AVAIYA UNIVERSITY

Here is the transcript for:

Discover the Secrets to Balancing Your Cortisol and Elevate Your Sexy with AVAIYA Teacher, LJ Johnson.

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Brielle Starr [00:00:00]:

Hello, Avaiya family. I'm Brielle Starr, online event coordinator for Avaiya. Avaiya is the creator of over a 1000 books, films, courses, teachings, and other supportive resources. Thank you so much for joining us. Our fellow teacher, doctor LJ Johnson, is with us today to talk about balancing your cortisol to elevate your sexy. Doctor LJ Johnson is passionate about all things women's health, specifically endometriosis, PCOS, and fibroids. In her practice, she works hard to be an advocate for women battling endometriosis to provide them with holistic functional care so they are able to thrive despite the chronic invisible illness. Welcome to Avaiya, doctor LJ.

LJ Johnson [00:00:48]:

Thank you for having me. I'm super excited to delve into this.

Brielle Starr [00:00:52]:

Mhmm. Yeah. Absolutely. I am super excited as well to learn all about cortisol and how that affects our bodies and our sexiness. But before we get into that, I'd love if you could tell us a little bit about you. What inspired you and or led you to doing all of the amazing work that you do today?

LJ Johnson [00:01:10]:

That's an amazing question. I just, that's when the question hits me and I'm like, I'm very humbled. I'm like, I, I promise I won't break down in tears. But the reason why I do what I do is it took me 16 years to be properly diagnosed with endometriosis. That was 16 years of walking around saying things like, I hate my body. I hate my doctors. Why me? What's wrong with me? Why am I broken? Not realizing that I had a chronic illness that

needed to be diagnosed. And until I got that proper diagnosis, I was not going to be able to get the care I needed.

LJ Johnson [00:01:40]:

Now, once I got the care that I needed and I got the diagnosis, unfortunately for me, conventional medicine was not enough. A pill for every ill, you know, a procedure, a surgery, this, that, and the other, you know, let's yank it all your body parts. That wasn't working for me. It wasn't the quality of life I wanted. It was not my journey. So essentially what I ended up doing is leaving conventional medicine, not just in my practice, but in my own personal health and wellness. I had to pull away and really start leaning into more holistic practices, which is why we are branded as the holistic with the w, the holistic hormone expert because I needed that comprehensive approach. I needed someone that was gonna bring all that in and integrate it.

LJ Johnson [00:02:20]:

So that is where I got introduced into functional medicine because I was able to not only heal myself naturally and get rid of the endometriosis lesions and all the issues I was having, but be able to really pivot and help other people regain their lives. A huge start in endometriosis, but now we're all things functional medicine. Lots of things on hormones and gut health and just all the unsexy stuff that us women don't wanna talk about that makes a big difference.

Brielle Starr [00:02:46]:

Yeah. Yeah. Absolutely. Thank you so much for sharing about you and your journey, and it's always so inspiring when people use something that they have personally gone through to help others who are also dealing with it.

Because almost everything in life, someone else has experienced too. We're not alone. And so when people take that and help others, I always love hearing about that. So thank you for the lovely work you do to help all these women with their hormones and all kinds of other issues.

Brielle Starr [00:03:13]:

And yeah. So I know we're talking about cortisol today. So first and foremost, could you tell us what cortisol is for anyone who is unaware?

LJ Johnson [00:03:22]:

I know. Right? So I'm sure there's lots of things that come to mind as people as soon as people think cortisol. So I'm going to kind of reverse it. I'm going to start with some of the misconceptions. So I think that's the best way to unpack it. When we think about cortisol, it is a stress hormone, but I think what's happened in the last 3 or 4 years, we've all been through stressful times. I don't even need to go into the details. Right? We've all been kind of in fight or flight.

LJ Johnson [00:03:45]:

And what has happened is we have normalized where we're demonizing cortisol. Right? Everyone's like, drink this to crush your cortisol. Drink this to get rid of this. Do this. Cortisol is not the enemy. That's where I will start. It is not the enemy. It is a stress hormone produced by your adrenals, but you need it.

