

Trina Felber: All right. Hey, everybody. I'm super excited. This is going to be such a great show. I am joined with Dr. Jason Piken. We are going to talk about acid reflux, but we're not gonna talk about bad acid reflux. We're gonna talk about what might actually be causing it, so you can actually get rid of it because this might shock you that it might not be the reason you think it is, so stay tuned and listen. Acid Reflux: Could The Cause Really Be The Tension In Your Jaw?

Let me tell you a little bit about Dr. Jason Piken. He is a chiropractor, certified nutrition specialist, and health coach who offers a unique holistic and whole body approach to nutrition and wellness. Love that. Growing up in Queens New York all of his life, Jason knew that the best of everything was found in New York City. Isn't that true? That's why he chose to start his practice in the heart of New York City just below Central Park.

Since starting his practice in 1996 he has taught people how to heal from various problems ranging from chronic pain to digestive disorders. With a focus on nutrition based total body approach to health, Jason helps his patients tackle issues using the health relationship between the gut and the brain, known as the brain gut access. He also uses a combination of functional lab testing and applied kinesiology in order to address the three basic causes of all health problems, imbalances in chemical, emotional, and physical systems in the body. You can learn more about Jason's approach to health and wellness in his book, Better! 11 Simple Habits to Improve Your Life. Welcome, Jason.

Dr. Jason Piken: Thanks for having me, Trina. That was such a great intro.

Trina Felber: Great. I've been practicing all day. I thought I was gonna get stuck on the word kinesiology, but I didn't.

Dr. Jason Piken: You didn't. Everything was smooth.

Trina Felber: But that's because when I wrote it out, I gotta show you, but I wrote it out how you pronounce it.

Dr. Jason Piken: Phonetically, okay, good.

Trina Felber: All right, so let's get started. I really want to know, talk to me about the connection between acid reflux and TMJ because I've never heard this connection before.

Dr. Jason Piken: Okay. Well, here's the story. Well at first how I came up with it was really it's because I had acid reflux in my first year in practice. I was a practicing chiropractor, thought I was the epitome of health, and I'd come home at the end of the day gripping my chest, and burping inappropriately at the end of the day with patients. I just needed to delve into why I was having the problem in the first place, and there really wasn't any good answers. Over many years of learning so many different things I pieced together all three parts of acid reflux. The most fascinating one was the jaw.

This was taught by actually Dr. George Goodheart. He is the founder of applied kinesiology, passed away, brilliant guy that towards the end nobody was listening to because he was too old, but luckily I'll be his voice. What he said was is that we're stressed, of course, as individuals especially more in modern life, and what most people tend to do in compensation for stress is just grit their teeth, clench. Some of us don't do it during the day. We only do it when we're sleeping at night, but so many people do it. And if we don't have the most perfect, symmetrical jaw, and bite, which very few people do, that small amount of tension, or large amount of tension if you're a real grinder, over time creates problems in your jaw. Now, in order for you to survive you need a really well functioning jaw because if your jaw doesn't work you don't eat, you die.

Trina Felber: Right. It's as simple as that.

Dr. Jason Piken: Yeah, simple. So, the body is so smart that it doesn't let you know about your jaw problem. It'll tweak the muscles around the neck area to try to keep the jaw in line, so you keep eating, and talking, and living life, and you'll wind up with tension in your neck. Usually the jaw compensates by causing a problem in the middle of your neck. C3, 4, and 5, the middle three bones, and those nerves that come out of those bones innervate your diaphragm.

Trina Felber: That's the connection.

Dr. Jason Piken: That's it. And that is what causes disturbances in the stomach. It can cause breathing issues, but let's just talk about the hiatal hernia, or stomach issues. That's the connection.

Trina Felber: So, leave it to a chiropractor to solve your gut issues, right, but it's so true. I go to my chiropractor and they're always talking about the nerve innervation for the different organs. We, as a people, forget that. That's a huge connection, so because you don't look like you would suffer from gastric reflux. What is the next step? What causes tension in the jaw in the first place?

Dr. Jason Piken: That's the emotional part of stress. What you do about that is there's tons of stress relieving techniques. I mean in my book I discuss it. I do a program called, Set The Tone For The Day. My whole morning routine is set up to erase the first probably 25 years of bad programming that I had in my head that told me all the wrong things about life that got my negative thoughts rolling around. If I do this program of whether it's prayer, or gratefulness, journaling, meditation, listening to positive things, like a podcast, anything to get my brain in a good space well then I start to feel better and there's less tension in the jaw. That's the emotional aspect.

