

**EPISODE 383**

[SPONSOR MESSAGE]

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[INTRODUCTION]

[00:01:34]

**FT:** Welcome back everyone, this is So Money. How are you? I'm your host Farnoosh Torabi. Thanks for joining me. Today's episode touches on a topic that I think affects all of us in some way, shape, or form. Whether we experience it, or we know someone who goes through it - depression. I think I was a little depressed perhaps four or five years ago. It was a combination, I think, of just being overworked, tired, it was the winter, I lived in an apartment that got no natural sunlight, and I had this looming deadline of a book proposal.

Actually it was, they wanted the book done by January and it was between October and December that I just got into this slumber, this malaise. I couldn't get out of bed, I thought I was just tired, I thought I was just maybe dealing with some jet lag from the holidays, from Thanksgiving 'cause I'd been to California, and it was finally my then fiancé at the time who was like, "Honey, I think you might be like a little depressed."

Not to make it a light matter, but I think that we just don't know sometimes what's going on, how are environment, how our experiences start to impact our mental quality. But today's guest will take it even a step further and say that it's not just your environment or not even in your DNA, but it's what you're putting in your body that's impacting your mindset, that's impacting your depression potentially, that we don't talk enough about nutrition and how that impacts our mindset.

Today's guest is Manhattan based holistic women's health psychiatrist, Dr. Kelly Brogan. She has an important book out right now, it's called *A Mind of Your Own: The truth about depression and how women can heal their bodies to reclaim their lives*. And while the book is about largely women, I think everybody can take away from this book. I mean we talk so much in this country about healing through medication, right?

Healing through pills, especially if you're someone who goes through depression, but why she thinks that that is actually not the solution. Dr. Brogan completed her psychiatric training and fellowship at NYU Medical Centre after graduating from cornel medical college. She has a bachelor of science from MIT in systems neuroscience, she's also board certified in psychiatry, psychosomatic medicine, and integrative holistic medicine and she specializes in root cause resolution approach to psychiatric syndromes and symptoms.

I love talked to her. We talk about, again, what causes depression? Really, what are we putting into our bodies that leads to this? And of course we talk about money. We talk about health, but we also correlated it to wealth, things that she practices to help her wither finances. Because at the end of the day, she'll admit, she's not the best sometimes with tracking her money, but she has a solution for that. I'm gonna stop talking now and just let this episode play 'cause it's so awesome.

Here we go, here is Dr. Kelly Brogan.

[INTERVIEW]

[0:04:20]

**FT:** Dr. Kelly Brogan, welcome to So Money. I'm really excited to connect with you and learn everything that you know that apparently a lot of us don't about depression and health and food and nutrition in the myths, welcome to So Money.

[0:04:35]

**KB:** Total please to be here.

[0:04:37]

**FT:** You're new book is called, *A Mind of Your Own* it's already an instant bestseller, *The truth about depression and how women can heal their bodies to reclaim their lives*. You have been studying and really invested in this field of understanding depression for quite a while and you have this out of the box thinking which as I'm reading it, I'm like, "It shouldn't be out of the box. This should be what we should be talking about it all the time."

In summary particularly for women when you are depressed, the prescription is go see a shrink, get some pills and that's the short of it but what you have discovered and you're really passionate about educating everyone, particularly women on, is that it really comes down to what you put in your body. Can you talk about first how you developed an interest in this particular area? Do you have a personal story?

[0:05:30]

**KB:** I sure do, yeah. In college, I worked a suicide hotline actually. I went to MIT and unfortunately, there are a number of completed suicides every year at MIT and so it was

actually a very intense position for just a college kid to hold and we were supervised by psychiatrist there and I was a neuroscience major.

So I was sort of like angling myself in the direction of trying my best to reduce human behavior to a noble science. I lived the greatest part of my adult life in a very, I would consider masculine energy where I very ambitious, very productivity oriented, very much like a doer/fixer, somebody who is deeply invested in mastery and it was very adaptive.

I went onto to medical school, I did what I set out to do, became specialized as a psychiatrist and it really wasn't until my fellowship where I specialized in women's mental health. I was also pregnant at the time that I was incentivized I guess through my own pregnancy to do a bit more research on some of the pearls I've been handed down from my mentors in conventional training that I just sort of accepted without any questioning.