LJ Johnson [00:04:02]:

It helps you decrease inflammation. It helps regulate your metabolism, immune response, your body's fight or flight. Like, it is a very integral part of our hormones. The issue is is when you have too much of something. I'm huge on always letting people know it's about balance. It's all about balance. Cortisol is there to help you wake up in the morning when that alarm goes off at 5 AM and you feel like, you know, well, maybe you don't feel excited. If you have lower cortisol, you're not feeling excited.

LJ Johnson [00:04:30]:

But when you wake up in the morning, I I kind of explain cortisol. Like, it's that go go juice. It helps you get up in the morning. It helps you be productive. You know? Combine that with estrogen. For women, it gives us our sassiness. It gives us our fire. But what happens is is that when you have too much of anything, may it be too much cortisol, estrogen, whatever hormone.

LJ Johnson [00:04:50]:

I mean, you could have too much of a supplement, right? Too much of anything is the problem. And so cortisol really is important because it helps you regulate your blood sugar. It helps with fight or flight. Fight or flight is a big thing, right? Right? Fight or flight is that moment where you need to make that decision. The issue is is that you're stuck in fight or flight. Your body always thinks it's running from a bear. You know, it's always constantly in survival mode. And so that's where you're bringing in the inflammation, different things like that.

LJ Johnson [00:05:17]:

Cortisol can help with wound healing. It really is a big deal when it comes to metabolism. Nobody really wants to give that credit to cortisol, but I'm like,

oh, no. You need cortisol when it comes to metabolism, your thyroid. It affects your focus, your mood, your energy. I don't really say cortisol as everything, but it plays a really big role in your health.

Brielle Starr [00:05:37]:

Mhmm. Yeah. It sounds like it affects so many different areas of our health and our lives. And so now that we have a better understanding of what exactly it is, could you tell us some more about what a cortisol imbalance will look like or feel like?

LJ Johnson [00:05:53]:

Right. Okay, ladies. I like it. TMI if you call it, but I like to keep it 100 and just go straight to the point. You know, all that extra weight, I call it the extra cushion for the push in, all that extra weight that kind of literally jumps between the boobs and the knees. It's like you haven't changed your diet. You haven't changed anything that you're doing. And then all of a sudden you're like, my body is expanding.

LJ Johnson [00:06:12]:

You feel like you can look at food and you gain weight. You're gaining weight around your abdomen. You have all this extra fluff. Sometimes you feel like you have a layer of water that's on your skin. You're like, I'm puffy. I know we've all heard about the cortisol phase. Right? You have that water retention. You have anxiety.

LJ Johnson [00:06:29]:

You're wired but tired. You're laying in the bed. You're listening to this, for example. You're listening to this presentation right now. Your mind is racing. It's like you're trying to take in the information, but you're already thinking of your to do list and a project you're behind on and things you gotta do with the family. We're in the holiday season. Right? Like, everything is running a 1000000 miles an hour.

LJ Johnson [00:06:48]:

That can be symptoms and signs of high cortisol. Once again, it is about imbalance because you could have low cortisol, low cortisol, fatigue, barely able to keep your eyes open, not that that energy we're talking about in the mornings. You don't have that energy. Right? You're always feeling like you're stressed. You're overwhelmed. Even when we're talking about high cortisol and low cortisol, I wanna talk about because those are both imbalances. You can be easily startled. Right? Maybe you're easily startled.

LJ Johnson [00:07:16]:

You're always on edge. You're you feel like your mood is not quite as balanced. You're like, I'm a good person. I'm a nice person, but you're like, I just lashed out. And you're almost like, who is that person? What what was she thinking? What's going on? Right? When you have high cortisol, you can have high blood pressure, low cortisol. You could be dealing with dizziness, different fainting spells. Like, there's all of these things and these really what I like to say with the symptoms is it is your body giving you a check engine light, letting you know that something is wrong. Your body whispers.

