

Clara Cohen: Do you count your steps daily on an app on your phone? Do you check your sleep score before you even say good morning to your significant other or your pet? Do you know your heart rate right now just by looking at your wristwatch? If you said yes, don't worry, you're not alone. Most of us are doing some kind of metrics or following numbers, but some people may be too obsessed with it, including some of our patients.

But here's a story that made me stop and think hard about this. One of the most measured men on the planet just got some bad news. If you've never heard of him, his name is Bryan Johnson. He has a Netflix documentary all about what he's doing. He is the guy who spends millions of dollars a year tracking every single number in his body: steps, sleep, blood, organs, everything.

He gets tested regularly. I'm not talking about every few months. I'm talking every week, every day, because he wants to live forever, or close to it anyway. And then a few weeks ago, he shared that he's been diagnosed with an autoimmune disease. His own words were, "My stomach is eating itself."

Now, here's the part that stops me in my tracks. This man has more data on his body than almost anyone alive, and his body still hid this from him because apparently he's had gastritis for years. So today we're gonna talk about what happened to Bryan Johnson, but more than that, we are going to talk about yin and yang, about why our entire culture right now is stuck in one gear, the yang, go, go, go, do, do, do, get all the metrics, don't miss anything, obsession, and about what it means to you, to your patients sitting on your table, to all of us.

Are you ready? Let's go!

Welcome to AcuPro, a show dedicated to making Chinese medicine and acupuncture easy to grasp and fun to learn. Hi, I'm your host, Clara Cohen. I support practitioners and students like you in changing the world one patient at a time. My goal is to share my passion for TCM and empower you to achieve superior patient care.

I love to showcase the amazing benefits of acupuncture, because after all, acupuncture rocks

So let me catch you up in case you've never heard of Bryan Johnson. He sold his company years ago for a lot of money, and then he decided he wasn't going to work, he was going to spend his money trying to reverse his own aging.

He calls this the Project Blueprint. He's got YouTube channels, like I said, a Netflix special documentary on him, And basically he eats the exact same food every day. It consists entirely on a monitored, nutrient-dense, plant-based vegan diet.

It's tailored to his longevity, according to him. Basically, in the morning he has a massive bowl of super veggies like mixed broccoli, cauliflower, black lentils, garlic, ginger, and a lot of olive oil. He eats a lot of nuts, lots of seeds, plant-based protein powders, pomegranate juice, and basically three meals a day that are vegan-based

Every calorie is counted, every macronutrient is counted as well: carbs, protein, fat. He also takes a hundred supplements a day. Yeah, dozens and dozens of supplements a day.

You should see, it's like a little box full of supplements he takes, which is so hard on the liver and the stomach to break all this down. He gets scanned, tested, and measured constantly. MRIs, blood work, even his overnight erection are tracked on a machine. I'm not joking. He sleeps alone in a cold, dark room on a strict schedule.

No phone, no screen, same time every single night. And for years, people called him crazy, some people called him a genius. He looks very, very pale to me. He says his age is 48, but he has the body of an 18-year-old.

What's interesting to me is they never talk about his mental health or his mental state. And then recently, he told the world he has been diagnosed with an autoimmune disorder, gastritis.

That means his own immune system is attacking the cells in his stomach that make stomach acid. It's not something that showed up overnight, obviously. It has been building for years, right? The only clue was that he had low iron, no anemia, nothing dramatic, just a quiet number slowly drifting the wrong way for over a decade while he's tracking practically everything else in his body. For some reason, this didn't concern him at all with the vegan diet as well.

Fascinatingly interesting, right? But here's what I want you to sit with for a second. Biohacking, that's what this guy does and a lot of people online do, looks brand new to everyone, right? He has a red light therapy. He's wearing rings. A lot of people wear the Oura Rings to track everything from their sleep to their activity.

