Navigating Stress with Dr. Alyssa Berlin, PsyD

Episode 450 · March 13, 2025 · with Dr. Alyssa Berlin, PsyD

IN THIS EPISODE

For the 450th episode, Dr. Elliot Berlin, DC is joined by a very special guest: his wife and partner in parenthood, perinatal psychologist Dr. Alyssa Berlin, PsyD. Together they tackle why stress, anxiety, and overwhelm are skyrocketing — especially for new parents — and the tangible resets that help, from culinary therapy and lifestyle shifts to EMDR.

About this transcript: *This transcript was created with AI-assisted transcription and reviewed by our team. It may not be 100% accurate — names, medical terms, and phrasing can occasionally be mis-transcribed. For exact wording, please listen to the episode audio.*

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Today's episode is a special one. It's our 450th episode, and to mark this milestone, we're making some exciting changes. We've got a new intro, fresh music, and a slightly different opening format, but our mission remains the same. To bring you entertaining, informative, and engaging conversations about pregnancy, birth, and parenting. In this episode, we're tackling a topic that's more relevant than ever. Stress, anxiety, and the overwhelming feeling of running on adrenaline. So many people, especially parents, are struggling with mental and emotional exhaustion, and we're going to explore real, tangible ways to reset and reclaim balance. We're going to talk about why anxiety and stress

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: levels are skyrocketing, especially for new parents. We'll talk about some simple at-home outlets, maybe like culinary therapy and lifestyle shifts. And we'll talk about professional and alternative reset mechanisms like EMDR. You've probably heard of it, but what is it? And to help me navigate this incredibly important discussion, I'm joined by someone very special. She's a psychologist specializing in perinatal mental health, a self-trained chef who has turned food into a therapeutic outlet, and most importantly, the mother of our four children. I'm pregnancy-focused chiropractor Dr. Elliot Berlin, and you're listening to the Informed Pregnancy Podcast. Dr. Elissa Berlin, honey bunny, welcome to the podcast.

DR. ALYSSA BERLIN, PSYD: Hi, sweetie. Thank you for having me.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Thank you for coming back on the podcast. We have an episode 183 where we talk about postpartum transition, and it's an extremely popular podcast. Anyway, I'm glad that you're here for the rebirth.

DR. ALYSSA BERLIN, PSYD: Yeah, that was pre-COVID days. That was a whole different world at that time, but I'm so happy to be back.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: All right, let's talk about stress and anxiety. I mean, I feel like whenever you ask somebody how you're doing, it's always like, I'm so stressed, and maybe even more so for parents. I'm so stressed. I'm burnt out. I'm wiped. I'm fried. I'm wired. However, they're going to say it. There's just an overwhelming feeling of stress today, and it feels like it's built over the years. Like, it's more now than ever in my lifetime. Like, not just for me, but around me, in the community around me, in the country, and even globally. What's going on?

DR. ALYSSA BERLIN, PSYD: Yeah, I think it's a very astute awareness. It's true. Parenting has always been a demanding job, right? There's no way that we could get around that. It's just it's an all-encompassing thing, and those sweet little buggers of ours, they need 24-7 something, right, irrespective of age. But today's parents are dealing with a whole different set of pressures that I think we've never actually encountered before, and it's exhausting. Lots of people like to talk about, you know, the village, that we lost the village, that we lost the support, and that our generation, you know, is doing so much more on their own than ever before. I think the thing that people don't talk about as

DR. ALYSSA BERLIN, PSYD: much is the idea that there's been a lot of societal expectation shifts that happen. And, you know, parents in today's day and age are expected to do so much more, to be more hands-on, more emotionally available, more deeply involved. You'll hear buzzwords like attachment parenting. And these are things that we want. We deeply want to have this time and connection with our kids. At the same time, we're balancing careers and household responsibilities and personal relationships. And when I talk to clients, I say all the time, we live in a world now where there's more to do than hours to do it. And so it's not surprising that parents are running on fumes. And that's without even adding the digital world