LJ Johnson [00:07:48]:

Right? Maybe you start to gain a little weight. Maybe you have a little bit of brain fog. That's not addressed, then your body is screaming where you're like, I can't focus. I feel like I have ADD. I feel like I'm, you know, a whole another person. Like, that is what it looks like when those symptoms begin to kind of run your world, and then you're just, like, chasing symptoms trying to calm them down.

Brielle Starr [00:08:09]:

Mhmm. Yeah. There's so many different symptoms there. Even my own mind, I'm like, oh, I wonder if this is something I'm personally dealing with with some of those symptoms. We've talked a lot about the symptoms of cortisol. Could you explain why someone might have low cortisol or why someone might have high cortisol? What's the difference or the reasoning behind that?

LJ Johnson [00:08:30]:

Perfect. You know what? I'm gonna pause you again. I apologize. I know exactly where I was at. So you guys whoever's editing, you'll know where I jacked up, and now I'm gonna pick it back up. Okay. That's what I was gonna say. It all just came to me like, ta da.

LJ Johnson [00:08:42]:

Okay. Moment cleared up. Brain's back on. So when we're looking at Cortisol, this is very important for us to understand. High Cortisol and low Cortisol happens throughout the day. So it's not about, I have high cortisol. How do I sync it? It's not about I have low cortisol. What do I do to raise it? Once again about balance.

LJ Johnson [00:09:02]:

In the morning, you want that cortisol to rise so that you're productive, so that you're able to be wake up. You're alert. You want that high cortisol to kick in if there is a situation where your boss is like, hey. You did have 2 weeks for that project. Now you have 48 hours. Right? You need to kick into high gear. You need to be present. You need your mind to be sharp.

LJ Johnson [00:09:21]:

You need to be focused. The issue is is that a lot of people, that sharpness and that focus and that fight or flight, they're in that 247. And what happens is is it gets to 8 o'clock at night and you're ready to relax, you're ready to chill, your body is still running from a bear. Right? Your body is still processing that argument that, you know, whatever you ate that didn't agree with your body, that inflammation. So all of that begins to tie in. So it's about how do you balance that curve? How do you support your nervous system rather than hyper focusing on what can I do to wipe out my cortisol and what can I do to, you know it's all about balance once again?

Brielle Starr [00:10:01]:

Mhmm. Yeah. So if this balance is so important, are there any long term effects if we don't address that imbalance?

LJ Johnson [00:10:10]:

Yeah. So let's talk about it. When you have high cortisol, going back to that fight or flight, your nervous system is revved up 247. You're not able to balance your hormones. So for females, when we're talking about tapping into our sexy, if your body is so busy just flooding all this cortisol, like it doesn't feel safe, You don't feel valued. You don't have good nutrition. You

have all these things going on. It doesn't stop and say, Oh, you know what? We should probably give her some progesterone so that she can get some really good sleep tonight.

LJ Johnson [00:10:42]:

It's so hyper focused. So when you have an abundant amount of cortisol, all of the other things start to fall apart. So for example, you're not going to be able to focus. Your mind is going to be racing. It's like you feel sharp, but you're not, but you can't turn it off. You're the person that's laying in the bed at night, midnight. You know, you have to get up at 4 AM. You know that you have things to do, but you're not able to just turn that brain off.

LJ Johnson [00:11:06]:

Your body is always chronically inflamed. No matter what diet, pill, potion, or lotion, or whatever you're doing, your nervous system is revved up. You're doing all the things to support your metabolism. You're still gaining weight. You have a lot of water retention, different things like that. So those are some of the signs and symptoms that really kind of bounce back and forth.

Brielle Starr [00:11:27]:

Mhmm. Yeah. So it sounds like it's very important to take a look at this as early on as possible because it might get even harder to really work with it and solve it if it gets left unaddressed. And so then for anyone listening today who thinks that this could be of concern or something that they're dealing with, what can we do to naturally balance our cortisol?