And then you could do physical things and chemistry things for reflux too. I don't know how much you want to get into that, or you want to stick with all this?

Trina Felber: Well, I'm fascinated with the jaw. I'm fascinated with this because with my background I'm a nurse anesthetist, so with my background in nursing we've always just discussed how to fix it from down here. Foods, or just obviously they're always prescribing medications to prevent the acid, but really that's the symptom of the problem, and if you never fix the problem it's never gonna go away. So, I'm fascinated with what you want to talk about with C2 ... Was it 2, 3, and 4?

Dr. Jason Piken: 3, 4, 5.

Trina Felber: 3, 4, 5. C3, 4, 5, so let's talk a little bit about that, and what you can do, how that relates to your gut, and why it's causing those problems?

Dr. Jason Piken: Okay. So, besides going to a chiropractor that's familiar with it, that knows how to adjust the neck to free up the subluxations. Those are misalignment's irritating the nervous system in C3, 4, 5. There are a lot of things that you can do on your own. Of course, it's best to go to an expert. I'm gonna tell people to come to me, or go to a local chiropractor, but if you want to start working on yourself you just have to look for the physical tension to see if you can get some relief.

There are three main areas. One, let's just talk about the jaw and how to release tension there. Most people that even know they grind and feel tension in their jaw don't bother to work on it. I mean all you have to do is rub it. I can show you where.

Trina Felber: Yeah, show us. Yeah, show us.

Dr. Jason Piken: Yeah, you drop down from your eyeball and you have your cheekbone and it feels kinda hard, okay. You drop down from that hard bone and there's a little softness that happens. That's the beginning of your masseter muscle, your clinching muscle. And if you can just feel underneath that ridge there's usually one or two, if you're going back or forth, tight points. If you don't find those tight points, which you can rub if you feel that they're tight, well then drop down to the bottom of your jaw with a few fingers, or one finger, or what I like to do because my fingers get sore is a knuckle.

Trina Felber: Oh, yeah, yeah.

Dr. Jason Piken: Yeah, and I just get in there with a knuckle, and I just rub in there. There's internal stuff too, so you got to make sure have got clean fingers and literally-

Trina Felber: Oh, go in, yeah.

Dr. Jason Piken: ... yeah, you just go in there and what most people don't do is, I just taught you about the masseter, the muscle over here, there's just outside the back molars of your teeth way back you can actually feel tension in the jaw joint right there. And then you wanna ... You don't want to kill yourself. You don't want it to cause torture because it's usually sore on most people, but if there is especially a difference from side to side, one is a lot more sore than the other, try just putting a

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little pressure right inside your mouth up there. And see if it feels good, like that good pain, that massage good pain. If you have that well then stick it up there for 20 seconds, okay.

Trina Felber: I've actually had a massage therapist that would do that. They would put their finger in my mouth and actually do that pressure point right there.

Dr. Jason Piken: I do that all day long with people. We work on that. I use a vibration tool. It's called a percussive massager, on my hand so my finger vibrates into their jaw, and we work on there. And then we use a cold laser, which is a fantastic tool to break up scar tension and fashion trigger points.

Trina Felber: Fascinating. That's interesting, yeah. A lot of people take proton pump inhibitors, Prilosec, Nexium. Tell people why they would want to do this. Don't stop taking those, obviously, unless your symptoms go away. But let's talk a little bit about this versus medication.

Dr. Jason Piken: Okay. First, the why. It's the medication the vast majority of the time does not address the why, especially in this situation. I'd say at least 80% of the time, maybe 90% of the time the cause of why they're having acid reflux is a lack of acid in their stomach, so that is counterintuitive to most people. Why would I have a lack of acid in my stomach? If people have done a lot of searching about it they probably heard that before, but the basic premise is we need acid in our stomach. Our stomach is the most acidic portion of our entire body, and it's protected. The acid is supposed to be there.

As long as that acid doesn't escape we're okay. So, if we take a proton pump inhibitor what we're doing is we're preventing that acid from forming, and we decrease our ability to digest proteins and certain minerals. One of those minerals, zinc, actually helps us to produce more acid. So, we're basically having a self perpetuating problem we can't ever fix because we're not allowed to absorb the nutrients that heal our gut, and we're taking something that disturbs our digestion.

Trina Felber: Right.