DR. ALYSSA BERLIN, PSYD: to the mix. I mean, in case our kids listen to this episode, we won't go too deeply down that path. But we've lived the struggles of media and the digital world, you know, firsthand. And, you know, the digital world is a bombardment for the nervous system. There is constant information that is, you know, coming at us from all sides. We are struggling, and we're thrown into a comparison culture. And it really just leaves most people, or many people, I should say, and definitely parents feeling just struggling with this overwhelming sense of not doing enough, or not being good enough. So it's exhausting. I can't talk about parenthood without talking about the chronic lack of sleep. And so when you

DR. ALYSSA BERLIN, PSYD: take all of this together, yeah, parents are utterly depleted in today's day and age.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah, I mean, the chronic lack of sleep, I guess, in general, but even more so now, I think, not just with babies who, you know, haven't sleep trained just people just not sleeping as much, you know, I'll raise my hand guilty. I think that you also said a couple of things that

really resonate. Number one, the village, because I see postpartum, my clients come back into the office, you know, if they have a village here, if they do have family around people willing to come over and help out and pitch in, it just makes it possible for them to be available to come to the office and get some postnatal care, that the moms who I see, the parents who I see that don't have any support like that, and may or may not be able to buy

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: support like that, they can't do it, they can't do the same kind of self care. And that's just coming to see me at the office. It translates into so many more things, you know, being able to just have mental time for themselves while somebody else is helping out or caring for the baby or someone to do things, the things that you mentioned, the household things or other responsibilities, someone to be able to do those things and give you a little time to unwind or just even be with the baby without having other distractions. So I think that's a big deal. The other thing is the technology is also interesting because in theory, the technology is going to be able to afford us more time to do other

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: things like whatever I used to have to spend my time doing X, Y or Z, and now there's a software for it or an app for it. So now I should have more time. But I think that for many of us it translates into now I have pressure to do more stuff because a tool to be able to do it. And so I think as these tools, these quote unquote time saving tools come out, they actually not really saving time. They're just putting more pressure to be more productive.

DR. ALYSSA BERLIN, PSYD: Yeah, it's really complicated. You talk about support or lack thereof. And that was our story. We don't have family that live around us, you know. So when family would come to visit, sure, it was a nice reprieve. But for the most part, and on the day to day, we had to figure out how to juggle all those things alone. And I mean, some of the most challenging moments for me would be, let's say when you were at work and the baby was sleeping, but the two year old needed to be picked up. That's stress, right? That is just overwhelming stress and navigating on our own without that village. So yeah, I definitely identify with the beauty when you can have supportive help. And let's not assume that all help is supportive, but good quality supportive

DR. ALYSSA BERLIN, PSYD: help is huge. And the things that you have to navigate when you don't. It is a challenging, you know, here we are in 2025. And the two things we still haven't figured out how to do is either add more hours to the day, or you know, get life to slow down. And I feel like in some ways really, since COVID, you know, you get nothing for free. So we got that little reprieve of, you know, sheltering in place and we were home and we're like, wow, all this time. I feel like the world has been on this vengeful act to somehow make us pay it back faster and faster. And so yeah, all these great technology, we just say, great, it'll help me move faster and do more, as opposed to, oh, maybe I need to use this to slow down.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And then to me, stress is how much stuff you have to do in the numerator and how much time you have to do it in the denominator. So more stuff adds to stress, less time adds to stress. And when a baby comes, you have a lot more stuff to do and seemingly a lot less time to do it. So it's stressful. What does it look like symptom wise? What are the signs or the effects on the body when someone specifically parents, but anyone really is under that kind of stress for prolonged periods of time?

DR. ALYSSA BERLIN, PSYD: Yeah, it's a great question. It runs the gamut. Really, stress takes no prisoners, it'll hit every facet of the body. A lot of my clients will talk about fatigue, if not utter exhaustion on the physical side. It may present as headaches, chronic headaches, digestive issues, and, you know, trouble sleeping. And the sleeping one is really a paradox, right? We need the sleep, we want the sleep, we lay our head down and we have trouble staying asleep because there's so much swirling inside. On an emotional level, people talk about overwhelm, irritability, mood swings, or it being so intense and so much that you just short circuit and people just go numb. And it's like they lose all feeling from those sensations. And it's a

