

Michael Roesslein:

We are live with another episode of Rebel Health Spotlight. I'm your host, Michael. Thanks for tuning in. I am here today with Christopher Blakeslee. Christopher, thank you for joining us.

Christopher Blakeslee:

Oh, thanks for having me. It's always so great to talk with you.

Michael Roesslein:

Yeah. It's so much fun. And you were one of the first people I thought of when we were going to record this because I thought-

Christopher Blakeslee:

Thanks.

Michael Roesslein:

... who would be able to shift somebody's trajectory in 20 minutes? And for those who don't know, we'll put the link to the long form, the podcasts that we've done with Christopher will be down below this video, so you can click, go over there. There's a two-part podcast because it was just too much to share. We'll get into why in a second, but before we start talking about any of that stuff, Christopher has been on his own incredible healing journey and we're going to talk about that. And I'll let him tell you now. So who are you? What do you do? What's your current role in the health space? And then we'll get into a little bit more.

Christopher Blakeslee:

Gosh, I'm a ADAPT-certified functional health coach. I've been running recovery health coaching for the last two and a half years, and I've worked successfully with a little over 100 clients so far. Like so many people outside the mainstream health world, it's been a pretty unexpected journey to this profession. The younger me who just wanted to write novels would be quite shocked to hear that I run a successful healthcare business whenever I just wanted to write fiction.

So like you said, the longer version will definitely be below this podcast, but I basically got into this world out of necessity because I was sick ever since I was young. All my memories when I'm a kid is just something coming up, being on antibiotics, "Oh my gosh, it's strep throat." And then the bladder stuff started. It's like I had IC, interstitial cystitis, irritable bowel syndrome, fibromyalgia, all by the time I was a teenager. And I was just always limited as a kid and health was ever present, which is why I didn't really want to focus on it because it's just this limited kid going through life struggling and shutting everything away and just trying to function as best I could and knowing I couldn't keep up with anybody. And that led to me barely making it through college where I had a smile on my face thinking that I was getting by pretty okay. And then it all just exploded beyond my worst nightmare pretty much within that year after I got through school.

Michael Roesslein:

So you were sick from when you were a kid kid with all those things that you just listed, which limited your whole childhood and growing up and high school and college. I can't believe you made it through college like that. That's an incredible achievement in itself.

Christopher Blakeslee:

Thanks.

Michael Roesslein:

Because people don't realize that even if your health conditions don't have neurological symptoms as the main thing, which you did have some, but even if you don't have neurological symptoms as the main thing, being in pain or having a whole bunch of other issues going on in your body, I witnessed this with my wife. It affects your ability to think and concentrate and focus care about doing things and to be productive or efficient or any of that. And so it's really pretty incredible. And then you said early 20s is where it really kind of went off a cliff. And you'll learn in the podcast, I highly encourage you guys to go listen to the longer podcast because the story is incredible. You at one point were bedridden.

Christopher Blakeslee:

Yeah.

Michael Roesslein:

How long?

Christopher Blakeslee:

Essentially for 15 years. It was from '04 to 2019 where it's just I was disabled that whole period of time where my body just kept breaking down more and more to the point where I just gave up on any sort of exercise and just laid there, sat there. And that deal where I lost three inches off my height because I was always just in the same hunched over position because I couldn't even lie down, because the nerve damage was so extensive even in the back of my head that lying down didn't work.

I've had some tests done that indicated that I have nerve damage and 85% of my body, which is just crazy, considering how great I feel now. But oh my gosh, those 15 years were just pure agony. It's just nonstop. People say, "Time goes by so fast." And I'm like, "Really? I feel like that was like 300 years."

Michael Roesslein:

I can't imagine how long because we've had stretches in our life like this one that we're currently in that are very difficult for various reasons. It can be a health problem. It can be a life circumstance. It can be something else. But when you're in it, when there's a major problems going on, timestamp still it is... The clock is like tick, tick. So I feel like these last seven weeks in our life here have been three years. I can't imagine 15 years of that. We'll keep this short, but what flipped the script? What flipped the switch? What was your moment of I'm going to change this, or you believed you could or something happened or you met somebody. What was your switch flip?

Christopher Blakeslee:

That's a really good question, and it's like a two-part answer because I'm realizing that I had that attitude the whole way that it was going to work out one way or another, that if I just lived long enough that somebody had figure it out or I would. And that's why I spent, and now I'm over 17 years into studying functional medicine that nothing was working. So I was just studying lifestyle changes, mindset work, functional medicine, and kept trying and striking out during those 15 years.

