. I had to become a yoga teacher to really be able to embody this.



HORMONE RESET PROGRAM

With: Sara Gottfried, MD

So, the idea when cortisol is right-sized, when it's in that Goldilocks position, not too high, not too low, and not turning your brain into Swiss cheese, is that you feel calm, you feel cool, you don't feel reactive.

There's a beautiful quote by Viktor Frankl where he says, in the gap between stimulus and response is your freedom. Now, I'm paraphrasing him. He's someone who was a psychologist and survived the Holocaust.

**Jackie:** For the listeners, it's a very, very heavy book, but "Man's Search for Meaning," it's got to be on my top 10 book list. He's an unbelievable perspective deliverer [laughs] among other things.

**Sara:** He absolutely is. And for many women who have cortisol that is like a runaway train, their life already feels like his book, so I just want to be careful to pull out the juicy parts. But here's the idea.

You bounce out of bed in the morning, you feel restored. You have the full, what I call the adrenal repair conversations every night when you sleep. You don't have disrupted sleep. There's no bags under your eyes because you slept well.

You eat normally. You don't have these crazy blood sugar swings that make you want to have a glass of zinfandel every night. You feel like your body has this beautiful rhythm, buoyancy. You feel positive and upbeat because if you have persistently high cortisol, it depletes you of those happy brain chemicals like serotonin and dopamine. We can get into what those do, but when I was 32 I had post-partum depression because my high cortisol completely burned through my happy brain chemicals.

So, when you're faced with stress, you don't recoil in horror. You realize that everything is figure out-able. You've got these stressors on your plate and you manage them one at a time, and you do everything you can with the stressors that you know are under your control. You're able to focus...Oh, go ahead.

**Jackie:** No, no, please...Of course, what you're saying leads to 100 more questions, so please keep going.

**Sara:** So, just a couple more things. I mentioned some of these already, but just to close the loop, your blood pressure, your fasting glucose are completely normal. So, you're not craving coffee the second that you wake up in the morning. You're not craving ice cream or the latest latte from Starbucks.

HORMONE RESET PROGRAM

With: Sara Gottfried, MD

You're able to get your tasks done with pleasure, you don't future trip on what's next. You know where your keys are, you know where your children are most of the time. Your kids don't bug you. When your partner acts out, you don't think immediately of divorce. You're able to breathe deeply on a regular basis. You're proactive and less reactive.

**Jackie:** It almost seems like too good to be true that you could actually start to feel like that, or that something...This is the just the first class about cortisol, and I know we're going to go over the thyroid and the Charlie's Angels, but are you suggesting that when you can get your cortisol balanced that your personality that you once had comes back, and your muffin top decreases? Is that what you're suggesting?

**Sara:** That's exactly what I'm suggesting. You know, I have a 41-year-old woman that I saw this week who's got one child. Her daughter is nine years old. She made three tweaks to her high cortisol, and she said to me when I saw her this week, "You know, Dr. Sara, I feel back home in my skin again. I don't know who that person was who came to see you six weeks ago, but I was just out of my mind. I just felt like I wasn't on my game, I wasn't able to manage really any stressors, especially managing a nine-year-old tween who was starting to approach puberty and adolescence, I just couldn't do it. I felt like it was a way in which I was falling short as a parent. I didn't realize it was biology." Biology! It was biology, it was her cortisol.

**Jackie:** All right, so what's the prescription? I shouldn't say it in those words, but I have to know.

**Sara:** [laughs]

**Jackie:** We've got to get the action plan to start feeling better, to target some of these things that really not only bring our life down, but our energy down, our weight, all these things. I'm stumbling, but I want to hear, I need to know the action plan.

**Sara:** The action plan. So, I've got about 100 things that you can do that are proven to help you with lowering cortisol. But what I did with this woman was, number one, we talked about hitting the pause button. And this is one of those places where a lot of people, again, have their eyes glaze over.

I just want to say to you, stay with me here for a moment. Because we know, this is true for me when I was 32, it was true for this woman who saw me this week who's 41, most of us are really good at pressing the pedal to the metal.

HORMONE RESET PROGRAM

With: Sara Gottfried, MD

I bet you are, Jackie, especially with your venture capital background from your 20s. We are good at going fast, we are good at rocking our careers. We are good most of the time at parenting, whatever it is you're parenting. Maybe you're parenting a mission, maybe you're parenting children.

We're not so good at stopping, especially the stopping that needs to happen for prevention, to manage proactively your Charlie's Angels, especially your cortisol.