Dr. Jason Piken: You feel better sometimes at least 60 to 70% of the time I think is the stat that people feel better from these proton pump inhibitors, but if you don't it's either because you have non acid reflux, a mechanical problem, or you just haven't gotten to your why, and the body is just saying no, I'm gonna keep giving you the symptom until you fix me.

Trina Felber: Right.

Dr. Jason Piken: Yeah.

Trina Felber: Yeah, I'm all about, and I know you're all about getting to the actual source of the problem. What I bet most people don't realize because I had never heard that before is that the cause could actually have

nothing to do, or little to do with your gut. It could actually start from the back of your neck.

Dr. Jason Piken: Yes.

Trina Felber: And your nerves. So, talk for a second about what that connection is. I know you said that the nerves that innervate come out, but exactly how does that work? What's the next step for everybody listening because if they're out there going that's me, that's me. I have neck issues, I have this. Do people typically have neck pain, neck symptoms that might be something that they can look into causing their acid reflux? Do you know what I'm saying? Or, does sometimes the neck never hurt, but it could still be the problem?

Dr. Jason Piken: Okay. Premise to answering that, only 9% of the nervous system can feel. Only 9% of the nerve system is set out for sensing pain because if you knew everything that was wrong with you this second you'd just, yeah, you'd explode. Okay, we wouldn't be able to survive. So, we sometimes don't feel the problems. Sometimes our problems come out in one way and not in another. This is what I try to make a point with whenever I'm dealing with people is even though most people are coming in for one single thing that's their driving force of why they made an appointment to see me, I have to uncover all the other little things that are probably contributing to it.

Again, with physical to go over this again is let's say you still have that tension in your jaw and your neck is compensating to try to realign your jaw. Besides the subluxation, besides the misalignment that needs to be adjusted, you can also work on the tension in your jaw. Most people if they do feel pain in their neck as a result of this pattern they'll feel it in the back of their neck, but that's actually not where they need to rub. The most important place that they can work on is the front of their neck.

Trina Felber: Like the sternocleidomastoid? Is that what you're talking about?

Dr. Jason Piken: SEM, scalenes, there's a ton of little muscles that attach from your tongue to your neck, your tongue to your jaw. All these little muscles can be worked around. And so, what I do is just use a pincher grab, and just get in here and work it. Again, if you feel a spot that's tight rub it, not so you get injured, but that you feel that good pain, and rub it out. You can go with that muscle in your neck. It goes all along the collarbone all the way up to your mastoid right here behind your ear. You could feel for trigger points there. Most often if somebody releases tension here the tension in the back of their neck goes away.

Trina Felber: Goes away.

Dr. Jason Piken: And if you have the whole pattern where it's jaw and then neck, where I taught you how to work on your neck, you'll also start to get tension in your diaphragm, which is down here. These are the other little places to work. Again, crooked fingers like this, just get in there and feel for what's tight. You can't believe how many people tell me they feel so

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much better after I rub one little tender point in their diaphragm for 30 seconds. They can do this on their own. I teach them.

Trina Felber: Yeah, I've done that before. I've gotten my finger up under my rib cage and poked around up there. It can get pretty tight. It's pretty crazy. The body is amazing. And like you said, the body's always going to compensate to go back to normal. Your neck is always trying to find that normal position, so it's gonna do whatever it has to. And if your jaw is not in alignment or it's tense, or whatever your neck is always going to try to maintain that normal position, so that's the problem. What about people at night time that clench their jaws?

Dr. Jason Piken: It's really difficult. It's a challenging thing to fix. The best thing is, again, when you take away some of that physical tension it helps some other things like meditation and journaling to get the thoughts out of your head and be in a calm place mentally, and herbs that help to get rid of the racing from your head that stimulate [gab 00:15:49] are also really important, are herbs like lavender, chamomile, lemon balm. Magnesium, not an herb, but a mineral helps to relax muscles. These are also little tricks that I use depending on the person because more magnesium means more relaxation of muscles, less jaw clenching. Some people have been doing it for so long that it's a hard habit to break especially because it's unconscious.

Trina Felber: Yeah.

Dr. Jason Piken: But I find over time if we keep working with it, them doing their homework that I give them to work on themselves, and us working on relieving some of that deep down pressure then it can stop.

Trina Felber: So, what about my listeners that aren't in New York that can't come and visit you, do you have a program or something that they can go to, to find you to be able to get more information about this?