I did this research because I started to feel like, "You know what? I'm sure I want to take a medication in pregnancy," even though I'm telling and exploring the literature with these women, discussing how and why they should be reassured about the safety, believe it or not of antidepressants for example during pregnancy.

But I just have this little voice inside that told me I wasn't totally convinced and of course, that voice is now something that I recognize as intuition, right? And it was trying to pull me in the direction I inevitably would end up but it wasn't until I developed my own autoimmune thyroid condition post-partum that I had this re-visitation with this voice.

I said, "You know what? I don't want to be on prescription thyroid hormone for the rest of my life. I know plenty of patients who do that and they never feel quite right. I'm going to do this differently." So much, I'm sure this is true across arenas, so much of what we do when we break ranks is that we take things back to the essentials. So we get out of our heads, we get out of this construct that we bought into about how to fix problems quickly which is the American way, just make those problems go away.

[0:08:19]

**FT:** The quickest way from A to B, right?

[0:08:20]

**KB:** Exactly, without an investment in a longer term outcome and without consideration of the many, many, many variables that are going to be impacted by a quick fix. So through my own, through putting this autoimmune disease into remission through lifestyle change, I developed the experiential knowing of how the body has all the tools that needs to do that and it really caused my entire world view to crumble.

Everything that I had learned, everything that I had tried, my type A, as we call them in medical school. I was like a total gunner, everything that I had learned was now brought into the harsh light of a very different reality and so I spent the better part of the following eight years unlearning everything that I had put hundreds of thousands of dollars, blood, sweat and sleepless nights into.

For my personal journey then to the extension into my clinical practice, I'm now at the point in my personal development where I completely personally reject the models that I was taught and it's not to say that these models are not the right fit for certain people, but it's my passionate belief that women deserve to know all of the information. So that they can make informed choices about what model of health is most resonant for them.

[0:09:50]

**FT:** Have you gone back to the fellowship or MIT or any of your past places to say, "Here's what I've discovered. Let's change the curriculum or the advice." So what have you now maybe reconciled with your past?

[0:10:11]

**KB:** That's such a good question. For a couple of years, I did. I did teaching in all of the teaching hospitals in New York City. I did blogging for more conventional outlets and as I became more and more sure that I was on a path that in no way can co-exist with the

current systems in terms of its philosophy and I can touch on what that philosophy is in its essence in a second.

But the more sure I became about how radical change was necessary in the system, the more I began to see that it just didn't make sense for me to be taking my megaphone into the hallowed halls of conventional medicine because the truth is there is this Bucky Fuller quote, which essentially eludes to how you don't fight the system, you build a new system that renders the current system obsolete, right?

That became my rallying cry where I was like, "I am going to create something, a consciousness around health and wellness and particularly mental health and particularly depression that is so empowering to women that going the conventional route is just not going to make any sense. It's not going to feel appealing anymore," and so it's not such a matter of convincing or coercing people who actually feel held and contained by a medication based model. As it is opening up a possibility for people to have that little voice inside that says, "yes" to this concepts right.

The primary distinction between the two models is that, the model that resonates for me, you can call it holistic medicine. You can call it functional medicine, you can call it whatever you want. But the model that resonates for me looks at depression as a symptom of a greater imbalance, right? So it's almost an invitation for change and sometimes, that change is minor like taking a specific nutrient as a supplement.

Sometimes it is major like deconstructing your entire world view so that you can make room for the type of woman that you are actually here to become. That is a very different perspective than the conventional model which looks at depression as a disease, maybe one that you're born with and one that needs to be put into its place, suppressed so that you can get back to work.

So that you can maintain your functioning, because there is no room for whatever message that depression is bringing to the table. What is important is suppressing the symptoms. So the analogy that we use in that model is as if you have a piece of glass

stuck in your foot and you're just going to take a bunch of Tylenol until you don't feel it anymore right?

[0:13:03]

**FT:** Right. How challenging is it though to work with someone with your philosophy, with your method who is depressed because I feel like when you're depressed, it's hard to even just get off the couch depending on the level of depression you're at. I know people who have experienced depression, they stay in bed all day and to tell them, "You need to change your lifestyle," seems overwhelming wouldn't it?