DR. ALYSSA BERLIN, PSYD: go through the motions more robotic act just in an effort to get through the experience and the day. I mentioned, you know, a moment ago, that part of what can interfere with sleep is, you know, not being able to shut your brain down. So cognitively with chronic stress, you will hear people talking about racing thoughts, trouble focusing, attenuating to something in front of them, forgetfulness, which can be really upsetting. I'll hear people say like, my brain just feels foggy. And it's so frustrating because that was never me. And then little things, little things that you know, little decisions also become overwhelming. And we feel stuck. We feel stymied between what do I want to eat? Or what am I going to pack,

DR. ALYSSA BERLIN, PSYD: you know, my kid for lunch? Or do I want to leave before a feeding, right? Leave the house before I feed the baby or after. Little things that seemingly would not otherwise impact us all of a sudden feel so big. And all of this, you know, long-term chronic stress, if unchecked, and if we don't do anything to address it, can absolutely contribute or lead to the development of perinatal mood and anxiety disorders. It strains relationships and it leaves us feeling just not good, right? Life just feels overwhelming in that state.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: How do you know when you're crossing over the threshold? Because stress is not inherently bad. Sometimes we need stress. It invokes that fight or flight response, which can be survival, necessary for survival, help us survive. And then sometimes the stress is just not normal. The body's reaction to the stress is not normal. How do you tell when you or someone around you is going over that cliff?

DR. ALYSSA BERLIN, PSYD: If it's okay, before we go there, even you're talking about, you know, the sympathetic nervous system, right? The fight flight system. And unfortunately, I'm seeing people live in an almost constant near state of fight or flight. And what we know about that system is your body is releasing cortisol, it's releasing adrenaline, and all of that is meant to help you have these short, big bursts of energy to get through a specific moment. The problem is, you know, the sympathetic nervous system was never meant to be a marathon system. It was never meant to be a place that we stay in for long periods of time. It was meant to be a sprint system, right? Something comes up, get in, get out, take a deep breath. And when you stay in that

DR. ALYSSA BERLIN, PSYD: place for an extended period of time, it can be very harmful. It can lead to all of those symptoms we were just talking about. And people, you know, and one of the common things I'll hear clients say is that they feel like they're reacting. They feel like they are just living in a world where it's not their best version of themselves because they're just constantly going from one fire to the next, as opposed to being in a place that can be thoughtful, that can be intentional

and mindful, where they can respond to things as they come. So it's a really intense place to be. How does someone know that they're there? I think the thing that we want to think about is a person's ability to adapt, a person's ability to move out of that place versus

DR. ALYSSA BERLIN, PSYD: getting stuck, right? So if you find yourself just perseverating or just stuck in this unending loop of ruminating thoughts, and you're just not able to cope, that's usually an indication that, you know, there's more going on, that there's something bigger to look at. You'll see people talk about little moments of joy being overshadowed by exhaustion, kind of things along those lines. And it really leads to short tempers. It leads to little things creating big frustration. And it evokes our feelings of guilt, which again, not a good place to live.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Hmm. Well, it seems like it would be great to tackle it before it gets to that point. But if not, at least recognize it when it gets to that point, so that more advanced help could be brought in. I think we're going to have some solutions here. In the second segment, we'll talk about things that anybody can do at home to sort of vent off the natural buildup of stress. And then in the third segment, we'll talk about more professional help and modalities that people could seek out if things are going out of control, or you don't want them to. Let's take a break and we'll be right back. Welcome back to the second segment of Episode 450. So maybe you don't relate at all, listeners. Maybe you're not stressed at all. Maybe you're just smooth

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: sailing for all of you. But if you know somebody who is struggling a little bit with the buildup of tension and feeling that there's too much to do or there's starts to turn to a lot of worry or other feelings like guilt. We have some remedies, some ideas. So you are a cookbook author and I am the beneficiary of your amazing cooking all the time. You're self trained and it's an outlet for you. It's a therapeutic outlet for you. And I know that you encourage your clients and other people to develop therapeutic outlets. Tell me how this became a therapeutic outlet for you and how something like this could help counter some of the buildup of stress for someone at home.

