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Episode 157 – How To Use Water To Heal Anxiety, Depression, and Sadness

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Jonathan Hunsaker: Welcome, everyone, to another episode of Empowering You Organically. I'm joined by my co-host, TeriAnn Trevenen.

TeriAnn Trevenen: Hey, everyone.

Jonathan Hunsaker: We have a very special guest with us today, Dr. Wallace J. Nichols. He's the creator of Blue Mind, which we're going to get into here in just a second. But we're actually doing another virtual podcast here. We weren't able to have Dr. Wallace here in the studio with us, so we're doing this virtually over Zoom. And TeriAnn, why don't you give us a quick bio on Dr. Wallace and tell us more about him?

TeriAnn Trevenen: Sure, yes, I will. He is called "The Keeper of The Sea" by GQ Magazine and visionary by Outside Magazine, featured in Time, PBS, and many other media outlets. He's an entrepreneurial scientist, movement-maker, voracious idea explorer, New York Times bestselling author, international speaker, loving dad, and strategic advisor and collaborator.

He created the phenomenon, Blue Mind, a powerful new Universal story of water and a movement of global proportions. In this, he shares the cognitive, emotional, psychological, social, and spiritual benefits of how being near, in, or on water can change your brain state and be a powerful wellness tool. Blue Mind Health is an amazing free documentary series created to show how you can get energized, create more joy in your life, and revitalize your health with Blue Mind, a concept we're very excited to talk about today. So, to kick things off, why don't we talk a little bit about what Blue Mind is? And then there's also Red Mind and Grey Mind. Will you touch on those three things?

Dr. Wallace J. Nichols: Yes. Yeah, great. It's really nice to see you, nice to be here having this conversation.

TeriAnn Trevenen: Likewise.

Dr. Wallace J. Nichols: So, Blue Mind refers to this kind of mildly-meditative, kind of relaxed state we move into when we're near, in, on, or under water, or when we're thinking about those things. So, you can close your eyes and imagine your water, wherever that is. Maybe it's a bath, a shower, a pond, a lake, a river, an ocean, a spa, a nice rainy afternoon, or even snow is water, and fog.

And that will put you—you're probably already thinking about it right now, and you're probably feeling exactly what we're talking about. So, there's science backing up how water shifts our mental state, our emotional state, how it calms us and centers us, how it connects us to each other in the best possible ways, and even boosts creativity. And we've been pulling that science together, taking it further, and then trying to make it available to as many people as possible, just as a tool for your toolbox for your life, throughout your entire life. So, that's Blue Mind.

Jonathan Hunsaker: So, how did you come up with this? I mean how did you—what started, what was the inspiration? And yeah, share the background a little bit.

Dr. Wallace J. Nichols: Yeah. So, I think I'm like a lot of people. I felt this way as a kid. As a kid, I stuttered. I didn't like to speak to people because it made them uncomfortable and made me uncomfortable. So, I really liked being in the water, or underwater in particular, because nobody talks to you when you're underwater.

I became a marine biologist, and I noticed that whenever I was with people by the water, there was just a level of contentment and happiness that went up. And as a scientist, I kind of became curious about what was going on, and I went looking for a book about it so that I could learn more so that I could apply it to my work.

And when I went looking for the book, I didn't find any books on it. So, I thought "Okay, somebody needs to write this book. I'll convince some smart people to do it." And I failed at that. Everybody said "No, thanks." So then, it fell back to me. When you find a vacuum, you fill it if you're a curious, outgoing person. And so, I felt like that became my job, to fill this niche, I guess. And so, five years later, the book was published, and now five years after that, we're sharing the story with literally billions of people. And so, that's kind of a quick version.

Jonathan Hunsaker: Yeah, for sure. And I don't anybody can argue, right? When you talk about "How do you feel when you're by the ocean, or when you're out at the lake?" I mean I love snowboarding. How do I feel when I'm on a mountain or on the snow? I mean there is undeniably a calming feeling, a

grounded feeling, a relaxed feeling. And it's interesting, because a lot of times, on our podcast, we're talking about things for your body, we're talking about exercise, we're talking about supplements, we're talking about food and nutrients, and different things that your body needs.

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But the one thing that doesn't get talked about enough is the emotional state, right? The psychological state. And I just—I love the idea of Blue Mind, I love the idea of just what it is, and how easy you can actually tap into that. So, tell us a little bit, so we can understand, you also talk about Grey Mind, and you talk about Red Mind. Will you share what—just the differences?