And then whenever I... Because I tried to wed the approaches of conventional medicine along with all the alternative stuff. And then when I went on that immunosuppressant and started losing my vision

and started shaking that night, I was like, "Oh my gosh, I think I might actually die here in 2017." It was like full commitment at that point. And then luckily nine months later, I found what I refer to now as the fourth pillar after those other three, which is neuroscience from Dr. Jim Lemons who was in Kansas City and was doing some things, just had an in-house program.

As soon as I came across that it unlocked everything for me. I was already doing those other things correctly around how to eat for autoimmunity and so many other things around that, that I was getting off the 15 medications. I was quitting the morphine, I was quitting the long-acting narcotics and the muscle relaxers, and that just put it all together for me. And it's been six and a half years now since that moment.

Michael Roesslein:

Wow. It's incredible you were able to keep that hope. I don't think I would've. I would've been long gave up at that point. I don't know. It's hard to tell how somebody reacts in a situation like that unless you're in it, but it's really remarkable. And so it was the neurological work that really started moving the needle with you, the nervous system-based practices.

Christopher Blakeslee:

Right. I just couldn't get moving to the right degree because I had so much atrophy from not moving at that point. And I was over 100 pounds overweight and just standing was such a big deal at all. And I would just flare up and just have a horrible week, just as sensitive as I could get on everything. So figuring out how I could comb it from every direction, that was so incredibly important. And it's something I make sure that I do with every single one of my clients because it's just foundational to everything.

Michael Roesslein:

It's fascinating because we've done a masterclass brain and nervous system. We talked about this extensively on your podcast too. The nervous system work is something that's often overlooked in functional medicine, in the functional medicine approach. Nobody knows this yet. I haven't announced it publicly at all, but I'm co-hosting Summit for Health means that will air in March and they produce all the huge online summits. And it's titled Beyond Functional Medicine. One of the things that we're going to talk about about is nervous system work.

Christopher Blakeslee:

Oh, that's great.

Michael Roesslein:

It's essential and it often gets overlooked even in a progressive functional medicine approach. So the transition from going through all of that to becoming a coach, you just decide, "Hey, I've learned all this stuff. I might as well use it to be a professional." Or was it a really strong drive to help people that were in similar situation or what was it that kind of was like, "Hey, I should do this."

Christopher Blakeslee:

It was kind of both of those things because I knew that at this point I had a really weird and unique skillset to help people out because who the heck comes out of that sort of thing and knows how do you adjust your activity levels? How do you stay sane during these kinds of things? And I thought, "Man, this

would be such a waste if I didn't pass this on in some point," which is why I'm writing a book with Dr. Lemons.

And I'm still hoping that'll be done next year. I'm on a version 2.0 on that right now. After working with clients, it helped me just name the first principle so much better and just essentialize it to be so much more helpful for people. And then I just thought, I don't want this to happen to anybody else because now it's like, "I'm great. I work out six days a week. I can deadlift 310 pounds. I can squat 270." It's like I never had to go down that road. And it's like I didn't have a pain-free day for 27 years now. I've had 26 here in the last couple of months.

And just thinking, it's amazing what the body can do and if I can stop it from happening to one other person, it's totally worth it. And then getting into it and seeing all the recoveries, just I couldn't do anything else now is the best job.

Michael Roesslein:

Yeah. That's amazing. And it's like... I'll call it graduated. Once you were well enough to function as a coach even or go to a training or get a certification or anything, it's like you walked in the door with a master's level education in stuff. The certifications were like a... I don't know what to call that, a symbolic thing at that point. It wasn't something-

Christopher Blakeslee:

I got perfect on the final without studying,.

Michael Roesslein:

I'm sure, yeah. And so you probably saw practitioners where you knew more than they did when you walked in the door. So learning out of necessity is a way that a lot of people in this industry that I've interviewed have come to do what they do. A lot of functional medicine doctors and coaches and practitioners, they have the specialty they have because it's the thing that was the thing they had to figure out. I know know a lot more about autoimmunity now that my wife developed autoimmune conditions, and right now I'm learning a lot more about pediatric health than I ever knew before.