DR. ALYSSA BERLIN, PSYD: It's such a curious question because it's not like I consciously set out to do it. I think it was something that really just developed organically. If we go back to, you know, our earlier days, you know, at the beginning of marriage, we were, I'm sure you remember we were both in graduate school and looking for, you know, intentional time to spend together so that we didn't completely lose sight of each other. And we would do things like, you know, until we got in trouble cake decorating classes or we just found ourselves spending time in the kitchen. And it was really just a fun, enjoyable place to be. And it was really like the yin to my yang, if you will, in the sense that, you know, I spent all day in school and loved my

DR. ALYSSA BERLIN, PSYD: graduate studies, but it was very cerebral. It was very exhausting. And the kitchen was just a happy place. It was a place that I could zone out and really invoke my more creative side. And I found that I really liked it. It was my medium, right? More than painting or sculpting. Loved combining flavors in unique ways that you wouldn't think about using things that were typically savory and sweet dishes and vice versa. And really plating, plating was the thing that I enjoyed the most, taking something and making it look pretty and presenting it in a way that was really exciting for other people. So, I mean, I think we kind of discovered it a little bit together.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah, you ran with it. I enjoyed it mostly because we were doing it together. But you had an enjoyment of it beyond that.

DR. ALYSSA BERLIN, PSYD: Yeah, I could appreciate that. I mean, you really did run with it.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oftentimes, you know, making dinner is not fun. It's just something that has to get done. But also oftentimes you make it fun. And I think that you're always experimenting with flavors and textures and culinary techniques. And you make it fun for us and exciting. You make food exciting for everyone in the house. So much so that, you know, people will be at other houses or sometimes even out to eat. The common is, I prefer mommy's food. And I mean,

DR. ALYSSA BERLIN, PSYD: if ever there's something I would love to help people. I would love to help people improve their relationship with the kitchen and to improve their relationship with cooking, help people reconcile. I think cooking is something that often scares people. There's a fear and expectation if it doesn't come out right. And it's a pity because, you know, if you have time to devote to it, it really is a bevy of mindfulness opportunities. I mean, it sometimes is surprising to me. People search for mindfulness opportunities. They'll search out a piece of grass to put their feet in it, to have that tactile experience or, you know, a really nice scent or spray. And yet all of that exists within the kitchen if you're not afraid of it.

DR. ALYSSA BERLIN, PSYD: And yes, I don't think there is a food network game out there that we haven't played. And so, you know, my comfort being able to translate to the kids and the idea that the kitchen doesn't have to be even a solitary place. Right. Who says that it only is for the cook? I mean, one of my earliest memories of Yosef, our oldest son in the kitchen, is him making eggies on the inside of the oven alongside of me and then playing food network games and really moving towards you know, now Dina's in Israel and cooking for herself and sending us pictures of the cool, well-balanced plated meals that she's making for herself. So, yeah, I think it can be contagious if you can remove the anxiety and the stress. Although cutthroat kitchen

DR. ALYSSA BERLIN, PSYD: not pre-cutthroat. Yes, it did. But that was part of the plan. I never took it.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah, I think that's a great point. So if you have something that needs to get done anyway and you can turn that into a therapeutic outlet, there are many elements of cooking that can be meditative, almost. You know, rumor has it Russell Crowe knits on set between takes to clear his mind because he's just doing something that is almost mindless and repetitive and, you know, maybe he's counting the stitches.

DR. ALYSSA BERLIN, PSYD: Just like chopping vegetables, right? Just like, you know, washing dishes. But you said something that that is my jam. That is the secret to self-care in 2025. Got to check something off of that to-do list. The only way that people will really invest in that. Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I mean, that goes back to the stress equation. If you take something off the stuff to do, then the level of stress goes down. But if you can do it in a way that's also helping your mind, you know, zone out and reset, then it's a win-win, a double whammy. It's therapy that you can eat. Well, there's some other things like that that maybe people could do at home that could be a therapeutic outlet.