Dr. Wallace J. Nichols: Definitely. So, the first thing you mentioned there was how intuitive and obvious this concept is, right? You experience it throughout your life. And some people have said “Why? It's so obvious and so intuitive, why do we even need to be talking about it? Why do we need a book about it? Why do we need research?”

And that's a fair point. But the reality is, whether we're talking about exercise, food, reducing stress, we all need reminders. You need reminders, I need reminders. And this is our job, and we need reminders. So, everybody on the planet I've ever met needs to be reminded of these simple, intuitive things on a daily basis almost.

It's so easy to let things slip away. So, that's kind of one main point. We know gravity, intuitively, if you drop a book, it falls down. But we still study it. And because we study it, we've been able to put people on the moon. And so, physicists study gravity, we study human emotion. And so, in that inquiry, we've identified and sort of color-coded these three emotional states.

And this is an over-simplification of the complexities of our emotional lives, certainly, but it gives us a handle and a way to talk about how we're feeling. So, we talked about Blue Mind, but the polar opposite is Red Mind. And that is you're wired, you're dialed in, you're over-connected, you're striving towards goals.

It's kind of our normal base state in modern society. There's too much information coming at us all the time, for modern humans. We don't know where our off switch is. It affects our sleep, it affects our performance, it affects our relationships, it affects our physical wellbeing, our emotional wellbeing. That's Red Mind.

It's actually quite necessary. You need to have a Red Mind sometimes, to win, to get to the finish line, to reach your goals. We're not saying Red Mind is bad, but if it's all you have, you will burn out, guarantee it. You will hit the wall and burn out. And when you burn out, that's Grey Mind. And while Red Mind and Blue Mind are useful, Grey Mind is pretty worthless.

It's just the burnt out, indifferent, numbed-out, disconnected, don't care much about anything anymore state, mildly depressed, or even severely depressed. And we've all been there, too, where you're just spent. And that may last an afternoon, it may last days, weeks, months, and even years. And that's Grey Mind.

So, we want to stay out of that Grey Mind mode. We want to use all the tools available. We mentioned exercise, diet, supplements, social interactions, and the beauty of nature, being out, being in awe, and wandering out on the water, out on the mountain, moving your body outside. So, that's really the—that's kind of the three-part, color-coded emotional message there – blue, red, and grey.

TeriAnn Trevenen: And how does Blue Mind look for someone who's healthy, emotionally balanced, mentally, physically balanced? What does Blue Mind look like in that scenario for people, and how are they utilizing Blue Mind in their life if they're in that good space?

Dr. Wallace J. Nichols: Yeah, so people that are—I would say are the true believers in our practicing Blue Mind, they're prioritizing what their water time, they're prioritizing their down time, they know they need restoration. That may need to be sleep, that may mean a long, soaking bath, that may even be a mindful shower.

So, instead of just hopping in and out of the shower and doing your job in there, getting clean, take a minute, take 30 seconds and just really feel the way that water is hitting you on the back of the neck, really feel how it's impacting your nervous system, lean into your water. And then you can kind of go bigger. You can go to a float spa, perhaps, and do an hour or 90 minute float, sensory deprivation tank experience. Many elite athletes and high-performance people are doing that. Or take a weekend vacation, unplug, and get out on a river, get out on a lake, get up on the mountain with the snow.

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I get to the beach. And just make sure you prioritize that throughout your life. And it really isn't about living a luxurious life in the financial sense necessarily. All these things are available to all of us in one way or another. So, that's what I see, the people who are putting it into practice. The other piece of it that's super important is the service piece.

So, when your lake, river, ocean, mountain, water gives you some of the best moments of your day and of your life, what are you going to give back? Are you going to become a water warrior? Are you going to be someone who's out there, who's leaving the place better than you found it? Are you going to clean it up?

Are you going to be a member or maybe the founder of a Save The River project? Or maybe you're going to be an educator. So, that's the piece where it gets really, really pretty cool. That's the regenerative feedback loop or windmill. When Blue Mind is giving you so much, you feel like you want to give back.

And we find that that sense of awe and wonder we feel in nature boosts our empathy and our compassion, and when we feel that empathy and compassion, we want to help each other, and we want to help fix what's broken.