LJ Johnson [00:11:48]:

I love that question. So first things first, and I know no one wants to hear it, but I'm just gonna go there to build that foundation. You need to realize that having a cortisol imbalance is not the foundation. That is just more of a symptom of a bigger issue, and that's where it comes with partnering with a practitioner, doing the research, having open conversations with your doctor and letting them know, like, hey. Some days I feel amazing. Other days I don't know who I am. I'm packing on weight. Being very open and transparent and then going into your gut health and nutrition.

LJ Johnson [00:12:21]:

And I'm gonna kinda tie both of those together because a lot of people like to use the word diet. Like, I'm on a diet, and I really need us, especially at this age. Right? If you're in your grown and sexy, us 40 plus, I'm 45 plus, we're not dieting like honey. We we are not dieting. Just very, very harsh, I know, for some of you, but I want you to pause and think about it. You are no longer dieting. You are bringing in nutrition and foods that help you optimize your hormones, balance your hormones, give you the energy, maximize your libido to actually have quality of life. When you change your mindset of I've gained 10 or £20 because I have high cortisol, so I'm going to starve my body, and you change your mindset to, hey.

LJ Johnson [00:13:05]:

I have packed on £20 of inflammation. I'm stressed out. I'm not sleeping properly. What are some foods that I can bring in that would nourish my body? What are foods that I can bring in that would balance my hormones? Stepping away from the ultra processed foods. And I wanna piggyback this one for a second. Because when people hear process, they're like, oh, no process. And I think we all as practitioners are like, no processed foods. Let's be honest.

LJ Johnson [00:13:29]:

We're all doing a little bit of processed foods. I had some almond milk this morning, and no, I did not make it from scratch. Therefore, it is processed. Right? But then there's ultra processed. Right? There's the almond milk with the 2 or 3 ingredients, and there's the almond milk with a long list of ingredients. And about 80% of them you can't pronounce because the words are like or chemicals are 25, you know, characters long. Those are simple things like what nutrition can you bring into your body to calm your body? This is also where we start thinking about food allergies and food sensitivities. Sometimes you're eating foods that don't make you feel as well, Right? Maybe your heart starts racing.

LJ Johnson [00:14:06]:

Maybe you start getting really bloated. Maybe you're very agitated. Maybe there's times of the day that you're very stressed and you're like, I just need something crunchy. I just need something salty. Needing that salt, needing that crunchy is really telling me also that your adrenals are on fire. They need some nourishment, they need some minerals. But looking at your nutrition, stepping away from dieting and then realizing that a lot of hormonal imbalances are tied to your gut health. And when we come to gut health, once we've left that diet mindset, we're talking about nutrition.

LJ Johnson [00:14:36]:

What are foods that you can bring in that can balance your gut microbiome, that can calm your nervous system, that are healing and filling versus ultra processed foods, which you're cramming down your throat in between Zoom meetings because you're just trying to hurry up and get to the next meeting, and you're not even able to properly digest your food.

Brielle Starr [00:14:54]:

Mhmm. Yeah. Oh, go ahead.

LJ Johnson [00:14:58]:

No. You're fine. Go ahead.

Brielle Starr [00:14:59]:

Oh, I was just gonna ask, are there are there any specific foods, like, you know, people wanna hear, oh, there's, like, this specific food that's gonna be so helpful. Is there anything like that in this case, or is it going to be unique to each individual? Do you have any thoughts about that?

LJ Johnson [00:15:13]:

Very unique to each individual, very, very bio individual. But what I will say as I see more healing and progress, when we step away from the ultra processed foods, a lot of the refined sugars stepping into more of whole foods, Just that simple. Right? Being able to cook from home, being able to bring in healing oils. So being more specific, stepping away from the seed oils, canola oil, vegetable oil. I mean, I don't know about you, but I was in the produce section last week and none of the fruits were and vegetables were oily. There is no oil that comes from vegetables. They are not oily. So removing seed oils, coming in with things like olive oil, coconut oil, those healthier oils, ghee, possibly organic butter.