DR. ALYSSA BERLIN, PSYD: That could be a therapeutic outlet or specifically to like, you know, take some of the stress off of cooking specifically. But I mean, both. So I am the queen of freezing. If anyone wants to know what can freeze well or how to freeze food, you should flash my number somewhere on this podcast because I am happy to help. But but freezing is is a huge way to remove pressure from day to day. Take a step back. I very much recommend people do bulk cooking, ideally on, let's say, a Sunday or a Saturday, a day that you're not otherwise busy with the hustle and bustle of a busy week. And if you could really allow yourself to kind of set the stage and get in the zone, doesn't have to take a lot. Put on some music, a glass of wine, if that's OK.

DR. ALYSSA BERLIN, PSYD: Or I prefer, you know, different like health shots, anything that's enjoyable to you. And then cook in bulk, right? Make a lot of food or components of a dish that you can then use throughout the week. It doesn't take more time to double a recipe truly than it does to take a single recipe. So stick one in the freezer. I can't even tell you, especially when the kids are little, how many times I would just laugh out loud, you know, in a moment of stress and, oh, gosh, and kids are going to want dinner again. And I'm like, yes, I have a lasagna in the freezer. Like, oh, my goodness, I figured out how to pull this off. Or we've had it a lot of times that company shows up at our door. Very unexpected.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: We do get that. And it's startling. And then I don't know where you pull stuff out of. But all of a sudden, there's a meal that seems like you were expecting them and you've been cooking for days. That's it.

DR. ALYSSA BERLIN, PSYD: And everyone is welcome. We are very inclusive and inviting of anyone who wants to stop by. But I couldn't do it without the freezer. And so that's huge, right? Cooking in bulk, freezing, freezing components of dishes, doing at a time that doesn't feel so overwhelming and stressful are all things that are going to help de-stress the food section.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I see people doing before they have a baby, you know, every time they cook a meal, just cook a little bit extra and put it in the freezer so that once that baby comes, you can have a couple of weeks of meals without really having to think about it and still get the more healthy and nutritious food rather than, you know, just being overwhelmed and ordering in.

DR. ALYSSA BERLIN, PSYD: Totally. We did that the first time that we traveled internationally, not knowing what we'd find food wise, right? And we just kept freezing and scrolling it away. We ended up not eating it, right? We ended up getting the mad dog hookup of kosher food coming with us. But it was good and it works. Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Outside of food, are there other recommendations that you give that people could just do at home? You don't need a specialist or any big special tools for to kind of vent off some of the steam.

DR. ALYSSA BERLIN, PSYD: Yeah, there's a lot of wonderful things that you can do. I mean, we could start with breath, right? Breath is often the difference between being in a state of arousal or being in a state of calm. And so focusing on your breathing. Sometimes it's harder than it sounds. And so I recommend that people kind of breathe backwards in the sense of breathing in through their mouth and out through their nose. It really stops your brain in its tracks. It really requires your brain to

focus on what you're doing because it's so antithetical to how we normally breathe. And it could be really helpful and effective. Other things that we can do, you know, at home to relieve stress is engaging with your outside environment. So, you know, I'll talk

DR. ALYSSA BERLIN, PSYD: a lot about the idea that throughout a day we're moving between two different worlds. It's the world that lives inside our bodies and then the external world, you know, where things are happening. People live, you know, there's butterflies and unicorns or maybe not unicorns, but, you know, rainbows and good things like that. And I'll think about stress or being triggered as when we fall inside our internal world and things just kind of ping pong with, you know, all the unfinished stuff that needs our time and attention. And it could be a really hard place to be. And so something that will really help with that type of stress is engaging with your outside world. And so one of the most common ways to do that is I'll tell clients all the time

DR. ALYSSA BERLIN, PSYD: and if they're listening, I'm sure they're saying it right along with me. Find 10 colors in your world. The first few are pretty much a gimme. They're pretty easy. The red, blue, yellow, green. And then people start to have to work for it. And as soon as you're starting to scan and have to work to find it, all of a sudden we're shifting our attention from that internal world of stress and triggers. And we're now engaging in that outside world that allows us to ground and decompress. And just so that I'm true to all my patients, usually the recommendation is 10 colors, then five shapes and five textures. And there's nothing magical about those numbers. You do them and you feel like you're a little bit better, but still could use