And so, it's this beautiful feedback loop that happens. And when you're down in Red Mind, and you're just stressing it out, and you're getting this tunnel vision, you're not thinking about helping anybody. You're just thinking about getting through. It's the fight or flight response that's triggered throughout our day, really, in ways in modern humans that wasn't always happening throughout human history. So, keeping Blue Mind in mind, on a daily basis, it may literally mean stepping into a bath, or putting on some ocean sounds to help you fall asleep, or hanging up a piece of artwork that reminds you of that water that you love in your home. So, this is—

TeriAnn Trevenen: I love the concept, because water, I feel like we live in a society where we're so desensitized. We live on a screen, and we've lost human interaction and touch, and just all these sensations in our lives. And I love this concept of water. I was really excited to talk to you today, because I love water.

And I think water is such a beautiful thing. Oftentimes, like water will just be running when I'm doing dishes, and I love to run my hands through it. I love how it feels, I love how it sounds, I love to be on the water. I always have. And it's this concept is such a beautiful concept, because I feel like it's a matter of feeling things, a sensory thing, where you're in touch with something natural again, and you're feeling it.

The other day, I went out for a run, and it was raining, and it was just lightly raining, it was like a mist, and I loved that rain on my face. It connects you with nature and reality, and yourself in a way. Or when you get in the shower, the bath, or you're out in the ocean, you're touching something, you're feeling something, it's being connected to something physically.

And I think that it's such a beautiful concept of thinking of people using that to heal and to have a balance in their lives, because we've lost so much of that. We've lost so much connection to people and nature, and just things physically. It really is a very powerful concept. So, tell me this. How can Blue Mind work with conventional medicine, when people are going through something and they're needing to heal, or they've got something going on in their lives physically? How can those two things combine together to work together?

Dr. Wallace J. Nichols: Yeah, that's a really good question. I think the rule for me is always add water. So, whatever the recommendation is, whatever the prescription is, add water. So, add another glass of water to your meal, add some more water time, add some—add a bath. So, if you're dealing with a disease, a disorder, an injury, an illness, and you're getting medical care—and by the way, I'm a marine biologist, I'm not a doctor, so you can listen to me through that filter.

I just wanted to be really clear. But it's a supplemental, complimentary, plus-one situation. So, adding water to any prescription, or any guidance that you get from your health practitioner is always going to be good. So, if the recommendation is more exercise, take it into the water. You can put your exercise bike in the water. People are doing that. Special exercise bikes, not every exercise bike will thrive in the water. So, you can bring your weightlifting regime, your resistance training into the water. You can walk laps. If you're recovering from an injury, do it in the water.

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If your issue is stress-related, which 60 percent of diseases, disorders, and illnesses are related to stress, 60 percent. That's the majority. If stress is part of what's going on in your un-health, get in the water and just chill out, daily if you can. And whether that's a spa situation, or at home in the tub. So, I just say, I say it to everyone, just add this Blue Mind thing to whatever your health regimen is.

And I can't promise anything. I imagine, and what I've seen from everyone that's done that, is positive. At least a little bit positive, and sometimes extremely so. So, we've seen with your veterans and first responders, dealing with post-traumatic stress, debilitating levels of anxiety, that water can really, really help them as one of the tools in their toolbox, whether it's surfing, kayak fishing, flip tanks, or all of the above. It helps.

And these men and women, they're the ones who are serving us, even when we don't know it. Like they're running towards the sound of bullets and bombs on our behalf. So, they need it the most. At-risk youth, we see a whole range of benefits. Some kids that never experienced peace of mind for their entire childhood, they get in the river with a mask and snorkel and a camera and experience peace of mind for the first time in their life.

Wow. Holy crap. Imagine that life. And now they know that water is their medicine. Now they know it. Not because they learned it in a book, or they saw it on TV, but they learned it because they did it. So, right around the whole spectrum of things that are broken, or people who need some help, we find that water helps them.

And I'm kind of ecumenical, so I would say snow and ice? Yes. Lakes and rivers? Yes. Oceans and bays? Of course. Showers and bathtubs? Right on. Float spas and other spas? Swimming pools, water parks, waterfalls? Yes, to all of it. And your point that the water embraces us, right? It holds us. And sometimes, we need to be held.

Sometimes we're not being held. It is—it's as intimate as a relationship as you can possibly have with anything, because it's enveloping, and it goes everywhere. It touches you everywhere. You sink under that water, it's in your nose, it's in your ears, it's in your mouth, it's in your eyes, it's in your pores. That's amazing.