LJ Johnson [00:16:00]:

Those are gonna really be building blocks bringing in that cholesterol to help you balance your hormones. Stepping away from a lot of the processed

stuff. And when I I keep saying ultra processed and I think it's important. A lot of people have adapted this. I'm keto. I'm vegetarian. I'm this. I'm that.

LJ Johnson [00:16:15]:

You found your community and you're locked in. You're vegetarian. You're vegan. And nothing against that. But sticking to the whole foods if you are keto, right, versus a bunch of protein shakes and pills and little quick stuff where you're not really getting those nutrients. You know, the seed oils are a big thing. For females, also the xenoestrogens, making sure that you're getting organic dairy. Make sure that you're getting things that have less pesticides, hormones, and different things like that because those xenoestrogens, those fake, you know, I guess not fake antibiotics, those additional antibiotics, those pesticides, those things are mimicking hormones, and they are tying to the receptors and really causing a lot of issues as well.

LJ Johnson [00:16:56]:

Mhmm.

Brielle Starr [00:16:57]:

Yeah. Thank you for addressing that and sharing more information about the importance of those whole foods and really eating things that are going to feel safe and healthy for us. And just tying it into sex a little bit. How does cortisol impact other sex hormones?

LJ Johnson [00:17:13]:

Right? So remember, like we said in the beginning, cortisol is not the enemy, even though we're just like, ah, we want to lose the weight. When your body is hyper focused on the cortisol, it's not able to bring in the other hormones. So for example, like I said, you want to feel calm at night. You want to be able to relax. You want to be able to tap in with your partner, be intimate, connect, etcetera. But you need that progesterone. Right? So when cortisol is the only thing your body is pushing out, then you typically will become estrogen dominant. Right? You'll have more estrogen.

LJ Johnson [00:17:45]:

You'll have more of that fury, that fire, that go go juice, the what what you don't want at midnight, what you don't want at 1 AM, you need that progesterone. So when that comes in, everything starts to push down the incorrect pathway, and then you don't have the calming hormones. The progesterone, the way I like to explain it, it gives us the calm. Right? Estrogen gives us the sassy and the fire. Progesterone is what keeps us hired. Right? That's what makes us, you know, where people can pallet and we're palatable. Right? We're not as spicy. We're not as sassy.

LJ Johnson [00:18:16]:

We have that balance. And so when you have skewed that over, your gut microbiome isn't as, you know, balanced. So when you're talking about the gut microbiome and that, your body, you're not able to digest food. Right? Think about when you're running on a treadmill. Think about when you're working out. How often do you go into the gym or do a walk or workout with the full stomach? It doesn't feel well. Right? Because your body is then pushing all the nutrients and the muscles and everything is going. Your stomach is just kind of hanging out.

LJ Johnson [00:18:47]:

So when you have that gut microbiome and you have that gut that's always running, it's like you're just inhaling your food and you're not even getting those nutrients. So it's really, like, bringing it back to those foundational pieces. Mhmm.

Brielle Starr [00:19:01]:

Yeah. It sounds like that calm is so important, and I could especially see that being important with your sex life. If you can't calm down and relax, that's going to make that a lot more difficult. That whole process is not going to probably be as pleasurable and relaxing. So, yeah, it's all, everything is so connected and it's, I think it's really important to realize that.

LJ Johnson [00:19:22]:

Right. And it's also when your nervous system is upregulated, you're not able to tap into the dopamine, the endorphins, those feel good hormones. It's just in crisis. It's in fight or flight. It's running. It's running. It's running to safety. So you're not able to be intimate with your partner.

LJ Johnson [00:19:38]:

You're not able to connect. And it's not just physically connecting. It's emotionally connected. Your emotions, your mental health, you're wired. You're tired. You're feeling discouraged. You're not feeling in your sexy. You know? How many times have you came home from a long day at work and, you know, you're stressed out, you're bloated, this, that, and the other? The last thing you're thinking about is tapping into your sexy.