DR. ALYSSA BERLIN, PSYD: some extra decompression. Do it again, right? And just keep doing that until you're feeling much more grounded and much more engaged with your external environment.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: That's a really good one. And I couldn't agree with you more about breath. Breath is the autonomic function that you can take over. So, you know, we have our voluntary nervous system, things that we can move, generally skeletal muscles. I can walk, talk, move my body, however I want to. And then you have the autonomic things that are just on autopilot responding to stimuli in you and around you. So, you know, if it's hot, your body will automatically try to make you colder and it controls your blood pressure and your pulse and where blood flow is moving into and away from and how open or closed your pupils are. So many different things and your breathing rate and your breathing depth. You don't normally think about it just happens

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: in the most optimal way. But you can take control of your breath and that autonomic system is where fight and flight lives. It's one polar end of the mode of operation of the autonomic nervous system. When you are being chased by a tiger and you need to survive, your body does everything hardcore and quickly for survival brings a lot of blood flow to the arms and legs and away from your spine and posture and speeds up your heart rate and it opens your pupils so you can see the battlefield really every detail and you're only supposed to be there when there's an emergency when you stay there for long periods of time. It does more harm than good. So how do you bring yourself down? How do you reset that thermostat? And what you are saying is

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: breath is an incredible way to do that because it's really the one autonomic thing you could just think about and do it. Say I'm going to take the reins on breath. I'm

going to slow it down and I'm going to demonstrate to my body, to my nervous system that I'm not in danger and I'm not in survival mode and then all the other components have an opportunity to reset also and to move down towards the more normal function, the more maintenance area of function where the body takes care of itself instead of trying to not die. I recommend that. We're on the same page. All right. There's also things that people can go for professionally for help. We're going to take a break when we come back. We'll talk about a few of those things,

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: including the buzzword EMDR. We'll be right back. Welcome back to the third and final segment of episode 450, that special, special episode where we hung out together talking about stress. Feeling within real time the stress of our daughter. Oh, yeah, we just had in the break. It's funny. How did she know? Maybe she will listen to this episode, who knows?

DR. ALYSSA BERLIN, PSYD: It's so indicative of life, right? That's just how it rolls. And two parents on the same podcast, both getting attacks from feverishly. I need you now. I need you now. It's going to create a vacuum, so we'll have to decompress later together. OK, if you cook, I'll eat.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Hey, it's Tuesday day and night. Why am I cooking? Oh, you love it. All right. Segment three is going to be about professional alternatives for things that people can go see somebody for to help reduce stress. There are many, many, many, many. But you hear a lot about EMDR lately, and I know that you do it and you get great results with it. So I'd love to learn more about it and share with the audience.

DR. ALYSSA BERLIN, PSYD: Amazing. Yeah. And if anyone's listening and stress, give me a holler. But I do. I love EMDR. I love how quickly we can get results compared to talk therapy or straight talk therapy. So what is EMDR? It stands for eye movement, desensitization and reprocessing. And it's a wonderful therapeutic technique. It's one of few empirically validated technique to really help process and heal trauma. It's based on the premise and uses something that we call bilateral stimulation or BLS. And, you know, bilateral stimulation is any type of stimulus that we're going to introduce that goes from side to side. You know, so the ways that we do it is, you know, through guided eye movements. So your eye is darting back and forth with the help of a light bar

DR. ALYSSA BERLIN, PSYD: or following my hand is an example of BLS. You could do it with sound, right? Sound that moves from side to side in the body or tapping or any kind of physical sensation. And anyone who's ever done EMDR will know about the buzzy's, right? These devices that I could put in your hands and they vibrate and they take turns vibrating right, left, right, left to really activate the brain's natural ability to reprocess trauma. Helps unstick memories and emotions that get stored in a heightened stress state. And it allows the body and the brain to integrate those memories in a healthier way.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So somebody's coming in and they're experiencing all the symptoms that you talked about of stress. They're feeling overwhelmed, they're feeling worried. It's difficult to sleep. Is EMDR something that a single session would do something or is it a process?