People like to kind of go back to the womb experience that we all—most of us had for about 9.21 months, that warm bath called Mom, that warm ocean called your mama. Wow, that was—we all had that experience of that warm, salty water, and swimming around in there for 9 months. That’s kind of how it feels.

And I think you were lying if you say you don’t need some of that in your life now, everybody does. And it’s super restorative, and more than that. People who were feeling pretty good already, and they add it, it’s going to go to the next level. Their performance, whatever they do will be enhanced. Their creativity will bump up.

Health will even improve. And it’s—it’s not a silver bullet fix to anything, but it’s just, kind of like you said earlier, exercise and eating well, right? 30 years ago, that was far out, kind of California thinking. Doctors might roll their eyes at you if you said “Hey, here’s some good ideas. Exercise and eating real food is good for you.” That was kind of fringe. Now it’s totally mainstream. And these ideas will be, too, probably within a decade, if we do our job right.

Jonathan Hunsaker: I love hearing you talk about it, really. I mean it’s—as I hear you talk about it, I’m sure many others, it brings up just memories for me, and I think back to times when I’m in the lake, I love being in the lake, I love standup jet skis and being on the lake, or wake-boarding, or—I think back to times I’ve gone snorkeling, or I think to the snowboarding. I’ve got all of these things come up to me, and those are the times that I’m actually able to unplug the most.

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Right? When I’m snowboarding, at least while I’m riding down the mountain, is the time when I can be away from business, and the kids, and the stress, and everything in life. And it’s the same thing when I’m at the lake, or different things like that. So, it’s very intuitive, right? It just makes sense when you hear it. And you were talking very early on, we do have to talk about you are what you eat, we have to talk about exercise, we’ve got to talk about all these things that we know are good for us, right?

But we still talk about them a lot because we’re not doing them. And so, I love this conversation. I love the idea of being around water more. Maybe there’s some people that just aren’t responsive to it, but I don’t think there’s going to be many. I think most people think about it, or go back to that time, and they can just see how it can make a difference.

So, and you’ve talked about having just pictures up of water, or things like that. Is it just the act of being in the water? So, right, like there’s times that I’m in the water, and I’m doing a sport, I’m focused on doing something. Or is it more the act of being mindful when I’m in the water about relaxing and being in the water? I mean do we know is there a difference there, or is it just the fact of being around the water? Can you talk more on that at all?

Dr. Wallace J. Nichols: Yeah, so you can bring your Red Mind to your Blue Mind water experience. And so, when you do extreme sports, jet skis, surfing, or any kind of skiing, even open-water swimming, or sailing with a strong wind, there's an adrenaline rush, no doubt. This isn't—you're not closing your eyes and meditating, hopefully.

You're paying close attention. But in doing that, you're so incredibly focused on the task at hand, and you're surrounded by water. So, there's this kind of, "If I fall, I land in the water," sense. But it's—that's the good kind of stress. That's the high-performance stress that we're built to do. It's the chronic social and psychological stress that just eats you up, that never goes away, that is—that leads to Grey Mind.

But those high-performance Red Mind moments are part of being an active, healthy human being. So, whether it's—think about thousands of years ago, you're just trying to catch something to eat, right? There's that Red Mind mode. And then you perform, and then you succeed, right? Or trying to escape from a predator.

Those are all—this is the good stress. So, bringing that to the water is really, really good for us, really fun. I mean the fun factor is—on the water, is just through the roof, right? Whether it's a waterslide—I like to say a balloon is fun, a water balloon is a party, right? A slide is great, a waterslide? Bring it. Just add water to any of those things.

It's—it adds an element that just raises the fun factor. So, there's all of that kind of going on. But I think it's also the—it's the up and then the down. So, the pauses between the action. So, think about surfing. Like when you catch a wave, it's all on. You're—everything's functioning, and you're hyper-focused on just that one thing.

And then it ends, and then you paddle out and you sit on your board, and you wait. And you may, if you're here in Monterey Bay, you may see an otter, or you may see a dolphin. You may look off and see a whale spout. You may see some birds, you may see a fin, a fish. You may chat with someone. There's that meditative lull.

And then there's another set that comes in, and you get ready, and then your Red Mind kicks in, the healthy Red Mind. And you make it, or you don't. And then you do it again. And so, there's this nice, I call it creative this equilibrium rather than balance. Because it has these big high, and then these calms. And so, I think that's kind of what you're referring to a little bit there, enjoying those moments.

