Gina Harney: You're listening to the Healthy In Real Life podcast, episode number 42.

Speaker 2: Welcome to the Healthy in Real Life podcast, bite-sized tips for healthy living that you can implement right now. Join us weekly for interviews and real-life advice for creating the happiest and healthiest version of yourself. Here's your host, fitness expert, author, and mom of two, Gina Harney.

Gina Harney: Hey, everyone. This is Gina, creator of the Fitnessista blog and brand. I'm so excited that you're here today. Thank you so much for tuning in. I'm so pumped you guys liked last week's episode with Betsy about plastic surgery. If you haven't given it a listen yet, I highly recommend it. She's so much fun, and we just chat about all things plastic surgery. For today's episode, we are changing it up a little bit. We're talking more about skincare, entrepreneurial endeavors, healthy diets, fasting. We are talking a little bit about Botox and fillers, and I am so excited to chat with Dr. Lamees Hamdan. We'll get into that in just a little bit.

Gina Harney: But before we roll into this week's episode, I wanted to read this week's five-star review. Thank you so much to all of you who have taken the time to leave ratings and reviews for the show. It means the world to me. This week's five-star review said, "Long-time blog reader. I have been reading Gina's blog, fitnessista.com, since 2010. I love her down-to-earth approach to fitness, health, and nutrition, and motherhood. She is so relatable. I was so excited when she started doing a podcast, and she has not disappointed. Great guests and valuable information. Thank you, Gina. You rock."

Gina Harney: Thank you so much for that amazing review. If you guys wouldn't mind heading over to Apple Podcasts, Google Play, Stitcher, wherever you're listening today and leaving that five-star review, it would help us out so much. We're still trying to grow the little podcast, so that would be amazing. I also really love to hear your feedback.

Gina Harney: Before we get into this week's episode, I wanted to tell you guys about Equilibria CBD. CBD is very hyped up in the fitness world right now. I feel like you see it everywhere, in baked goods, in lotions, in bath bombs I saw at Whole Foods. Just so many different places, but the problem with CBD is that it can get a little sketchy. If you buy CBD, you really don't have any way of telling where they sourced it from, if they've added anything into it, like any type of synthetic or really inexpensive oils, if they've added heavy metals.

Gina Harney: Also, the thing with CBD, and the difference between CBD and THC is that CBD does not get you high. It has to contain, I think it's .03% or less of THC to be considered CBD, so very, very, teeny, tiny, maybe a trace amount in there. Anything higher than that is not CBD. That is marijuana, so they're very different things. THC is what gets you high. CBD does not get you high.

Gina Harney: It's really interesting because your body actually has these cannabinoid receptors, so it can take these phytocannabinoids and use them. There have been a lot of studies that have been done. There's a lot of anecdotal evidence, but CBD can help with anxiety. It can help with pain, mood. It can help with inflammation. There's just so many things that it has the potential to help with. I was very interested in trying it because I suffer from anxiety, and this is something I'm very open about. It's something that has followed me my entire life, so I've always just been looking for ways to just minimize my anxiety.

Gina Harney: Yoga has helped a ton. Meditation has helped a lot. Just being organized and trying to plan out things and also having grace with myself has helped a lot. But I've noticed it creep back up, especially over the past year with the pilots' deployment and also starting with the airlines because the schedule has been bananas. I've been a solo parent for over a year now for the most part. I'd say probably 85, 90% of the time, if not more.

Gina Harney: So, just a lot going on. I'm feeling very anxious, and I wanted to try CBD. I tried one brand, and I really liked it. Then, I found out that they were actually sourcing it from Mexico, which was not explicitly disclosed. That was very shady to me, so I stopped taking that. I came across Equilibria. Long story long, the one that I found that I really love has been Equilibria, and they offer a bomb, which is topical. They offer soft gels, and they also offer an oil dropper.

Gina Harney: The soft gels you can take before bed at night. The topical you can use anywhere you have aches and pains, sore muscles. I use it where I cut my thumb a few years ago. I severed the digital nerve in my thumb, and I had to have nerve graph surgery. I still have aching in my thumb occasionally, not all the time. But if I notice that my thumb's bothering me a little bit that day, I'll put some topical on there.

Gina Harney: I like the soft gels before bed, and I like the oil when I just know it's going to be a stressful day, and I have a lot going on, or I feel my anxiety creeping up a little bit. I put a few drops under my tongue, and this literally has changed my life. I'm so pumped to tell you guys about it because it has helped with my anxiety so much, and it has also helped with my sleep. I take the soft gel before bed. Or sometimes I'll even use the oil before bed instead, and I feel like I slipped into a warm bathtub. So, it is just like a nice, comfy hug. I feel so relaxed. I do not feel high at all. I just feel like all of the crazy thoughts and things you worry at night before bed, they just kind of go away. So, I don't feel like the wheels on the bus are running at night.

Gina Harney: So, a little CBD before bed, and I sleep extremely well. I just feel focused, less anxious during the day, and I am loving it. So, I wanted to offer a discount code for you guys if you wanted to check it out. If you just head to Equilibria, and it's just, let me find the website, equilibriawomen.com. So, Equilibria, W-O-M-E-N, dot com. I'll include the link in the show notes. If you enter the code Fitnessista, so F-I-T-N-E-S-S-I-S-T-A, you'll get 15% off. I really hope you love it as much as I do. Like I said, it's made a huge difference for me.