Now, this is true for me, but if you think about a race car driver just for a moment--I know this is a very masculine analogy--race car drivers don't develop mastery from driving fast. They actually develop mastery from learning when to take a pit stop, from learning when to do that preventive stop that does exactly what they need for their tires, for their gas, for everything they need to keep their gas tank where it needs to be, to keep their energy high to be an effective race car.

So, that's the idea that I want to bring in here, and there's so many ways to hit the pause button. I really like to personalize it, because for some women I'll say, yoga, meditation, tai chi, and they just look at me bug-eyed.

They're like, no, no. I'm not coming to you and paying these fees and you tell me to go do a yoga class. So, I like to really cast a wide net here, and one of the things that I did for this woman--because she was the type who was just like, I'm not sitting on some cushion for 30 minutes every morning, that's not me--so I assigned her tiara time. So, the idea is that you get some tiara. It can be a cheap one. You can spend some money on some rhinestones. And the tiara time is where you hit the pause button.

I don't want to have that same old boring conversation about stress and the fact that we're supposed to reduce stress. I want you to manage your cortisol as aggressively, and girlfriend time is one of the most effective ways to do this.

**Jackie:** ...have connecting with girlfriends. And again, I love your analogy about the race car driver, because I didn't realize that. I didn't realize that, you're right, to be a good race car driver is when you stop, when you start to do all the maintenance, not driving as fast as you can.

**Sara:** That's right, and it's a hard piece for women to get. We are wired to give and to breast feed not just our babies, but the entire world. One of the feelings in your body when your cortisol is high, when it's a runaway train, is that you feel this kind of anxious

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HORMONE RESET PROGRAM

With: Sara Gottfried, MD

jitteriness if you don't solve someone's problems immediately or you don't figure out what needs to happen, or what you can do for them. And that is overproviding.

You know, my friend Jennifer Loudon defines overproviding in a beautiful way. She says, "Overproviding is when you give more than is sustainable, probably for the wrong reasons."

Women are wired to do this. So yes, the race car driver, that idea that it's actually essential to your health and to managing your cortisol, that you learn how to hit the pause button, that you learn how to stop the race car it will make you more effective. It's a bit of an irony.

**Jackie:** I know, we have those two things. Well, what's next? Let's say, it sounds great, but I'm even thinking of my own excuses in my head saying OK, well, I'm going to do that, but gosh, I can't control when my other friends are still trying to put the gas pedal on as fast as they can and they can't get together.

Or, sometimes I think, gosh, I'd love to take half an hour out for myself right now, but if I just get this done, then I'll have the half an hour. Because that's kind of what some of us explain in our head.

I just want you to go through all the things that we can start to do and have this layered approach. Because even if we do a little of it, it's going to start making huge inroads into this problem.

**Sara:** Sure. Well, this is what I call step one of the Gottfried Protocol, and the next piece that we can move into in just a moment is filling in the nutritional gaps that happen when you are a stress case. But one last thing I want to say about hitting the pause button is that orgasm is an incredibly effective hormone therapy.

I want to be a little cautious about this. I'm a gynecologist, so I talk about orgasm and vulva and vagina all the time, it's part of my everyday bread and butter conversation.

Women 35 to 55, and they asked about whether they would rather have sex or be on Facebook, and 20 percent of them said they'd rather be on Facebook than have sex. I was surprised that the number was so low [laughs] , because...

**Jackie:** I am, too. I thought you were going to say 80 percent.

**Sara:** Right? I mean...

HORMONE RESET PROGRAM

With: Sara Gottfried, MD

**Jackie:** I did, I thought you were going to say 80 percent. Was that study anonymous? I'm just curious, I definitely thought the number would be a lot higher.

**Sara:** Yes, maybe it was on Facebook and that's why the 20 percent is much lower than I would expect. I did an anonymous survey in my practice. I did a study of 6,000 patients last year and I had a sociologist do it so that there was no bias.

She did it anonymously and asked about sex drive and weight loss and energy and we found that 80 percent of my 11,000 clients feel that their sex drive is not what they want it to be.

They felt like they were having mercy sex. We can talk about what that is. They were just desperate for some natural solutions. Getting back to the point here, we've got this protocol that we're going through. We're still on this step number one which is to hit the pause button.

What we know about female orgasms is that it lowers cortisol. It also makes your thyroid more efficient, which is the driver of your metabolism and your weight and also your mood.

It also helps with the tango between estrogen and progesterone that we're going to talk about in another session that we have. I think it's so important to just say, if we could pause just for another science moment here, there is a really interesting study. You can imagine how funny this study is.