I think reflecting back as you did right there, just throughout your life, you can point to your Blue Mind days and string them together and just get really happy thinking about those things. I think there's another point. Not everybody has had those experiences. So, one of our jobs is to break down some of the barriers. There are people, like my mom, scared to swim, just scared of water. I've spent my life trying to get her in the water with us. And those people, those moments of joy when they break through that barrier.

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They say, “I’m afraid of water, I can’t swim.” I say “Take my hand. Climb on my back. Put on this floatie and let’s do this safely, and let’s see if we can work through it.” So, if there’s anybody in your life who doesn’t have access to their Blue Mind because of some barrier to prevent access, that’s really fun. Take them with you.

Next time you go to the lake, grab somebody and say “Hey, I’m going to the lake. I know you’re not a water person, but I want you to do this with me today. And I’ve got all the gear. It’s going to be safe, it’s going to be fun,” and expand this Blue Mind stuff to people who need it, who don’t have access to it. That’s part of our mission.

Jonathan Hunsaker: Well, just being around the water, right? So, even if they’re scared to get in it, just being out on a boat, being at the beach, just being surrounded by it is a calming feeling as well, correct?

Dr. Wallace J. Nichols: Absolutely. So, I would say that it’s—there’s a whole continuum. So, if I said, “What’s your water?” And you start thinking about it, that begins a neurological cascade in your imagination that begins that Blue Mind process. We don’t even have to be near the water. All I have to do is ask you that simple three-word question, “What’s your water?”

And you begin to have those memories and that imagination. Then you can go to the glass of water, the kitchen sink, having your hands in the water, you can go into the bathroom and take a shower, a bath. And then you can go bigger than that. You can go to the larger bodies of water. Then the epic sort of extreme Blue Mind would be probably something like floating on your back in a warm ocean watching shooting stars while the bioluminescence in the ocean’s all around you, some sort of mind-blowing kind of awesome extreme.

Maybe a dolphin jumps over you or something, I don’t know. Just completely off the chart. But it’s a continuum from the nearly imaginary to the extreme experiential and everything between. And I guess the message is just add more of all of it to your life in whatever way what you can. If that means stopping on your commute, if you typically drive by a pond and you’ve never checked it out, check it out.

If you go over a bridge on your commute, look out. Keep your eyes on the road, but also, have a look at the water. And take a little break during lunch and walk out to any water that’s nearby, and just look at it. Maybe there’s a turtle, or there’s some ducks, I don’t know. Just find the water in your life and put it to good work, because it’s everywhere. Everywhere we live, there’s lakes, rivers, oceans, creeks, ponds, pools, and they need us, and we need them.

TeriAnn Trevenen: Yeah, so I want to ask you, I love this concept, and it’s funny, as we’ve been talking about it, I’ve been thinking about water a lot. It’s very calming. I think about my experiences, and I think

about what I've been through. It does immediately put your brain into this state of mind, thinking about the water.

And I love the concept, as I said before. So, obviously, this has been a journey for you, and you've been going down this path, and now it's becoming your life's work. What are the most important things that come to your mind when I ask you what people—what people should know. What are like the top three things that come to your mind that you've learned on this journey that have been so eye-opening for you, that have changed your life and made it your life's work? What are those things that just pop out right when I say that, like it's changed your life on so many levels, going on this journey, experiencing this, learning this, and seeing how it's impacting people?

Dr. Wallace J. Nichols: Yeah, I would say one big idea that I find myself repeating often, and it gets people's attention, is that the emotional health is the basis of sustainability. And whatever you mean by sustainability. If you mean sustaining your family, sustaining your business, sustaining life on Planet Earth, if you—if the emotional health is missing, you will not achieve sustainability.

So, for your team, for any relationship, you can throw a lot of things at this idea of sustainability, but emotional health is at the core. And this Blue Mind idea can help with your emotional health. So, that concept is largely absent from most conversations about sustainability. As we've said earlier, emotional health is often skipped over.

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We look at economic health, and ecological health, and physical health, but we kind of skip over the emotional health, which frankly, it's the basis of everything. If you're not emotionally healthy, forget it. You'd better get to work on that. So, that's one big idea that I would share. The other one is that if—getting the value equation right.

When we—it's connected to that last statement, but when we undervalue anyone, or anything, bad things happen every time, right? Throughout history, whether we're talking about people, places, waterways, mountains, sports, that's just a true statement. So, our job is to get that value equation right, to properly value, not overvalue, but certainly, not undervalue the different components of life and society.