Gina Harney: Let's go ahead and get into this week's podcast episode with Dr. Lamees Hamdan. Here's a little bit about Dr. Lamees. She's a medical doctor, but she's also extensively studied alternative therapies of Southeast Asia, Europe, and the Middle East. After a two-year residency in dermatology in Dubai, she left her medical career to seek out alternative scientific paths to healing. She was feeling a definite shift within the medical community in accepting integrative ways in the path for health, and she re-entered the medical profession and is currently working as a doctor with the Ministry of Health in the UAE.

Gina Harney: She is a serial entrepreneur. She's founded and directed several beauty startups, and in 2004, she launched her premier natural beauty company, Shiffa, that integrates their holistic teachings into a line of natural skin and body care products. They're carried at Nordstrom, Bloomingdale's, Violet Grey, and Sephora overseas. She's been featured on Oprah, and she is such a wealth of knowledge. I loved chatting with her.

Gina Harney: In this episode, we are talking about how she started her skincare line, her background, her story, her health and wellness tips that she follows in her own life, her own personal skincare routine. She shares all the details on all the products that she uses and also her thoughts on Botox, fillers, fasting. It's such a great conversation, and I really hope you guys enjoy it. Welcome to the show, Dr. Lamees. Hey, Dr. Lamees. Thank you so much for being here today. I'm so excited to have you on the show.

Dr. Lamees H.: I'm excited to be on the show.

Gina Harney: Yes. I'd love to hear more about your background and your story. Could you chat a little bit about where you grew up and your journey to where you are today?

Dr. Lamees H.: Oh my gosh, it's very international. I was born in Dubai, but I grew up in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Both my parents were attending college there.

Gina Harney: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Dr. Lamees H.: Then, when I was about 10, I moved back to Dubai, and I studied medicine in Ireland. So, I've sort of been everywhere. My journey, I guess, in terms of the past 44 years, was that I studied medicine. I wanted to be a dermatologist, and I was doing my specialization in dermatology. Then, I fell pregnant because I was married at that time, and I had a baby. When I was pregnant, that was a real catalyst to ... It really got thinking about what we're eating, what we're putting on our bodies, what chemicals we're using to clean our houses with.

Dr. Lamees H.: If it's not safe for a growing baby, because you know how they say, "Oh, you're pregnant. Avoid this, and avoid that," why should it be safe for us anyway, in general? That was really an eye-opening experience, being pregnant and actually caring about ... Suddenly, you really do care about what you're putting into your body and on your body, and that got me into the past 20 years of studying alternative healing, studying naturopathy, homeopathy, Ayurveda. I've sort of come full circle now where I'm actually doing a fellowship in integrative medicine at the University of Arizona, so it's been sort of like a circle for me.

Dr. Lamees H.: During that time, I launched a organic skincare company, and I've just recently the past three months launched a supplement line, again, a very clean supplement line. So, I've been on quite a journey, and I've loved every moment of it.

Gina Harney: That is so incredible. I love that you're doing the program here. I went to University of Arizona, and we live in Tucson.

Dr. Lamees H.: Oh, it's a beautiful, beautiful place.

Gina Harney: Yes, so you ... Have you come out here then often, or-

Dr. Lamees H.: Yes, yes.

Gina Harney: Okay.

Dr. Lamees H.: Well-

Gina Harney: Wow.

Dr. Lamees H.: Yeah, yeah. We have because we have to do two, three-week in-house courses, so it's beautiful. The light and the cacti ... I'm old enough to remember the Road Runner and the Coyote. I never thought cacti like that existed, but they do.

Gina Harney: Yeah [crosstalk 00:11:17]

Dr. Lamees H.: They do.

Gina Harney: That's so funny. What a small world. Well, I love that you ... I think that when we become pregnant, we all become so much aware about the products that we're using. I'd love to hear more about your skincare line and how that came to fruition and the process behind that, if you wouldn't mind sharing.

Dr. Lamees H.: Well, as I said, when I was pregnant, I really was into, okay, what can I eat to feed my baby? Right? What supplements do I need to take for my baby? Because every trimester, the fetus is developing differently, and different organs are developing. Like, the first and last trimester is really focused on neural development, so you want to make sure you're getting your omegas during that time, your healthy fats during that time.

Dr. Lamees H.: So, keeping that in mind. Right? I was in this more healthy way of thinking, and then I was afraid of getting stretch marks. Because during a growth spurt when I was younger, I have stretch marks on my backside, my bum and my upper thigh. So, I was really afraid of getting stretch marks and being very vain. I went to the shops. Remember, this was 20 years ago. I went to the shops, and there was nothing that was made for a pregnant woman or that could help a pregnant woman.

Dr. Lamees H.: Because being a doctor, people would say, "Oh, here's this. Here's an oil." Being a doctor, I'd always look at the ingredients, and there's nothing. It was like a bit of almond oil, a bit of mandarin essential oil, and you're done. It will do nothing for me.