DR. ALYSSA BERLIN, PSYD: So it's definitely a process. You know, when we talk about EMDR, we say that it's an eight phase therapy. Don't be discouraged. You go through them pretty quickly. But

the idea being that we're never going to go in and try to heal or address trauma until first we make sure that you have what we call resources and resources are things that you and I were talking about before. Ways to ground yourself, ways to help regulate that nervous system, regulate breathing and the different stress responses if it becomes too big and too overwhelming. And so the process of EMDR requires first taking a history. I have to know what it is that we're talking about, what it is that we want to target before we jump in. And it's more of a thematic history

DR. ALYSSA BERLIN, PSYD: than necessarily a chronological history. I'm looking for themes, major themes that have existed in your life. Then I'm working on resourcing, making sure that if again, if at any point it gets overwhelming, then you have the tools to be able to bring it back down. And then we move into the BLS or the bilateral stimulation components of it. So if someone comes in and they say, gosh, I have one session, I'll probably focus on resourcing more than anything else and ways that they can in a very real day to day way, just bring down the overall threshold of stress. EMDR definitely takes more time. But again, fastest modality that I've experienced with all the different therapeutic modalities that are out there.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And, you know, there's lots of different practitioners and lots of different modalities that can be helpful. And I think everybody relates differently to the different choices and options that are available. One of the ways I know that stress is creeping up is that I've always incorporated some level of energy work into my hands on structural body work, whether it's cranial psychical therapy or reflexology or chakra balancing. But of recent, I've been getting the request more and more to do whole sessions of energy work just to help calm that central nervous system and make the mind, body and spirit more relaxed and more functional. And, you know, it's another powerful tool. Energy work is another powerful tool. And there's hypnosis

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: and hypnotherapy, yoga. There's sound baths. There's meditation. Some people do really well in float tanks. There's just lots of different things that you can do in this world that just seems to have us running on high octane. And as if there is some kind of emergency going on where really the emergency is coming from the inside. The stimulus is from the inside, not the outside. And there are a whole bunch of things you can do about it. And I think that anybody knows the more grounded you feel, the more that thermostat on the autonomic nervous system is in line with reality, the more productive we become, the better we become at anything, including parenting, to bring it full circle. Because it's really hard to be present with your kids

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: when you're in fight or flight mode.

DR. ALYSSA BERLIN, PSYD: Absolutely. Energy healing works. And we've been the direct recipients of all these new things that you're doing. It works hand in hand with therapy. And it really helps to address something that a lot of people don't realize, which is that stress and trauma and emotions don't just affect our minds, but they deeply impact our bodies. And I'll use the analogy a lot of times for people. I mean, I'll define trauma amongst other different definitions. One is unmet needs or wants that live in our system that still live in our body or an incomplete fight or flight, an incomplete sympathetic arousal. And I'll liken it to, you know, playing a game of whack-a-mole, right? Where if you've ever been to one of those, you know, arcade type places,

DR. ALYSSA BERLIN, PSYD: you've got the giant foam hammer and all of those moles popping up and you're in a constant state of trying to keep them down. And it's exhausting. And so the more energy that's trying to keep those unresolved, unfinished things in your body down and, you know, keeping them from intruding on day to day functioning, the less energy we have to actually engage with life. So it's exhausting before you've ever opened your eyes and got up to brush your teeth or, you know, engage with your baby for the first time. So stress and trauma deeply in our bodies. Dr. Bessel van der Kolk has a great book. It's a dense book for anyone who wants to read it. And anyone who's read it, I applaud you because it's a lot to get through. But I love the title,

DR. ALYSSA BERLIN, PSYD: The Body Keeps the Score. And it's the idea that trauma affects the nervous system, right? We've talked a lot about the nervous system. And when trauma affects the nervous system, it leads to chronic tension. It's leading to pain and difficulty feeling present in your own body. And so any type of energy based healing that you talked about is so wonderful because it helps people be more in touch with their body and helps them then access that trauma that's locked inside. And so your work really does make my job easier and enhances the therapeutic process.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Well, I guess that's why lots of people see both of us for the full mind, body experience. Your whack-a-mole is a really great visual. And I think in my mind, something that I've pictured in the past is a Tupperware that's just a little too full. And you can get three corners down. As soon as you put down the fourth corner, a different one pops up and, you know, it's frustrating and it feels like can I ever get all of these down and can I get the beast contained in there? All right. So much to talk about that we could talk about, but we're almost out of time. I think that's something that I hear from our parent patients is that I want to do these things. I want to take care of myself. But because I'm so busy taking care of my baby

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: or my family, I just don't feel like there's time for me, almost like there's a guilt in taking time for me. How do you address that?