So we learn the things we need to know. And unfortunately, you needed to learn a lot of things. And so it's really, really, I can't stress this enough for people to listen to the podcast. I've heard a lot of healing journeys and stories in my life and I can't even think of another one that's comparable to yours. I know that that brings a level of empathy into your work that a lot of coaches and practitioners won't have. So if you're out there and you're thinking somebody won't understand me or won't understand where I am or won't be able to relate to where I am, or I'm too far gone, or I'm this where Christopher's been and come from, I guarantee you there's nothing you're going to tell him that he hasn't either experienced or heard of or seen. So how can they find your work if they want to work with you or check out what you do a little bit more?

Christopher Blakeslee:

So recoverfromchronicillness.com will go to my website and they can schedule a free 30-minute call with me and sign up for my email list too, because we got a course coming out here that's over 30 modules on thinking, moving, breathing and other neuroscience education things I've seen really useful for people. I try and work as intensively as possible with my clients because I know you get the best recovery situation whenever you totally focus down on people. So I came up with this intensive program that I work with people in, and I do this really thorough intake. I've expanded it as much as I can to make it as close to a one stop now where I do the functional testing and do some protocol work when needed,

the neuroscience education and just I'm seeing people sometimes now two or three times a week at the beginning and messaging them every single day because I found that so many of the appointments we're recapping so much of what happens.

I have all these skills around neuroscience and just balancing your day and knowing how to keep your mindset in the right place and what diet tweaks to make that. I thought we're spending too much time on that, so why not pull them out of hell as fast as possible and just do this for a month or two. And I'm seeing such great results now. I used to say three.

Michael Roesslein:

With high touch, high contact, constant support really, instead of going over this load of stuff and then seeing them again in two weeks and then spending the whole hour with them catching you up on what happened and then giving them a new thing to do.

Christopher Blakeslee:

It's like do this next protocol step. Yeah, there's just so much that can tweak.

Michael Roesslein:

So it's like having a teammate.

Christopher Blakeslee:

Yeah. The people that get into it, it's like the frequency is the magic along with those skills. Some people are saying, I didn't know that something like this could exist. And it's exactly what I've wanted all along. We're going to record some testimonials pretty soon because I had this one guy that he had mold toxicity, E. coli, oxalate overload and a surgery that just left some pretty nasty stuff. And he was really sedentary, just pots off the charts, pain anytime he moved. And then six weeks later he's walking four miles a day. Now it's been six months and he's swimming and lifting kettle bells, and he lives on his own. He works on site again. It's just oh my gosh.

Michael Roesslein:

Amazing, amazing.

Christopher Blakeslee:

Seeing stuff like that, I just love it.

Michael Roesslein:

That's incredible. Just love it. So we'll put the link down below to contact Christopher. I love that approach because people that are really in it, they need that high touch. They need not only to tweak things on the fly, but also to know that someone's there. Just that. When you met the doctor you ended up working with, that was really helpful for you. It was that relationship too that really shifted the needle a little bit too.

Christopher Blakeslee:

For sure.

Michael Roesslein:

I love that approach. I think it's really unique. I haven't heard of that, I don't think with anyone that I know either. And it's very labor-intensive on your side, but it'll move the needle fast, I think versus the weekly or biweekly check-ins.

Christopher Blakeslee:

For sure.

Michael Roesslein:

They're on their own for a week and they're making the best call based on, "Oh, I think maybe I should do this or whatever." That's amazing. So contact Christopher if you're interested in working with him. And I'd like to give them a little taste of... Obviously everyone is different, so there's no universal, everyone needs to do X, Y, Z thing. But if you could share with us a few needle movers, a few recommendations that you often see people either aren't doing or don't know about or are doing in a way that might not be optimal, what would those be that you could share with the audience that they could either switch or change or start tomorrow?

Christopher Blakeslee:

Okay. The first one is build your foundation first. And what I mean by that is you got to address the basics of recovery before you go after something advanced. So you need to ask yourself things like what's your diet like? What's your movement like? What's the state of your nervous system? How stressful are your interactions with others? Because if you try something advanced before you've done that stuff, you're just in such an inflamed state and you're introducing an inflammatory detox that it just doesn't go well.

And those heroic measures, when people just dive to those, that's when they either don't stick or they just don't work at all even if it's something they really needed. So I see a lot of people spend a lot of misery. Well, get a lot of misery and spend a lot of money trying to do those sorts of things. And sometimes they don't even need that advanced stuff. If they just get the basics going, it's amazing. We'll start detoxing just because they're not busy with other stuff.