Dr. Lamees H.: So, that sort of got me on the quest of really researching the best and most nourishing oils for the skin that have been or have been known to either prevent stretch marks or help with wound healing and skin elasticity. So, I sort of made my own pregnancy oil. Every time someone got pregnant, I'd give them the pregnancy oil and say, "Use it every day, and you won't get a single stretch mark." And I didn't get a single stretch mark, although I had a 3.9 kilo baby. I don't know what it is in pounds and ounces, but it's not a small baby.

Dr. Lamees H.: So, that's how Shiffa started. Everyone kept wanting the pregnancy oil, so I decided, I really don't want to go back to medicine. Because what I have discovered was that there is a better way maybe to heal people, and it's not by necessarily giving them or prescribing medication. We should be looking at diet, exercise, and lifestyle first and making changes at the same time if people need medication to give them medication. But I found that no one was doing that at that time. So, I was very disappointed, and I left medicine. Remember, again, this was 20 years ago. Integrative and functional medicine didn't really exist as a speciality then.

Gina Harney: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Dr. Lamees H.: So, I did my own research, and for 20 years, I've been studying myself. During that time, I launched Shiffa. Shiffa means healing in Arabic because that's what I believe in, healing your skin from the inside out. It's one cleanser, two toners, two types of moisturizers. You don't have to have a lot of products to get good skin. You just need effective products for good skin. I had made a decision very early on that it will be organic. To this day, 80% or more of the ingredients a Shiffa product is organic.

Dr. Lamees H.: And I want it to be effective. Because there's no use in being natural if it can't be effective, and that's also based on my overall belief in a healthier lifestyle. If you're going to give people so many difficult things to follow, they're going to say, "Forget this healthy lifestyle. I'll just go back to what I was doing before." Every little step counts, and give people viable alternative options, whether it's skincare or whether it's in how to cook your food and what pots and pans to use.

Dr. Lamees H.: That's how Shiffa came about, really, with the pregnancy oil. That was the first product I ever launched. Then, we became a very high-end spa product, but people kept using it and loving it at these beautiful spas around the world. So, I decided to launch in retail, and our first shop was with Sephora Middle East. They were opening in Dubai and the rest of the Middle East, and we opened and launched with them. We became in three months' time their best-selling skincare line.

Gina Harney: Wow.

Dr. Lamees H.: It was a shock to all of us because I didn't have the money to advertise. All the money went back into the product, and we were a very, very small company then. I've learned a lot along the way, and I think also the way to do business has changed for the better now. Because before, you used to have to rely on the supporters of the world or retailers to take you on. But now, with social media, you can sell directly from your social media account or from your website. You can bypass these, I call them gatekeepers or retail outlets, and you're your own ... It's very empowering nowadays to launch your own company, while before, you really had to be with a strong retailer.

Gina Harney: Yeah, that is so incredible. I think it just goes to show that when you focus so much on the integrity of the product, people will respond to that. You were so focused on doing it right and using incredible ingredients and making sure that they worked well, and obviously, people responded to that. I'm very jealous that you have zero stretch marks because I have, like, 1,400 of them. My baby was very big. She was almost 11 pounds, so definitely have some stretch marks. But I would love to hear some of your skincare tips and your skincare routine because you have amazing skin. You obviously know your stuff, and I'd just love to hear your ideas for protecting our skin as we age.

Dr. Lamees H.: Sure. Well, first thing is consistency is key. I'm 44 years old. I love the way skin looks now, and I have to say because I'm been consistently using Shiffa very high end products for the past 15 years. I will say that sunscreen is something that everybody should be using every single day, not only ... When I mean sunscreen, I mean proper sunscreen. Don't give me SPF 15. It really has to be SPF 30 or more just because we do not apply the amount of sunscreen that is needed to get that SPF that is written on the bottle because it's like one tablespoon or one teaspoon. I mean, I don't put that amount on every day. Make sure your sunscreen is un-perfumed as well because perfume does react with the sun, causing pigmentation. I don't even know why they add perfume anymore to sunscreens. They really shouldn't. Do you mind me saying what my favorite products are, or-

Gina Harney: Oh, please. Yes, absolutely.

Dr. Lamees H.: Oh. Yeah, because I don't mind, but some people are like, "No, we don't like to promote brands." It's like, "It's information," but anyway. So, I [crosstalk 00:19:05]

Gina Harney: Oh. Shout it out. Everyone wants to know.

Dr. Lamees H.: Okay. I use EltaMD, E-L-T-A-M-D, sunscreen every day, and I like the non-tinted ones. I'll tell you why, because I always apply sunscreen on my neck as well. If you apply tinted sunscreen on your neck, it's going to rub off on your white shirt.

Gina Harney: Okay.

Dr. Lamees H.: So, if you do like tinted sunscreen, buy that, but only use it on your face. But also buy non-tinted and use that on your neck. Because your neck ages and well, and there are less things you can do at a dermatologist or plastic surgeon's office on your neck than ... You can do much more on your face, so do be careful and protect your neck. So, sunscreen is number one, and be consistent with that, rain or shine. Find something that works for you, that's comfortable enough to use every day that doesn't break you out.

Gina Harney: Okay.