Sometimes we overvalue people. We think they're more important than they are. We see that in a lot of celebrity culture. Sometimes products can be overvalued and maybe out of reach, or inappropriately valuable. But when you get that value equation right, it's a beautiful thing. That's when the world sings, right?

And when we get it wrong, bad things happen. So, that's part of what we're doing, is trying to fix the value equation around water and emotional health, and to bring that knowledge to everyone. And then I guess the third thing I've been somewhat obsessed about is this idea of common knowledge. So, when

something moves from private knowledge, or shared knowledge, into the realm of common knowledge, that we all know.

I know that you know that I know, and you know that I know that you know. Then that—our conversation goes to the next level. So, just knowing who you are and what you stand for, before we met, then you the same with me, we have a set of common knowledge we begin, and we can begin our conversation, as we did, at this higher level.

We want Blue Mind to be common knowledge, not privately-held knowledge. We want everybody, 7.7 billion people and growing, to understand Blue Mind, however we do that. So, conversations with you, reaching your community, conversations at health conferences, or hospice conferences, or sea turtle conferences, reaching those communities.

So, this idea of common knowledge is really, really fascinating. When we have common knowledge, collaboration goes way up. When you hold private knowledge and you—I know that you know things that I don't know, and vice versa, collaboration goes way down. And there's some pretty interesting research being done at Harvard on the psychology of common knowledge. So, that's the third thing. So, I'd love to—

TeriAnn Trevenen: I love that you shared all of those, because it's funny, as you were sharing each one, I was thinking about how they have a relationship to water. You talked about emotional, you talk about balance, you talked about sharing. And your whole concept of Blue Mind, if you think about water, as we talked about earlier, it's everywhere, and we need it, and it holds us.

And it's just interesting, because it's like as people, being balanced is so critical, sharing, giving, having balance, having emotional stability, and it's all symbolic of water. When you talked about it, I thought about it. That's where my brain is in the conversation. And water brings balance, or it can bring chaos. But when it's in that place that it brings us peace, it brings a lot of peace.

Water's very giving, too. And I loved how you said earlier that water holds us. So, all these things you've taken away, they can all be symbolically tied to water, in a sense, and I just think that's really beautiful imagery of what water can do for us and how we too need to have that in our lives, that balance, that giving, that holding people, sharing common knowledge, sharing what we have to offer. And I think we feel that through water. So, I think that's a beautiful, just beautiful imagery of those things that you learn in looking at water and how it impacts people.

Jonathan Hunsaker: Yeah, and I mean I love the shared knowledge becoming common knowledge. That's something that we're trying to do here, right, with the podcast, is share as much knowledge as we can, so hopefully it becomes common knowledge, because it really raises the consciousness of humanity, right? And it allows us to get to new levels. And before we wrap up, I want to talk about one last thing.

You were talking about balance. Can you share with me, because I'd imagine it's something you're very passionate about, how human health is connected to the health of the ocean?

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Ocean's the biggest body of water that's out there, right? Most of our planet. Can we talk about that? Because I think that, a lot of times, there's lip service, but I think there needs to be some reality checks going on here with what we're doing to the environment and to the oceans, and how that's really affecting our human health.

Dr. Wallace J. Nichols: Yeah, so when we—generally, when we communicate about ocean health, the talking points often refer to ecological health, and our physical health, and the economic health. And all of those things are true. The ocean is maybe the biggest driver of our economy, and most people may not pause to think about that very often.

But it's true. It's the single biggest feature of Planet Earth, 71 percent of the planet's covered by ocean. It holds the most life, the most diversity, and it's the source of life. So, it's the economic driver of our planet. Ecologically, it's obviously very important. And from an educational perspective, whether it's metaphors, ocean metaphors, or just learning about the ocean science, there's just educational component.

And this is kind of what we've been talking about this whole time, the emotional health component. So, it's a big source of emotional health. I like to ask people "How many..." If you could imagine—imagine you could measure stress in tons. Just bear with me for a minute. If stress was measurable in ounces, pounds, and tons. How much stress has the ocean and your water pulled out of you in your life? Just make up a number. Is it five pounds? 20 tons? I don't know. So, some number, just totally—

Jonathan Hunsaker: 10 pounds, right?