DR. ALYSSA BERLIN, PSYD: It's a very real struggle. We talked again about the idea that there's more to do than hours to do it. And we do need to address that paradox, which I will in a moment. It's one of the biggest struggles that parents face, that feeling of guilt for prioritizing or doing anything for themselves. I always like to start with trying to create a paradigm shift, a shift in our thinking. And it's one of helping people understand that when you take care of yourself, it's things that you are doing for your kids. It's things that you are adding, you know, to your kids. And it's not something that is being taken away from them. It's an additive thing, not a subtractive thing. For all the reasons we talked about already, we know how much chronic stress

DR. ALYSSA BERLIN, PSYD: interferes with functioning. We know how little we have to offer and to give if we're running on fumes. And so anything that you're doing to charge your batteries is going to directly enhance your ability to parents, your experience with your kids, creating a peaceful home. It really allows you to show up as your best version of yourself. And I think that that's really huge, that that cognitive shift is step one. Recognizing I'm doing this for them. You know, it's also and I remember, you know, almost 21 years ago when we had Yosef, when we were new parents, I remembered you asking someone, like, what's the secret of parenting? And they were very clear with you and they said, if you want your kids to do it, do it.

DR. ALYSSA BERLIN, PSYD: Because kids will model what they see. So as much as I could tell my child, hey, it's really important to nurture yourself. If they don't see me doing it, they'll be like, oh, got it. It's something that sounds good. I would make a nice bumper sticker, but we don't actually do it. And that's usually something that helps kind of give parents a little bit of a nudge in the direction of doing something for themselves, because parents are very clear that they would not want to pass on this method of existing or this mode of existing to their kids. And so if we want to create change, it has to start with us. We can talk about trying to approach self care, not as an extra, but seeing it as a maintenance thing. And I do think that, again,

DR. ALYSSA BERLIN, PSYD: the secret is if you can check something off of that to do list and it could double as self care, then you're going to navigate how to be ahead of the game. And so, you know, I can't say that, you know, our sweet little Aussie doodle always gets the robust walk to get on a daily basis. But definitely in moments where I'm like, OK, this is my opportunity to get a little bit of exercise and get a little bit of fresh air. Having him there to kind of nudge me out the door can be really helpful, because, again, right, feeding two birds with one seed.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Well, thank you very much.

DR. ALYSSA BERLIN, PSYD: So it's really hard. It's really, really hard. We are a generation that's kind of stuck between the old generation that things are only worth it if it hurts and if you sacrifice. And on the other side, the generation that says, I don't do it unless I like it and it feels good. And so we're navigating how to bridge those two.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I love it. We could go on. I guess we'll have to do another one, maybe four seventy five or five hundred.

DR. ALYSSA BERLIN, PSYD: I'm holding out for a date first,

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: but sure, I could be persuaded. Honey, thank you so much for joining us. If our listeners want to find out more about you and your work and your cookbook. Cookbook is on Amazon plated Dr. Alyssa Berlin and your psychology work is on our website, Dr. Berlin dot com D O C T O R B E R L I N dot com. Thank you again for joining me and at home. Thanks for listening. If today's episode resonated with you, see what I did there. Share it with someone who might need it. Stress, anxiety and the burnout are real, but there are ways to reset and find balance. As always, thank you for tuning into the Informed Pregnancy Podcast. If you enjoyed the episode, don't forget to subscribe, rate and review. It really helps us continue

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: to bring you valuable content. Until next time. Stay informed. Stay empowered and stay tuned.

Enjoying the Informed Pregnancy Podcast?

Visit us at **informedpregnancy.com** for episodes, articles, and resources for pregnancy, birth, and beyond.

Want more? Subscribe to **Informed Pregnancy+** at **informedpregnancy.tv** for films, series, and exclusive content.