But underneath, it is really old thinking, pretty much wearing new clothes. It is Yang thinking. Push, fix, optimize, control, measure, and then improve. It is obsessed with go, go, go, do, do, do. It's an obsession that is not stopping. I have to share something with you, is one of my patient wants to have 10,000 steps a day, and she was telling me that if she has 9,900 step and she's missing that 100 steps, she will pace back and forth in her bedroom until she reach 10,000 before she goes to sleep.

That's obsession. Does that make sense? People are so obsessed with numbers that they're not taking the time to allow the body To actually breathe and do what it does best, which is to sit, self-regulate, and heal itself. So yang energy is not bad, we know that, but it needs the yin side. Yang drives action and effort. This is how anything gets done, right? Including healing. But yang without yin, as we know, is a body running on one setting all the time.

Go, go, go. No rest, no trust, no letting anything just be. And yin is different. Yin says your body already knows what it's doing. Yin says maybe the goal isn't to outsmart your body, it is to get out of its own self-healing way, to protect what is already working instead of constantly trying to upgrade it.

Does that make sense?

Ad: Diagnosis has to be the hardest part of Chinese medicine. We always say there is no wrong treatment in TCM, only the wrong diagnosis. This is why I created my second book, Chinese Medicine Made Easy, to make it easy to grasp using a lot of colorful visuals. I have included all Chinese medicine foundation, yin-yang theory, five element, zang-fu organ, all of it.

All diagnosis, of course, including tongue and pulse, practice case studies to help you improve your skills, as well as give you access to my online fillable intake form to use with your own patients. You can download the digital version on any device, and it comes with many video links to complement it.

Or if, like me, you like to read a real book, the hard copy ships all over the world. Before you invest in this book, you can download a sample of it to make sure that the format of the book is everything you were looking for, because I want to make sure that you are absolutely benefiting from it. Listen to what people have to say about my green book, Chinese Medicine Made Easy.

"The more I read, the more I like this book. It is simple to follow. All information is super organized with great pictures, makes memorizing a lot easier. This book will definitely make my learning a lot more productive." Yay,

so happy to hear that. "You've done it again. You are amazing. I wish we had your resources 20 years ago back in TCM school."

This also makes my day because this is why I do what I've been doing with AcuPro Academy for quite a few years now to support everyone. Check out the links in the show notes below, or go to my website, acuproacademy.com, and click the shop tab on the menu bar and get your copy today.

Clara Cohen: Bryan Johnson has a red light panel that he uses instead of going out and trusting the sunlight for 15 minutes to get his natural vitamin D. He's eating whole food, but he's also taking tons of supplements that are made in a lab, so you're swallowing a pill instead of real food, right?

And instead of learning from our own body, we hand that job over to devices on our wrist, on our phone, or like Bryan Johnson, pay millions of dollars to get all those metrics and this data that doesn't stop the body from saying, "Whoa, maybe we need to look at the whole picture," right?

Now let's bring this to our own world, because this next part is where it gets really interesting for us as TCM practitioners. In Chinese medicine, the stomach and the spleen sit in the center, right? They're part of the zong qi, and they are in the middle of the body. Literally, physically, they are in the middle.

From Du 20 to Kidney 1, or the top of your head to the sole of your foot, spleen and stomach are at the center. That means they are at the center of your health. They're the earth element. And they are in charge of digesting. Digesting food, but also thoughts, our experiences, our worry, our overthinking, our obsession. Now, if you haven't seen my five spirits video, I'll have the link for you below because it really explain how the five elements correspond to five spirits.

For the spleen, it is the yi. The yi is our thinking mind, our focus, but it's also our overthinking when it goes too far, our obsession. So think about this for a second. A man like Bryan Johnson, who has built his entire identity around thinking about his body, measuring his body, analyzing everything about his body every single day for years, and yet the disease shows up in his stomach, in his center, in the exact organ tied to overthinking and self-focus, self-center.