Dr. Lamees H.: Another thing I believe in is cleansing twice at night and using a muslin cloth. We sell packs of organic muslin cloth, and what's nice about that is I usually advise people to buy two packs, so you have six. You just put them in the wash after using them, and you wash them with your whites. Absolutely normal, and they last for years and years.

Dr. Lamees H.: But the fine weave of muslin means that it gives your skin the right kind of exfoliation that you need every day, and it also helps really clean your skin and just get all that makeup and pollution and what have you off your skin every day. So, whatever cleanser you use at night ... I use, of course, Shiffa aromatic cleanser. But whatever cleanser you use, use the muslin cloth to take it off because it does provide you that level of daily exfoliation that you need.

Dr. Lamees H.: I double cleanse at night, and then afterwards, I put a retinol oil by myself. It's called Shiffa's Rose Maroc Elixir because I think if you're over 30, you should be using a retinol or some sort of vitamin A derivative every day. That's it, and I sleep. So, it's only two products that I use at night.

Dr. Lamees H.: In the morning, I cleanse with the same cleanser with the muslin cloth, and then I use my toner as an essence, which means I don't spray it on a cotton round. I just spray it on my hand and pat it on my skin because my toner has thermophillus ferments in it and hyaluronic acid, so I use it as an essence in the morning. Then, I put on my eye cream, my white tea moisturizer because I have combination skin. I have large pores, and I have pigmentation. So, this helps with all of that.

Dr. Lamees H.: Then, over that, I use EltaMD sunscreen, and that's it. Then, my makeup is very minimal. Because I have good skin, I find I don't need to use as much. So, a little bit of blusher and always lip liner and a bit of lip balm, and I'm done.

Gina Harney: Perfect, and I'll include links to all of these so that everyone can find these products. What are your thoughts about Botox and fillers?

Dr. Lamees H.: I think that if it's something you want to do, why not?

Gina Harney: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Dr. Lamees H.: You see, I have two halves. One is, okay, I'm natural, and I'm organic. But I'm also a doctor, and I think that women are all ... Women are judged so much. You're judged if you do Botox and fillers, and you're judged if you don't do Botox and fillers. So, I like to say, "Do whatever makes you feel comfortable," but please look normal. It is normal when you smile to have a few wrinkles under your eyes. It is normal to have expression lines. When you freeze everything, it just ... You end up looking abnormal, and too much use of Botox actually makes the muscles under your skin ... It tends to regress because you're not using it. So, you find that your face, instead of ...

Dr. Lamees H.: I call it the 2-D face. Your face, instead of being 3-D, after years of Botox, does become a little bit flatter, a little bit 2-D. That's part of the reason why I developed my FaSha tool, which is like a crystal tool, which messages the fascia layer of your skin but also helps bring in blood to these under-utilized or under-used muscles of your face. So, I'm not against it, but do go with the bare minimum to help you not get wrinkles or deeper wrinkles. But don't freeze it up completely.

Dr. Lamees H.: That's my personal opinion, and I see a lot more people, especially actresses, are going the more not-too-frozen look, if you know what I mean. So, I'm not against it. I think it's a very good thing to have in your arsenal if it's something you like. But you know what I also like a lot, Gina, and a lot of people don't mention it, are lasers. I actually think-

Gina Harney: Okay.

Dr. Lamees H.: I actually think that lasers are great, and something called "the vampire facial," where they use microneedling. Then, they use your plasma, it's purified, and then it's put back. It's spread on your face. I actually think four sessions of that a year is very healthy and very good for your skin because it sort of helps increase the collagen levels of your skin, and so do lasers. Be careful. Choose a doctor that understands lasers because skin pigmentation, age, the color of your skin, your race, everything matters. That makes a difference to which laser is actually best suited for your skin type.

Dr. Lamees H.: But I think they're under-utilized. I think a lot of people are going for Botox and fillers and not realizing that aging is also a breakdown in elasticity, a breakdown in collagen. It is lasers that help with the collagen and to really jumpstart that.

Gina Harney: I love that so much. I do the IPL laser once a year, and I noticed huge difference with my dark spots and pigmentation.

Dr. Lamees H.: Yeah.

Gina Harney: But those are really, really great tips. I love that you mentioned that if you don't use the muscles in your face, you kind of lose it, the atrophy. Have you heard of face yoga?

Dr. Lamees H.: I have, and I have to say, I've been so intrigued. But I don't have the time to actually learn it and do it.

Gina Harney: [crosstalk 00:26:14]

Dr. Lamees H.: But I'm not against it. Now, there are two schools of thought, right, when it comes to face yoga. Some people say by repeating an action, you're actually causing more wrinkles.

Gina Harney: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Dr. Lamees H.: So, I think you have to use perhaps the correct technique. I think there are some techniques that give you more wrinkles if you do, and I think there are some that are okay. But, you see, I'm just so ... I'm not lazy, but I'm just so time constrained that I find my FaSha tool is so much easier. Because FaSha's multidirectional. You can't go wrong, whether you go up, down, sideways. But yes, I have heard about it, and I think that the more we do ... Well, how can you do face yoga if you've done Botox as well? That's my only concern. So, maybe that's something to do while you're a little bit younger, but I don't know. Have you tried it?

Gina Harney: I have.

Dr. Lamees H.: Because I always love to hear what people think. Yeah.