Dr. Jason Piken: Yes. I was asked about this for many years because everybody said, "I have a cousin. I have a friend. They can't get to you. What do we do?" I created a set of videos, a set of videos, an E-book, just everything I could think of that has to do with acid reflux, and understanding the why, and learning how to fix yourself. It's really the acid reflux solution. There's links to it on my site. I'm gonna give you a link to it. I'd love for people to take advantage and learn how to treat themselves because they can.

Trina Felber: Absolutely, yeah. We'll post the link to his site, so anybody that's listening or watching can go check it out, and especially if you suffer from gastric reflux or know someone that does because I think almost everybody knows at least one person that has problems with gastric reflux. It's a huge problem. It can cause bigger problems down the road. And really medication isn't the solution if the problem isn't being fixed. The medication just is a band aid that actually could cause more problems, right?

Dr. Jason Piken: Yeah. Could we mention some of that?

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Trina Felber: Oh, sure. I'm open.

Dr. Jason Piken: Yeah, I mean I take care of people. Again, they're usually coming in for neck pain, shoulder pain, knee pain.

Trina Felber: Yeah.

Dr. Jason Piken: And that [inaudible 00:17:53] to the fact that they have reflux, and they were never even thinking of treating it.

Trina Felber: Well, that's what I mean. That's why I love talking to you because people don't think about gastric reflux as a real ... I mean it's a problem and it inhibits your daily life, but when you go to the doctor that's not really the first thing you think of unless you're going in for that reason.

Dr. Jason Piken: Right. People need to pay more attention to it. If they're already on the medications they have to understand that those medications as a side effect are gonna be causing nutrient deficiencies over a long term. Inability, we mentioned, to break down minerals and proteins. But what they also lead to is a lot of other GI symptoms because when you take away that acid from your stomach you're actually more prone to infections. One of the number one ways we get gastrointestinal infections, why bugs get into our body and affect us, is we're protected by this acid because we eat these bugs on our foods, somebody didn't wash their hands, and we get it into our bodies. And if we have a lot of acid in our stomach it can kill those bugs, so we don't get an infection.

If we're taking those medications we reduce our ability to have a properly functioning immune system. And that can lead to other problems. Again, GI issues, CBOW, which is something I take care of a lot, bacterial overgrowth in the intestines, tons of other issues. And if let's say you ignore it and don't take the medications acid reflux left untreated ... I mean the worst case scenario esophageal cancer, stomach cancer. I mean these are horrific cancers. I'm not saying that's a high percentage of people that are gonna develop it, but it's a lot more likely if you let this go untreated.

Trina Felber: Yeah. And if the solution is simply jaw tension, I don't want to say simply, but really it's simple.

Dr. Jason Piken: Sometimes it is.

Trina Felber: Yeah, I mean sometimes you just have to dumb it down to what it is. And if that's really the cause because it's causing the nerves that are coming out of your spinal cord to be pinched or the innervation can't get to your gut and that's the reason you're having symptoms, it could be a simple ... Like, you could never take medication again if you get the problem fix.

Dr. Jason Piken: Yes. I've gotten people off of their medications. They've been on them for 20 years, and they can release it. They don't need it anymore. They don't even need the supplements I give them that they need at first, but eventually they're actually fixed. That's really the goal is to not be

dependent on anybody else, or anything else except your own innate ability to heal.

Trina Felber: Awesome. I appreciate everything you are doing because, like I said, most people probably have never, ever, ever, thought about this causing their gastric reflux. People walk around with gastric reflux all the time. So, I really appreciate that you ... This is one way that you treat yourself and whether ... If it doesn't work, what did you lose? But if it gets you off your medication and you don't suffer from gastric reflux think about how that can change your life.

Dr. Jason Piken: Right, yeah.

Trina Felber: Thanks, Jason. I totally appreciate it. We're gonna post the links, so that people can go check that out and self treat through you, and hopefully get people better without having to take medication. You guys check out his book, Better! 11 Simple Habits to Improve Your Life because if it only takes 11, and you can improve one aspect of your life I'm all in. Thanks, Jason. Anything else that you want to say?

Dr. Jason Piken: No. You've covered a lot. I'm sure there's tons of info around it, but you can get into nitty gritty. We can talk for hours.

Trina Felber: Hours.

Dr. Jason Piken: This is the most important part that I want people to understand.

Trina Felber: Awesome. I appreciate that. Thanks, Jason.

Dr. Jason Piken: Okay. Thanks, Trina.

Trina Felber: All right, you're welcome. All right. Bye, guys. We'll catch you next time on The Healthy Me. Thanks for watching. Make sure you subscribe to keep learning how to create your healthy self. See you next time.