There was a study done looking at women having orgasms and looking at MRIs of their brain. [laughs] It's hard for me to imagine pulling off this study. Women having orgasms while in the MRI machine. They found that most women 35 plus have this part of their brain, the amygdala, which is in charge of fear. I was talking about the hot amygdala earlier. That hyper vigilance, hyper arousal that so many of us start to have around 35.

They found that women who have an orgasm, that is the only time that the hyper vigilant centers of the brain actually go dark. It's the only time that they turn out the lights and stop being so hyper vigilant. This is a very effective thing. I'm not talking about the one minute orgasm that you have with the vibrator. I'm talking about a more lengthy, delicious, juicy orgasm. It doesn't have to be with intercourse.

I just think it's an important hormone therapy that's free that also lowers cortisol.

**Jackie:** I'm in shock right now. First, I have to say, I get a little uncomfortable talking about this and I don't even know why. I just do. The same thing happened when we were

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HORMONE RESET PROGRAM

With: Sara Gottfried, MD

talking about the cleanse with JJ and she started talking about how elimination is one of the most important parts and she starts talking about poo and how your poo is supposed to be formed and how it looks.

I'm sitting here just going this is disgusting and I don't want to talk about it. I can't believe I'm talking about this. Of course sexual energy and orgasm's not disgusting, I don't feel the same way, but it seems to be a very private thing and it seems there's a lot of societal ways we've grown up.

A lot of people that I speak to that were forced into shame whenever they thought about orgasms or different things have gone on. I do feel when you're talking about it there is a discomfort there, but it's good to even just talk out loud and say OK, this is something that can really...Who would have thought that orgasms were linked to muffin tops? I wouldn't have known.

**Sara:** Who knew?

**Jackie:** When you're talking about here's something very direct that's tied to your cortisol levels it makes me feel like OK, I know the elimination part of the cleanse was essential for getting toxins out and this is just another piece of this puzzle to the cortisol. For me, it anybody's out there having this, and maybe no one has any discomfort talking about it, but if you do...

**Sara:** No, definitely people have a lot of discomfort and I'm glad you're bringing this up. I'm someone that talks about sex and orgasms so much that my poor husband just wants to hide sometimes at dinner parties. I think it's so important that we acknowledge how our culture does not have a healthy attitude about sex.

I really feel like we have an epidemic of women who have their lights out for one reason or another. I'm not saying that to blame the women because I know, actually, from the science that 70 percent of it is hormonal and of that 70 percent a lot of it is cortisol. We have this epidemic of low sex drive and we are ashamed to talk about it.

Not only do we feel like we're not good enough as mothers, as workers, we feel like we're not extraordinary enough, not thin enough, we feel like we're not good enough in bed. There's some women who have a really healthy sex life and more power to them. I ask every woman who comes to see me, are you satisfied with your sex life? That is my number one screening question.

HORMONE RESET PROGRAM

With: Sara Gottfried, MD

I can tell you, 80 percent of the time they're not. They either don't want to be having sex and they feel distressed about it, they're having the mercy sex, basically sex to keep the marriage together, or they don't like the sex that's on the menu. They're bored out of their mind with the kind of sex that they're having with their partners.

This is an interesting piece. A quick little digression. When "50 Shades" came out, I still think it's on the New York Times bestseller list. It has sold more paperbacks than any of the Harry Potter series. It's the fastest selling paperback ever, especially women 30 plus, and it tells me that it's not that women have no interest in sex. It may be that the type of sex that's on the menu is not what they want.

There's some complexity here to the whole sex piece. I don't want to be overly reductionistic or pathologizing about it. I think it's one of those symptoms that we want to be tracking and we also want to be looking at how can we hit the pause button so there's tiara time, there's going to yoga, there's meditation, there's hanging out with your girlfriends, and there's female orgasms. Let's be complete about the list.

**Jackie:** It's true. I have seen people that are older than me that do have a healthy approach to orgasm and things like that and they are taking more time out for themselves and it does seem like how are they doing that? What's going on? The suggestion here is that the cortisol is balanced. This particular part of the equation has been addressed and it's in balance and able to support the life that you want.

**Sara:** That's exactly right. That's exactly right. It reminds me of when my husband, his name's David Gottfried, he's the founder of the US Green Building Council. It's funny. When he read my book for the first time, "The Hormone Cure," he works in San Francisco and he would go walking at lunch on the streets of downtown San Francisco and he would just diagnose one woman after another.