Gina Harney: Yes. Well, I just fell down this YouTube rabbit hole one night because I got target for it on Facebook. So, I just watched her video. I was fascinated because she's in her 50s, and her skin looks incredible. I was like, "Whatever this lady's doing, she's doing something right," so I'm definitely intrigued. I watched the videos, and she has one. It's her top five favorite exercises. Those are the ones that I do, but I do notice a difference when I do them. I have one line in the middle of my forehead from scowling, pretty much, and I never realize that I'm doing it. When I do the exercises, I notice a difference with it. It's not as prominent.

Dr. Lamees H.: Oh, great. Then, I'm going to check that out because five exercises we can probably do.

Gina Harney: Exactly.

Dr. Lamees H.: It's not so difficult.

Gina Harney: Yes, exactly. I would love to chat more about your entrepreneurial endeavors and everything you've created. What are some of your tips for creating a viable business plan and actually launching it?

Dr. Lamees H.: Well, I think first you have to learn how to write a business plan. Unless you've gone to business school, which a lot of entrepreneurs haven't, you don't know how to. But don't feel discouraged because I didn't know how to. I honestly bought the book Business Plan for Dummies, or How to Write a Business Plan for Dummies, and it was excellent. It takes you step by step on how to do it. Now, that was 20 years ago. I'm sure they have an online version where you can just type if up on your computer. But you need a good business plan, and there are three things you really need to think of very carefully.

Dr. Lamees H.: Number one is what is the mission of your company? Okay? What is it that your company does? What makes your company different from any other company, and why should people buy your product and not something else? If you can ... You have to constantly work on that because you can sort of waffle away. I get a lot of people coming to me and saying, "Oh, I have this business." I'm like, "Okay, what is it about, and what makes you so special?" and they get very upset. I'm like, "No, if you can't identify your strong points as a company, then how would you want anyone, A, to invest in it, because you will need investors eventually if not right from the beginning, and how would you know how to market it and how to ... Why should people even buy your product?"

Dr. Lamees H.: So, these are the questions you need to answer, but also what's really important is to get someone, if you can't do it yourself, to help you with the numbers. Because you need a plan, i.e., what are you going to do the first year, second year, third year, and up to five years. Remember, plans can always change, and that's what's so beautiful about being a small business. You're very flexible, and you can pivot when you need to pivot.

Dr. Lamees H.: However, you really need to think of the numbers quite seriously, and you need to make sure that you've taken everything into account. That's something that perhaps you need to speak to someone who has done a business before because they'll be able to tell you these hidden costs that maybe you didn't even know about, like office and overheads and certain tax things and lawyers' fees that you didn't account that can really add up.

Dr. Lamees H.: So, I find that a lot of people tend to underestimate how much it costs to launch a business, and just speaking with someone who has done it before, they can really help guide you into, okay, this is what you're going to need to do, and this is how much we think you need to spend.

Dr. Lamees H.: Have a catchy name, even if it's ... I mean, you know The Ordinary, the skincare line? Isn't that such a lovely name?

Gina Harney: Mm-hmm (affirmative), it is.

Dr. Lamees H.: I mean, it's so catchy. Even though you think, "Oh, it's very basic," but it's very catchy at the same time. I find that, especially nowadays, anything Instagramable tends to get a lot of traction. Because if you can photograph it, and it photographs nicely, people tend to share it. So, these are the things you really need to take into account nowadays.

Gina Harney: Mm-hmm (affirmative). I love that so much. Just like you said, taking the time to write out the projections, it helps you get a more realistic viewpoint of what it's going to take. It even may help you realize, okay, maybe this isn't worth it, or maybe I should pivot and do something else. So, it's really helpful just to take the time and plan everything out.

Dr. Lamees H.: I've been doing this for 20 years, and to this day, I still ... I've just launched DL.MD, my supplement line. What I did with the labels is we wanted nice, glossy labels. But I said, "Okay, here's my iPhone. I need to take a picture. I took a picture using flash. There was a lot of ... What do you say when the ... Backflash is it called?

Gina Harney: Oh, yes.

Dr. Lamees H.: It was just too shiny, and you weren't able to see the logo. So, we went matte. So, take the time to test things out, ask people's opinions of it. It's really important.

Gina Harney: I love-

Dr. Lamees H.: Do your own market research.

Gina Harney: Yes. I just pulled up a photo of it on Sephora. It just looks so clean and chic and beautiful, and it's a liquid supplement, which is pretty cool.

Dr. Lamees H.: It is. It's because it's 98% absorbed. Pills and gummies are cute, but you only absorb three to 20% maximum. So, that's that point of difference. When I said, "So, what's your point of difference?" that's the point of difference. I've got near perfect absorbability, where everybody else is between three and 20%.

Gina Harney: Wow. That's incredible. With everything you have going on, how do you make health a priority for yourself?

Dr. Lamees H.: Okay. Everyone's going to laugh when I tell you this, but I actually have scheduled my exercise into my working day. That means, I am taking two hours from my working day to exercise because I was finding that I wasn't exercising before, and I wasn't exercising after work. I don't know how many times people say, "Well, you can always make time if you want to." Yeah, easier said than done. Realistically, I wasn't making time.