He uses his money to see if he can live for a long time, right? And maybe he shares the data with the world, which is great. People can learn from what he's doing. But at the same time, it's very self-focused, self-centered. The stomach, when it's not happy, like gastritis for example, it's telling you you are too self-centered.

Does that make sense? So I'm not saying his thinking caused his disease. Nobody can say that 'cause I'm not in his body, I'm not in his mind, I don't know what he's thinking. But it's worth noticing that autoimmune disease means the body is attacking itself for a reason. And isn't that also what happens when we criticize ourself constantly, when we chase every number, when we treat our own body like a project that is never quite finished?

For many years, I was obsessed with not having a straight smile, straight teeth because my mom growing up was a single mother. She didn't have money for braces, so I grew up with a crooked tooth. Once I let it go and I didn't care what it looked like, My teeth didn't give me as much trouble.

Before that, I was always at the dentist. I had a cavity, I had to fix this, I had to have root canal, all those thing that I had to do, and then suddenly when I let it go, my teeth didn't fall apart again. If we focus on the fact that we don't have a six-pack and we don't have the perfect body and our thighs are too big or our hips are too wide or whatever it is that we're focusing on that we think is negative, we're constantly telling our body that this is ugly, this is not good.

That area is going to basically at the cellular level show you that it's not happy. Does that make sense? So we have to really look at it from that perspective, something to sit with, not something to diagnose from a distance, but you think, "Why do I keep criticizing this area in my body?"

Why do I keep thinking, oh, I wish I had smaller thighs." This is what the problem is with our society, with our obsession with being perfect. And as you and I know, perfection does not exist. So here's the part that I love because it's not just theory, it lines up with the actual biology.

When the stomach loses its ability to make stomach acid, that is exactly what autoimmune gastritis does. The body can't absorb vitamin B12 properly. It also struggles to absorb iron, and C, he had some low iron for years, and still he went for a vegan diet. That means that the spleen at the core in TCM is not able to absorb the food, transform it, and produce healthy blood.

Remember, the spleen produces blood from the food we eat by transforming and transporting it to all the cells in the body. So to me that's interesting because if there is absorption issue, in the TCM perspective, that means the spleen is very weak, very deficient, right? And on top of it, you're putting all this hard vitamins and minerals and supplements into the body, and the body has to break it down.

That causes a lot of problem because it's so hard to break down, right? So to me, this is what shows up in Bryan Johnson's lab for over 10 years, which is the iron absorption issue-

So this isn't a stretch for us to make, right? Low stomach function leads to poor absorption. Poor absorption leads to deficiency, specifically spleen qi deficiency, which cannot transport, transform, and therefore cannot produce blood that is healthy.

This is Western science and Chinese medicine landing in the same exact place. I love that.

Ad: Before we continue with today's episode, I wanna share something that honestly feels like a big moment for me. If you've been following me for a while, you know I've always said no to all sponsorships. I've been approached many times, but I turn them all down because if I don't genuinely use a product or love it, I will never recommend it to you.

But today is different. I am super excited to introduce my very first sponsor, drum roll please, Jane App. I'm also a Jane ambassador, so this is a company I actually use and love. I am saying yes because I've used Jane for years in my own multidisciplinary clinic. Truly, it's the best practice management software and electronic medical record I've ever worked with.

Before Jane, we were using a clunky system that made everything harder than it needed to be. When we switched, the entire clinic felt the difference immediately. Jane is built by people who actually understand what it's like to be a practitioner running a busy practice. One of my favorite features is online booking.

There is nothing better than waking up and seeing patients booking their own appointment while I was asleep. Your patients can book when it works for them, and the wait list feature fills last-minute cancellations automatically. I love that. I used to spend so much time calling eight to 10 people just to fill up one spot.

Jane also automates the things we never enjoy doing, like intake forms, reminders, confirmation. It honestly feels like having an extra assistant handling all the moving parts so you can focus on what really matters, which is supporting your patients and being the TCM rockstar practitioner you truly are.