Dr. Wallace J. Nichols: 10 pounds of stress been sucked out of you during your life. Okay, now multiply that by times all the people who have had 10 pounds of stress pulled out permanently. The ocean doesn't really throw it back into you randomly during the day. It takes it away and it's gone. Now multiply that times all people throughout human history who have had that 10 pounds of stress taken away and disposed of, so to speak. Wow, that's a lot of—that's a big service. How much is that worth? Trillions of dollars of—

Jonathan Hunsaker: It's a fascinating way to measure and look at it.

TeriAnn Trevenen: For sure.

Jonathan Hunsaker: It's fascinating. And I was like "Alright, now he's going to involve my 10 times the

7 billion people.” But then you talk about human history. How much is released for as long as we’ve been around, and that, it’s—yeah, it’s a very fascinating way to look at it.

Dr. Wallace J. Nichols: So then, the next piece is, okay, let’s take all that stress that the ocean, and our lakes and rivers have removed from humanity, and let’s just throw it back into us. Let’s just take—say, what if the ocean, rivers, and lakes, said “Hey, we’re giving it back. Here it is. Put it back in. Just fix it right in your heart, right in your brain. You’ve got those 10 pounds back.”

How does that feel? What does that look like? That’s Red Mind to an extreme, like we will be just exploding in not a good way. So, then, let’s go back to that better scenario where the ocean keeps it and takes it away. And that’s the undervalued aspect of emotional—ocean health, is its role in our emotional lives.

That stress that it removes, that affects every single cell in our body, every single thing we do, our creativity, our relationships, our wellness, everything, how we interact with everybody, and how we interact with everything is affected by that stress reduction. So, to kind of get at your question, is why I’m going down this road, is now imagine you go to the ocean for your daily wellbeing regime, whatever it is, a beach walk, let’s just keep it simple.

And it’s trashed. There’s trash. Instead of a beautiful beach that you wanted to come to, you go there, and it just pisses you off, it grosses you out, you get angry at people you don’t even know, you start spinning out on not liking people anymore, or—then you start cleaning it up, but now you’re spending your day doing a beach cleanup of gross trash that you—you were planning on coming and chilling out and having a Blue Mind moment.

Now you’re in Red Mind. And then that’s how you spent your day instead of restoring. So, imagine you go to the beach and there’s an oil spill, like we had in the Gulf of Mexico. That will rob you of your Blue Mind. So, it puts more Red Mind into your life rather than Blue Mind. So, when we keep our lakes, rivers, and oceans healthy, they give us so much, the economic and ecological and the emotional health benefits are massive.

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And they’re just available. All you have to do is show up. But when wreck the place, it takes that away. And when we undervalue that emotional piece, it doesn’t become part of our equation, it doesn’t become part of our conversation, it doesn’t become part of what we teach kids and college students and grad students, it doesn’t become part of our management and our policies, it’s just missing.

And that’s the, I think what’s so game-changing about this conversation, is when we bring it back in, we’ll look at water differently. We’ll say “Okay, water makes me happy, but I know that it makes me

well, that it helps me be a better version of myself, it helps me manage my stress, if I take care of it, if I take care of it.”

So, it’s a give/take. And we can spend a week talking about the ocean crisis, and I spend a lot of time working on various aspects of the problems, whether it’s overfishing, or plastic pollution, warming oceans, a whole range of things that are not fun to talk about. That’s all real, and I think we will be able to do a better job solving those problems when we bring the Blue Mind science to the table. That’s my hope.

TeriAnn Trevenen: Love it.

Jonathan Hunsaker: This is amazing. This is probably one of my more favorite interviews that we’ve done yet. I love it. I love the connection that you made, I love how you brought everything back full-circle to what happens if you go out on a beach and it’s trashed, or the oil spills and all of that. And it’s less—

I mean call it selfish, whatever, but maybe it’s not about you want to save the fish or save the whales, maybe it’s not about this or that. Maybe you just need a selfish reason. And hey, if that keeps you from trashing the oceans, then great. Whatever reason that may be. But I guess, I don’t—I’ve never made such a connection between my emotional wellbeing and water that you have brought to life during this interview.

And it’s something that I’ll take with—keep with me forever. Like I’m very excited to be a lot more present when I’m around water. I’m very excited to be much more present, to make sure that I have more water in my life on a day-to-day basis. I love this interview. I wish we were in person and we could keep going. And yeah, I mean do you have anything you want to wrap up on this?