Dr. Lamees H.: So, I said to myself, "Okay, I'm going to schedule in once a week with my trainer first," and that doesn't get canceled. Would you cancel an appointment with your boss? No. I'm not canceling an appointment with my personal trainer. I was able to keep it for six months, and then ... She said, "You know if you come just once a week, it's not going to do anything." I'm like, "It's not about the frequency now. It's about the discipline of actually doing it and the importance that I place on my own health."

Dr. Lamees H.: Now I go twice a week, and once a week I do yoga. It's within the working hours, and I don't feel guilty. As an entrepreneur, as a working person, you always feel guilty if you take time out for a massage or time out for exercise. What I'm telling you right now is that ... I still do feel guilty sometimes. But don't feel guilty because if you want to be creative, right, you're going to have to learn that after a while, you exhaust yourself. If you don't unwind by either mediation or yoga or exercise or just taking the time out for a massage, you won't be able to get creative again, and you're just going to be ... Me personally, I was having formulator block, you know?

Gina Harney: Yes.

Dr. Lamees H.: Like writer's block, I couldn't formulate properly. I wasn't getting ideas, and I think someone ... I remember I was reading a Buddhist text, and it said, "If you're not going to empty your cup, how are you going to refill it with new ideas?" So, you need to empty your cup once in a while so you can have the new ideas come in. So, don't feel guilty. Take it as like working on your creativity time. But that's how important health is for me.

Dr. Lamees H.: Remember, I'm also in my mid forties. At this age, if I don't sleep well, it shows on my skin. If I don't eat well, it shows, and I feel it. Same with exercise. In my 20s, I could do whatever and felt great, but you need to give some time out for yourself. So, that's how I manage to schedule in me time. Once a week, I try and do a massage, once a week yoga. I'd like to do twice a week. I don't have the time. Twice a week, I do personal training during the work hours. Then, when the weather permits, I go cycling, but I don't mind doing cycling after work, so that's something I was able to do.

Gina Harney: Okay. I love that so much. Just like you said, if you take that break, I feel like I'm so much more productive afterwards.

Dr. Lamees H.: Yes.

Gina Harney: Yesterday, I sat at the computer for three hours, and then I got up. We have a canyon really close to our house. It's called Sabino Canyon. I just went for a walk at Sabino Canyon for 40 minutes. Then, I came back, and I was ready to go again. But I feel like after that three-hour point, if I would've just stayed at my computer, I wouldn't have been nearly as productive as I was getting out of the house.

Dr. Lamees H.: Exactly. I think also what's nice about this new generation and the social media thing is that people are not that married to this 9:00 to 5:00 office work. You work when you're productive, and you stop working when you're not productive. I find it makes you happier and more creative. Before, no, they wanted to see you sitting on a desk behind a computer screen, but you weren't really achieving that much. You weren't being effective. For me, it's about not the number of hours I spend, but what the results are, what I've managed to achieve.

Gina Harney: Mm-hmm (affirmative). I completely agree. So, you do your personal training, your yoga, once a week. What do you do nutrition-wise? Do you follow a specific diet? Are you a vegetarian? Or what do you do nutrition-wise?

Dr. Lamees H.: Nutrition-wise, I actually eat everything but in moderation. So, 80% of the time, I'm super healthy because that's just the way I've trained my taste buds now, and I try to keep things very easy. For instance, if I ... I eat a rainbow. That's my mantra. It's like first things first. If you want to begin eating healthy, think about eating a rainbow. So, you see your plate. If you're got dark greens, where are the reds? If you've got dark greens and reds, where are the orange? If you've got the orange, where are the yellows and the purples and the berry colors? Just make sure you've got a rainbow. That's number one.

Dr. Lamees H.: Second stage is, okay, you've got a plate. Half of it should be fruits and vegetables. A quarter of it should be whole grains, and the other quarter should be protein. I'm not going to say what type of protein, what type of whole grains, what type of fruits and vegetables because I don't believe that ... A lot of people like to limit fruits, and I'm like, "No, fruits are really good for you." "Yes, but they've got too much sugar." They do, but they also have fiber to counteract and balance the sugars that are in fruits.

Dr. Lamees H.: I mean, for people to say, "Oh, I don't eat so much fruit because of the sugars," I just find that almost like blasphemous nutritionally. I really do. But a lot of people are saying that, "Go easy on the fruits." No, don't. Don't even be afraid of fruits as long as they're whole fruits, and you're not juicing. Right? I don't believe in juicing very much. So, that's what I eat.

Dr. Lamees H.: I don't eat a lot of protein. I don't eat a lot of meat, but if I feel like a steak, I'll have one. If I feel like a burger, I'll have one. But I'll have a burger, like, four times a year. I'm not big on junk food. If I feel like a cake, and it's a ... It has to be worth the calories. I just came back from Paris, and I had-

Gina Harney: [crosstalk 00:40:20]

Dr. Lamees H.: ... two croissants for breakfast, one after the other, and it was worth the calories, and I didn't feel guilty. Stop associating eating with guilt. Okay? If you're going to have your cake, at least enjoy it without guilt. And don't have a big piece, right?

Gina Harney: Yes.

Dr. Lamees H.: Just have a normal piece and enjoy it.