There are so many features I could talk about, but we would be here all day. If you're looking for a system that brings more ease, more clarity, and calm into your practice, I truly recommend Jane. You can check it out at jane.app/demo, and because you're part of the AcuPro community, you can use my code AcuPro1MO, one month, when you sign up to get a one-month grace period on your new account.

The link and the code are also in the show notes below for you. Now let's get back to today's episode.

Clara Cohen: This is such a good reminder for your patients, too.

You know the ones who come in exhausted, go, go, go all the time, a little pale, maybe with digestive complaint that's they've been brushing off for years. Sometimes the answer is not more supplements. Sometimes the stomach and the spleen themselves need support before anything else can be absorbed at all. And one more piece I can't stop thinking about from this Bryan Johnson story, instead of trusting sunlight, we all build devices. Instead of real food, we isolate nutrients and take supplement. Instead of real darkness and real season and fresh air, we engineer a version of it indoors. I love to sleep at night with fresh air. My window is always open, even in winter.

I just have a big blanket, because I believe that breathing fresh air instead of, like Bryan Johnson, have the best air going into your room so you can sleep really well and get oxygen. I think fresh air from the trees, from nature, is probably the best bet, right? In Chinese medicine, yang is renewed by the sun.

We need the sun, of course. It's all about balance. We're not gonna sit in the sun for five hours, but it is a simpler way to get vitamin D. All those ideas from Chinese medicine still work today. Go outside, let the sun hit your skin. Let your body feel the actual season it is living in.

In winter, we can stay indoors more, right? It is all about our circadian rhythm, but not going away from everything that is basic and natural. So Bryan Johnson has red light panels, laser caps, a temperature-controlled bedroom. What he does not talk about is simply walking outside, letting real sunlight touch his skin.

You don't need \$2 million budget to fix that. You just need to go get fresh air in the woods. Go for a hike, right?

And in my opinion, the piece that is missing the most for me, and I think you're probably thinking about this too, is nowhere in Bryan Johnson's Netflix special or his YouTube channel do we hear about grief, joy, happiness, anger, frustration, relationship, meaning, community, the things that actually make a life worth extending.

He never talks about the mind. It's all about the body, and that's exactly what's missing from his health goals, in my opinion, right? In Chinese medicine, the heart holds the shen, the spirit, our mind, our spirit, our sense of self. You can support every single organ perfectly and still leave the shen completely unattended.

You can optimize a body for a decade and still not have addressed the person living inside it. Well, that to me, that's the real gap. Not the supplement, not the diet, the missing conversation about what any of this is actually for

What do I want you to take from all of this? You are going to see more and more patients who are tracking everything, their sleep, their steps, their calories, their protein counts, everything. And that data can be useful. I mean, I have a lot of patients that have to track their basal temperature, right?

So they can see when they're ovulating. That's great, but sometimes they become obsessed because they missed a day after nine months of tracking, and they feel like they're a failure. That is the problem. So I'm not saying throwing everything away and all the apps and all the data away, But watch for the patients who are becoming disconnected from their own body because they are too busy monitoring it.

The patient who can tell you their heart rate number, their sleep, their steps, but can't tell you how they're actually feeling today. Sometimes the most healing question you can ask isn't, "How many hours of sleep have you got last night or in the last week every night?"

It's, "How do you feel?" Give them permission to trust their own body again instead of only trusting the device strapped to their wrist or in their pocket, right? This is yin work, and it might be the most important thing we offer in a world that is so stuck in yang

if this episode made you think, share it with a colleague or someone who needs to hear this too, because that is how we can impact the world around us.

Thank you so much for spending your time with me today. Again, I truly hope you got something out of this episode. And if you want more, head to my website, acupointacademy.com. I have tons of resources. And you can connect with me at Acupoint Academy online on YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, everywhere you like to hang out. I'm here to support your journey. And no matter what, keep rockin' it using TCM, and I'll see you next week.

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