LJ Johnson [00:19:59]:

Your body has to be calmed down. The other thing I will say about the nervous system and your sex drive and libido, you have to feel safe in your own body. There has to be safety. And so once you feel safe, then your body is like, oh, I don't need to protect you from anything. You are safe. You are worthy. So it's also finding those small things that you can do, like, even if it's just taking a magnesium bath. I know everyone's always like, give me the one supplement.

LJ Johnson [00:20:28]:

And it's like, there's not one supplement. But if I always had to lean towards 1, magnesium is going to be amazing. It does over 300 functions in the body. There are different types of magnesium. So depending on what you're going on, what you have going on, we've got magnesium citrate, which is really good for gut health, magnesium l threonate, which is really great for brain health, brain fog, and just keeping you sharp. So finding some things that you can do to calm your nervous system. Other small things you can do for the nervous system, you can use essential oils. Essential oils like lavender, different blends, find a good quality company.

LJ Johnson [00:21:02]:

As soon as you inhale an essential oil, within 20 seconds, it hits your brain and begins to calm your nervous system. If you were to apply it to your body, it starts to talk to the cells, bio individual, obviously, what your body needs. It will grab from those essential oils and calm you down. Simple things like grounding, going outside, putting your feet in the grass. Now I live here in Scottsdale and it is it's winter so we're good, but there's not a whole lot of grass. You know, it's it's it's the desert, but finding, you know, essential oils is what I rely on because there's not a lot of grass. But being able to, you know, do some grounding, do deep breathing. Another quick hack if you're at the office, like, even right now, let's say if I was if I was in a stressful situation, which I'm not.

LJ Johnson [00:21:44]:

I'm loving what I'm doing. But let's say you're on a Zoom call, you're stressed, you're feeling out, you know, what's going on. Just stretching your body. Stretching your body lets your body immediately know that it's safe. Right? Once it feels safe, then you maybe you'll start talking slower. Now I'm a fast talker. Right? I'm just high energy. But sometimes just simple things that you do at the office, like like slowing down your pace, taking time, scheduling in breaks.

LJ Johnson [00:22:11]:

All of those little things help your nervous system kind of help balance those hormones so that when you get to that time where you wanna tap into your sexy, where you need that libido to show up rather than wanting a miracle at night, you can't be stressed out all day and then flip a switch. Right? It's a little micro habits during the day. Stretching after lunch, walking for a few minutes to balance your blood sugar, having some good sunlight. You know? Yes. You maybe work with fluorescent lighting. What can you do to have good air, good water, good lighting? All of those little baby habits coming in throughout the day will make a huge difference in the evening or just huge difference whenever you need the relaxation.

Brielle Starr [00:22:51]:

Yeah. Absolutely. Thank you for all of those absolutely wonderful suggestions. Some of those are so easy to incorporate into our everyday lives and can really leave a lasting impact, make us feel a lot better in our everyday lives. And you've given us such a better understanding of cortisol today and imbalances and the importance of making it balanced and some suggestions to do so. And then are there any final insights you'd like to share before we wrap up, doctor LJ?

LJ Johnson [00:23:21]:

Final words. I would say you are worthy. I think for females as caretakers, as entrepreneurs, moms, wives, aunts, all of the hats that we wear, we forget that we are worthy of health. We spend a lot of time pouring, pouring, pouring, and a lot of you have an empty cup. Right now, it is time for you to refill your cup in this season so that you can not only support those that lean on you, but support yourself. Right? Self care is, you know, self care is like, oh, is it selfish? No. Self care is needed. So prioritize yourself and always remember that you are worthy of health.

LJ Johnson [00:23:58]:

You just need the tools in your toolbox to get you where you're going.

Brielle Starr [00:24:02]:

Beautifully said. Thank you so much for sharing your wisdom with us today.

LJ Johnson [00:24:06]:

Thanks for having me.

Brielle Starr [00:24:08]:

It was great having you with us here at Avaya. And I also want to thank our Avaya students for joining us today, and we will see you again real soon. Take care.

For additional support, explore our free Masterclass Series HERE.