He did it in a very loving way, it wasn't in a judgmental way, but he would be like oh my gosh, spare floaty around the midsection, her cortisol's probably out of control. Let's look at her. OK. She looks kind of young but she's got a lot of wrinkles. It seems like maybe her cortisol is high, too, and it's causing this accelerated aging. We know it does. We know that there's a 20x effect on cortisol on the collagen of your skin so it makes you age prematurely externally.

Then internally, in terms of your cells, high cortisol will make your telomere shorten. I don't know if you folks have heard about telomeres.



HORMONE RESET PROGRAM

With: Sara Gottfried, MD

**Jackie:** I have not.

**Sara:** Telomeres are these cute little caps on chromosomes inside your cells. I'm going to make this astonishingly simple. They're like the plastic caps on shoe laces. If you are a stress case like I was at 32 it makes your telomeres short and stubby, which is not good. You want them to be long and lovely. They are the best marker we have right now of biological as opposed to chronological aging.

We know hitting the pause button actually increases something called telomerase which helps to keep your telomeres long and lovely.

**Jackie:** Wow. Also, that race car analogy. I am taking this very seriously versus when you're always hearing in the magazines or your parents you've got to slow it down, until there's a really clear reason why and what the consequences are it's hard to actually do it. It's so clear why someone like me, and I'm sure everyone, needs to do this today. You need to start now.

**Sara:** No question. I was just like you, Jackie. When I was in my 20's and 30s my mother would say to me, "You've got to slow down. Your life is so crazy." I had a massage therapist who said, "Agro, woman. You are so agro."  
[laughter]

**Sara:** At least I was getting a massage. Massage has been shown to lower your cortisol. It's very effective. I never really took it to heart until I had that health crisis at 32 when I delivered my baby. I had very high cortisol, I was a complete stress case, I was collecting for board certification in OBGYN so I went back to work four weeks after having this beautiful baby that I wanted so much.

The joy of having this baby could not land with me. I had post-partum depression, I was offered exactly the wrong thing. I was started on Paxil and my problem was cortisol and it was driving up my blood sugar, it made it very hard for me to lose weight. I had to figure that out.

What I want to do is shorten the learning curve for other women. Don't wait until you have that crisis and you have the prescription for the latest antidepressant in front of you.



HORMONE RESET PROGRAM

With: Sara Gottfried, MD

**Jackie:** This is the step one to cortisol. Are there more steps to cortisol? I know the next class we're going to talk about the second part of the Charlie's Angels which is your thyroid which people talk about all the time.

**Sara:** It's about the herbal therapies, the botanicals, that have been proven in randomized trials which are the best evidence to turn around the high cortisol. How does that sound?

**Jackie:** Yes. Perfect. Especially part of us loves the thought that there's also something we can take that will help us with getting the cortisol back in balance. It's a layered approach so if we just keep doing a lot of these things it'll all start to come together.

**Sara:** That's right. One thing that I think is so important, I can't remember if I talked about my great grandmother before, but I had this radical great grandmother who would not show up at our house like other grandmothers with gum and Barbies and candy. She would show up with suitcases of whole foods, of wheat berries and kale and beets.

She really believed that you don't find the answer to health in a pill bottle. Just as I don't think you find the answer to health in an antidepressant bottle unless you have severe depression, I would also say you don't find the answer to health in a supplement bottle only. That's why I think this layered approach is so important.

That being said, when you have unmanaged stress and cortisol is running the show what happens is that you make more rust in your body, you produce more free radicals, and that tends to deplete you of certain micronutrients, including vitamin B1, B5, B6, B12, vitamin C, and tyrosine.

I really recommend that people take an excellent B vitamin, a B complex.

**Jackie:** Just to interrupt you for one second, my daughter's like don't be an interrupting chicken. I don't know if you've heard that. That's what they say at school.

For everybody listening to this, I know that sometimes when we start to talk about this it's hard to write really quickly what she's saying. We're going to put together really Dr. Sara's package for the cortisol.

She'll talk about this, but we'll also have it very easy for you to be able to understand what's in this.

HORMONE RESET PROGRAM

With: Sara Gottfried, MD

**Sara:** Yes. This is so important for me. When you already feel overwhelmed, I want to make this astonishingly simple. I really think it's important that you start with just one thing. What is the one thing that you're going to do this week?

When you're overwhelmed often you don't want a big project. We've talked about that before. Those are the things that get depleted and so I recommend supplements to fill those nutritional gaps. Then I've got some good news here within this particular category in terms of food.

I've been bad mouthing chocolate a little bit, but on cortisol small doses of chocolate, especially the high cacao chocolate, 75 percent or higher, have been shown to lower cortisol. Small doses of chocolate give you magnesium and it also lowers cortisol.