Gina Harney: Yes.

Dr. Lamees H.: I find that once you start eating healthy, you begin listening to your tummy. And when you're full, you've got to stop. That's it. Okay? We keep on eating too much, breakfast, lunch, and dinner. We want to feel sick before we stop, and that's wrong. If you can control and really listen to that, that will help. One way of doing that is eating a larger breakfast, an okay lunch, and a small dinner, and try and eat your dinner before 6:00 p.m. Studies have shown if you do that, you increase your weight loss. But you also decrease your hunger, so you're less hungry during the day. Because no one likes feeling hungry. Right?

Gina Harney: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Dr. Lamees H.: So, breakfast like a king, lunch like a prince, dinner like a pauper, that's something to look into as well. Then, I just take one teaspoon of DL.MD a day just to cover me nutritionally, and that's it. Another thing I like adding ... Okay, can I go into detail? Or is that-

Gina Harney: Please, yes. Absolutely.

Dr. Lamees H.: Okay. I love adding one cup of organic berries every single day. So, I have frozen berries in my fridge because I travel a lot. I'm not able to always buy fresh, organic berries, and they go off very quickly because it's fresh produce. So, I always have it in the freezer as well. It's much more cost effective, and have one cup of that every single day. Full of antioxidants. It's full of phytonutrients. It's what we need, and it's very low in calories as well.

Dr. Lamees H.: Yesterday on my ... I do stories. I was talking about kale, how it's a nutritional powerhouse and trying to have that at least twice a week. Kale is very moderately priced. It's not a super-expensive nutrient-dense food. It's a great value for people. Because I have four children, and eating organic all the time is very expensive, and I don't ... Not all the food in my fridge is organic. Some things are. I make sure my berries are.

Gina Harney: Are you an advocate of fasting at all?

Dr. Lamees H.: I am, actually. I do one month of fasting during Ramadan, which is the fasting month that we have. What it is, it's a dry fast from dawn till dusk. Then, when I break my fast, I break it with hot water and lemon, and then I juice a quarter cup of organic juice. It's usually a dark, leafy vegetable with carrots. Then, I'll have soup, and then something like a protein and some whole grain afterwards.

Dr. Lamees H.: However, if you want to take on fasting, I would suggest ... Because this is what the studies are showing. If you want to begin fasting, I think you should do twice a week, the 5:2 fasting. That's the one with the most studies behind it, where five days a week, you eat normally. And when I say normally, I mean healthy. Okay? I don't mean just eating whatever you want. Eat healthy. Then, for those two days, you consume only 30% of your normal calorie intake. I like to keep it at around 500 calories. So, you could have a sandwich. You can have ... I like to have beans because I find them to be very filling because I don't like being hungry. Then, of course, you can drink herbal teas and teas. That's a fairly easy regimen to follow.

Dr. Lamees H.: There's another regimen by, I think it's Dr. Longo, where you fast or you severely limit your intake of protein and calories five days, and you don't need to do it every month. You can do it every three months. That has shown also not only to help you lose weight but help with hunger and help certain cardiovascular issues, cholesterol issues. So, it helps with overall health as well.

Dr. Lamees H.: I think fasting is having a moment now, so it depends what works for you and what's easiest for you. If you don't, a lot of people do the 14-hour or 16-hour fast where, for instance, they'll have their dinner early, about 6:00 p.m. and then time-restricted feeding. So, then for 16 hours, they won't eat anything. They've found that with time-restricted feeding, whatever you hear, it actually makes a difference when you eat. Because a lot of people are, "Oh, you can eat for four hours or eight hours or six hours and then not," four, 12, to 16 hours. It actually makes a difference. So, if you do try time-restricted feeding, try and have your last meal earlier and then fast with fluids for about 16 hours.

Dr. Lamees H.: It is said that after 12 hours of fasting, your body tends to produce ketones. Of course, ketones are great brain food, and the brain tends to utilize it really well. But that's after 12 hours of fasting. So, just FYI. It's all very personal because some people do very well on time-restricted feeding. I did it for a while, and I didn't find that it made a difference for me. So, I prefer the 5:2 or the one-month fast during Ramadan. There's also Dr. Gundry, I think. I'm not sure if he's the one who does it. But again, he fasts for about three to five days every season, so four times a year.

Gina Harney: Wow.

Dr. Lamees H.: So, it depends on what works for you and your lifestyle.

Gina Harney: Yeah, and I agree. There's so many different types of fasting that you can experiment with. If you find that it doesn't work for you, you don't have to do it at all.

Dr. Lamees H.: Exactly.

Gina Harney: But some people really like it. Some people, they find that it affects their hormones negatively. It could just make their cortisol increase, and they just don't feel well when they're fasting. But I'm really interested in a lot of the research that's coming out about autophagy. Autophagy is basically when your body isn't working on metabolizing food, it's able to clean out damaged cells and help regenerate newer, healthier cells. I think that that's really interesting how the body just finds cells that are not good, gets rid of them, and creates newer, healthier cells. Lots of cool stuff about it. But like I said, it's one of those things you can try it. You can experiment with it. And if you love it, you can do it. But if you don't, you don't have to do it, kind of thing.

Dr. Lamees H.: Yes. I do believe that, for autophagy, you need to fast.