Michael Roesslein:

Yeah. I've seen that a lot when I was working with clients too. They would come in and want to do these run \$4,000 in lab tests and do these elaborate protocols and try this other thing. There's places for that, but then I would say, "What time are you going to bed?" And they'd be like, "Oh, 1:30 in the morning after the rerun of whatever." I'm like, "Okay, let's start there." So it's not sexy, but it gets the job starting with the foundation. So what other tips you got?

Christopher Blakeslee:

Yeah. The second one's really linked to that, and it totally sounds boring and obvious, but it's to focus on behavior management because it's so powerful and underrated. And what I mean by that is evaluate everything you do to find what your symptom triggers are and then develop strategies to either reduce or eliminate them. Because a lot of times it's this little stuff that people are doing throughout the day like not holding their body or just doing something that's not right for their context that's really flaring them up.

So just some little stuff like that I had to do is make sure I didn't wear socks due to my neuropathic damage. It's like, just stop doing that and avoid belts and make sure I didn't sit too long to not stir pelvic

floor up or don't drink too much or too little liquid within a couple of hours with my IC. And the trickiest thing about all this is that it shifts depending on how you're feeling. So you just dynamically are having to make really smart decisions about this. You can't just say, "Oh, that worked yesterday. I need to do that today." You have to check your status and go from there.

Michael Roesslein:

Okay. Makes sense. What would be either a final or another one?

Christopher Blakeslee:

Sure. So this one too is I see so many people go down the dark hole of where they're at with their chronic health problems. So I tell people, get your mind off your health problems and enjoy your life as much as you can. And I know that's the last thing ill people think that they can do. And when they feel that way, it usually means that they haven't fully grieved what they've lost yet. So they need to have a grieving period for their first, but just as soon as they can, they need to do whatever they can to try and be happy because focusing too much on their health just supercharges the inflammation and the neuroplasticity wires the system to just recognize more and more threats.

So I tell my clients, "Let me worry about what you're going through and just go have a day where you dive back into something you used to love or try and look at something new." And it's one of these things where I know it's something that everybody can do because all those dark years, while I'm lying in bed in a dark room staring at the ceiling, I'm planning novels that I'm going to write for my retirement years. It's like I could still do something in that to just get my mind off of it and give my nervous system a break.

Michael Roesslein:

Beautiful. I love that you brought up the grief aspect of it too. Today, we're recording this on September 4th. This Saturday I'm beginning a five-month training with a therapist who is pretty world renowned for his... He's written books, he speaks and he teaches about grief and the power of grief. And that grief is often ignored and grief is avoided in our culture. And we don't have grief rituals, we don't have grief community support. When somebody's grieving, usually other people immediately try to change the subject or change their mind or cheer them up or do something to distract them because grief makes other people uncomfortable.

So I love that you mentioned that because I agree for them to move on. That's essential to acknowledge the sadness and the grief around, I lost this, or I don't have this, or I can't do this.

Christopher Blakeslee:

It becomes a root cause

Michael Roesslein:

You're just in it. I love that you mentioned that I have ideas already kind of going for ways that when I'm complete with that, I might be able to help some of your people to really process and move through-

Christopher Blakeslee:

Sounds good.

Michael Roesslein:

... that kind of situation. So if you come to somebody that's really stuck with that, you can send them my way and I'll help them.

Christopher Blakeslee:

I'd be happy to.

Michael Roesslein:

All right. Is there anything else you'd like to share?

Christopher Blakeslee:

Oh, there's always more.

Michael Roesslein:

Well, there's always more, but I think we're running up on our time.

Christopher Blakeslee:

I think we're good.

Michael Roesslein:

I'm going to be strict with us because I know that we can talk for two hours because we did it before. So click the links down below for the podcast. We'll have any relevant links that he mentioned and also to click to investigate working with Christopher. He's accepting clients. He has this really hands-on incredible approach that I think is great. His story is remarkable. I watch your updates and see all your pain-free days. There's a lot of people cheering you on.

Christopher Blakeslee:

Thanks.

Michael Roesslein:

Know that too. It's so incredible.

Christopher Blakeslee:

Yeah. But thank you. It's always a pleasure talking with you, Michael. I really appreciate it.

Michael Roesslein:

Yeah, likewise, man. So thank you very much. Go check out Christopher's work. If you're in that spot and you can relate to what he's saying, reach out. He'd be happy to talk with you. So thanks, and we'll see you on the next one.