TeriAnn Trevenen: No, I think—I love your top three takeaways, and I love this concept. I agree with Jonathan. It just—I think you talking about, earlier, bringing these concepts to people, and bringing it to their minds, making them more focused on it, how everyone needs to hear it. We have this knowledge and we need to share.

And I don’t think that we think enough about the world around us and how it impacts us, but water specifically is such a huge part. We start out in the womb water, we’re made up of water. Water is all around us. I just watched this documentary the other day about water and the Amazon rainforest, and how much water is needed there.

And it goes up in the air and goes other places and gives so much back. I mean water is everywhere. And we just don’t think about those things in our life that seem so easy and effortless. But they’re everywhere, and they impact us daily. And water impacts us, I mean think about that concept. We don’t think about this.

Like we're made up of it, it's everywhere, it's all around us, it impacts us so significantly. And so, I love this topic. I love that you're bringing attention to it. And I love that you're talking about how water can give to us and we need to give back to water, because it is a life source for us in so many ways, not just physically, but also emotionally. It's just a beautiful concept.

Jonathan Hunsaker: Yeah, we will have you back on again, there's no doubt.

TeriAnn Trevenen: There's so much to talk about.

Jonathan Hunsaker: There's more to talk about.

TeriAnn Trevenen: Absolutely.

Jonathan Hunsaker: So, can you tell us, where can people find out more about you? You talked earlier about you have a documentary series that's for free online that people can go and watch. Do you want to give some URLs out? Do you want me to do that?

Dr. Wallace J. Nichols: Yeah, BlueMindHealth.com will take you to the documentary series. My personal website's just my name, WallaceJNichols.com, and it's like my locker, everything's in there. That will—

Jonathan Hunsaker: WallaceJNichols.org or dot.com?

Dr. Wallace J. Nichols: Both, both. Both will work. And those are probably your two best bets. I use the hashtag #BlueMind on social media if you want to meet all kinds of other people engaged in this conversation.

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And I would just encourage you, and everybody listening here, next time you see water, next time you touch water, just reflect on this chat that we've had, that you've just listened to. And then let us know. Reach out and say "Hey, I listened to your conversation. That was the best shower I've had in years." Or whatever it is. "I was on my way to work, and I just noticed the river in a different way, and it's going to be a bigger part of my life now." That's where the rubber hits the road.

TeriAnn Trevenen: Yeah.

Dr. Wallace J. Nichols: So, these conversations rock, and then what? So, that's our challenge to anybody listening, is let us know. Reach out through this website and just say "Hey, that was great. Here's what I did." Let's get this conversation going. Yeah.

TeriAnn Trevenen: Love it.

Jonathan Hunsaker: Perfect. So, BlueMindHealth.com, WallaceJNichols.org. You can always go to EmpoweringYouOrganically.com. We will have all of the show notes there, we'll have links to Dr. Wallace's website, and any other information that we've covered here. This was fascinating. Thank you so much for coming. Thank you for giving us some of your time. Thank you for sharing with our listeners.

Dr. Wallace J. Nichols: Yes, if we were in the same room, if I was there with you, I would give you one of these, which is what I always do. It's a blue marble—

TeriAnn Trevenen: I love that.

Dr. Wallace J. Nichols: —I give as just a small symbol of gratitude. So, I'll have to do it virtually for now, until we meet, and then these just get passed on as a symbol of this conversation, to people we want to say thank you to. So, love what you guys are doing, and the way you're reaching out to so many people on all these topics, with their personal health and wellbeing in mind. I think that's really awesome. So, thank you for—

TeriAnn Trevenen: Thank you. Thank you so much.

Jonathan Hunsaker: Awesome.

TeriAnn Trevenen: Thank you for being here with us today.

Jonathan Hunsaker: Thanks, everyone, for listening. Also, hashtag #BlueMind, have a conversation about it on Instagram, social media. Get connected. And I think it's important, if we're going to raise the level of consciousness of humanity, we have to stay connected. I think that's one of the good aspects of social media. I think there's a lot that can end up being negative. But that is a good one for us to unite around movements that we really believe in, movements that can actually make this a better world, a better place, and make you a better person. So, thank you again, Dr. Wallace, for being on here.

TeriAnn Trevenen: Thank you.

Jonathan Hunsaker: Thank you, everybody, for listening. And we will talk to you soon.

TeriAnn Trevenen: Have a great day, everyone.

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Episode 157 – How To Use Water To Heal Anxiety, Depression, and Sadness