Gina Harney: Oh, yes.

Dr. Lamees H.: Oh, but you can do the Dr. Longo's diet. He's written a book, Dr., I think, Valter Longo. That's his name. I can't remember what the book is called. But it's very interesting, and it's about longevity, which is what autophagy is about. As you said, it gets rid of ... They say it gets rid of cancer cells and everything, and I believe in it. But I personally think if you're going to do a water fast for more than 24 hours, make sure you know what you're doing. Make sure that there's a doctor following you because it's not something I personally have done for more than 24 hours. Not to say I wouldn't, but I do want to be under ... And I'm a medical doctor. I still want to be under someone's guidance when I do it.

Dr. Lamees H.: I'd like to do a spa fast. There are two places in the States that do it, and I'm thinking, "Who's going to come with me?" I'll just tell them it's a spa instead of the fast, and we get there. Then, they realize what it is.

Gina Harney: That's such a mean trick. If someone did that to me, I'd be like, "I'm out. I've leaving. I have to eat, or I'll be angry and cranky." That is hilarious. So, the title of the podcast is Healthy in Real Life. What's something that you do in your own life that's one of your own favorite sustainable healthy habits?

Dr. Lamees H.: I think it's one cup of berries a day.

Gina Harney: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Dr. Lamees H.: I honestly think that that gives you the vitamin C you need. That gives you fiber. That gives you phytonutrients, and it's really yummy to eat if you take it frozen. I don't like to cook them. Okay? So, if you do use frozen berries, just put the one cup frozen berries with a little bit of water. And if you want, maple syrup, because that's ... Of all the sweeteners, maple syrup is the one, or the natural sweeteners, maple syrup is the one that spikes your sugar levels the least. So, if you want, you can add a bit of that. I tend not to, and you just drink it. Put it in the Vitamix, and just drink it.

Dr. Lamees H.: I also love using bone broth, and I love drinking it because I don't eat so much protein. I find that that helps. And the days that I don't have time to do bone broth because I boil it for 24 hours, I actually use collagen hydrolysate. Make sure it is grass-fed beef or from grass-fed beef. Or if you use chicken or fish, that's also a great tip and an easy one. A lot of my friends now put it in their coffee and lattes. I don't drink coffee, so I just have it with anything. But I think collagen hydrolysate and the berries will help your health in a lot of ways.

Dr. Lamees H.: Berries are just dense with anti-cancer phytonutrients, antioxidants, protective, heart-protective, brain-protective. Another thing is, well, now that the keto is in fashion, a lot of people are having healthy fats. But don't forget healthy fats, the one teaspoon of olive oil a day, and I tend to take one tablespoon of olive oil and one teaspoon of coconut oil a day as well. These three, I think, covers you, and very easy to add into your and your children's routine.

Gina Harney: Yeah, so easy to implement. With the kids, too, I find that it works really well just to put it in a smoothie. I'll make them a smoothie, and I'll put in berries, spinach, a little bit of almond butter or coconut oil. You can put so many things in there, and they'll just drink it up. They're getting tons of nutrition really easily, so that's one of my favorites. Where can-

Dr. Lamees H.: And also flaxseed.

Gina Harney: Oh, yes.

Dr. Lamees H.: Sorry, that's another thing I do all the time. I have a little mixer, a grinder, spice grinder, and I keep my flaxseed in the freezer. I use whole flaxseeds, and I grind them and use them there and then. Don't buy store-bought ground flaxseeds, please, because they would've oxidized completely by the time you used them. So, I like to use it fresh within half an hour to an hour of them being ground. I know a lot of people grind it for the day and use it. I just don't personally do that. You don't need to wash your spice grinder every single day. All you have to do is just wipe it. I'm very French about it.

Gina Harney: Yes.

Dr. Lamees H.: I just wipe it, and I leave it.

Gina Harney: Perfect. I love that so much. Where can everyone find you online?

Dr. Lamees H.: Online, like social media? Or on the website? On social media, I'm-

Gina Harney: Everything.

Dr. Lamees H.: On social media, the best place is Shiffa Beauty, S-H-I, double F, A, Beauty because it's my life, and I'm very happy sharing little tips and tricks. Today I did chocolate chia seed pudding with turmeric. A lot of people ask me questions, which I love because I love to share. Some of them are like, "You say kale is good. But I have a thyroid issue, and I know it's not good." It's like, "No, it is okay. But just don't have more than one cup, and make sure it's fully cooked." So, there's a lot of misinformation out there.

Dr. Lamees H.: So, at Shiffa Beauty, and also at the DL.MD, which is basically my health magazine. Again, because there's so much misinformation out there, I just like to keep ... It's somewhere where these are the facts. This is what we know. This is what we don't know, and this is what we think you should be doing.

Gina Harney: Perfect. I'll include links to all those [inaudible 00:54:30] everyone can find you and connect with you and check out your amazing product line. Thank you so much for being on the show today. It was great talking with you.

Dr. Lamees H.: Thank you very much for having me. I really enjoyed it. Thank you.

Gina Harney: Thank you.

Speaker 2: Thanks for listening to the Healthy in Real Life Podcast. For more info, check out Gina's blog at fitnessista.com.