[0:13:26]

**KB:** Yes.

[0:13:26]

**FT:** As opposed to, "Hey, here take this pill and in four hours, you will feel better."

[0:13:31]

**KB:** Right, we could have a whole show about what it is that these pills actually do but certainly, they don't do anything, and maybe not anything for months or a month and a half if they do have an effect. So here's the thing, it's a lot about mindset because when I meet with patients, I am offering them a chance for change that they can control. And while that would, for us looking from the outside looking in, seem totally impossible and overwhelming for the reasons you just mentioned, in fact, to give them back that piece of their agency that they feel they relinquished is immediately empowering.

I mean I have patients who come in literary with 24 hour home health aides because they cannot function and when I present what is required essentially for this transformation and when I give them the menu, no pun intended, of what's necessary to engage in this process, something shifts.

It's like you may have the flu in your bed barely able to move but if I walk in your door and tell you, "Oh my God, guess what? You just won power ball, it's insane. Can you believe it?" You would feel a rush of an energetic reserve no matter how sick you thought you were five minutes before, right? So we have access to the wherewithal to save ourselves and help ourselves.

[0:15:02]

**FT:** It is very empowering. I mean gosh, to hear that message. To know that you have the ingredients in you to change your life if you want to. So then what are the ingredients on the menu? I know that you have a list of foods or at least inflammation is at the root of a lot of depression as you've discovered. So what leads to inflammation?

[0:15:27]

**KB:** That's a great question as well and really, we're just beginning to look at about 20 years now believe it or not that the literature has been reframing depression as a chronic inflammatory disease. It's called The Cytokine Theory of Depression and it really just puts depression in the same box that all of these modern illnesses from autoimmune diseases to cancer to heart disease have been in since we began to discover that they didn't exist quite at the rate that they exist now a 150 years ago. So what has changed?

So it's referred to as an evolutionary mismatch that over two and half million years or so, our genes have evolved to come to expect a certain type of environment, that environment includes your air, your water, your food, your day to day rhythms, exposure to sunlight and sleep and your stress levels and the nature of the stress.

It also includes your interactions with other people in a certain type of community experience and we have wandered so far off that path since the industrial revolution really over the past 100, 150 years that our bodies are essentially revolting and that's why we are sicker than we've ever been in human history today.



We know that because of what's going on in terms of you in political health care debates. We know that we have a big, big, big problem on our hands and medication and conventional models are not chipping away and in fact, the costs are only skyrocketing. So in many ways, inflammation is just the body's built in response to — it's an alarm system, right?

It's a built in response to adversity and that adversity can come in all of those forms. It can come primarily what I focus on a lot in of course is inflammatory dietary exposures. So really mostly, the intuitive stuff right? Processed food, sugar, focusing on trendy dietary concepts like low carb diets and really straying far from a whole foods model.

It can come from chemical exposure so stuff ranging from the cosmetics that you use on your face to fluoride on the water that you drink to air pollution that you are breathing in all night long as you sleep in your bed that is off gassing formaldehyde.

[0:17:51]

**FT:** Well as you are saying all of this I'm like, there is a period in my life where maybe I was depressed. I was just in the midst of the book and I had writer's block and it was the winter time and thinking back, you know what? We had no natural sunlight in that apartment. My job also had no natural sunlight.

We were in the basement of a building, how do you begin to do an audit of your environment and of the makeup and the foods that you're eating to really pinpoint what is the change that you need to make? Because I am listening to you and I'm like, "I think I had all of those things at one point."

[0:18:25]

**KB:** Oh absolutely and everyone and whether it manifest physically or psychiatrically so to speak is just subtle differences between us but I'm not sure how many people you know who have never struggled with a health problem but I have never met one. So we're all in this in different ways and it can feel very overwhelming.

“Well, look around. Everyone is doing just fine and we’re all drinking soda and sleeping on not organic sheets what’s the problem?” But the truth is, its accumulative burden. It’s like a bucket that gets filled with little drops of water from all of these different exposures overtime and at a certain point, there is going to be a drop that overflows the bucket and that is impossible to predict but it’s a long process for most of us.

So it’s one that you can continually prevent because every day you drain that bucket a little bit and the way that you drain the bucket, at least the way that I primarily start is around the dietary piece and I can elaborate on that some more but it also involves looking at other ways to enter. So are you moving, are you exercising?

I used to hate exercise and there are ways to make this digestible. There are ways to make this doable. What about relaxation response, how are you managing your stress? I am very interested in a type of meditation called Kundalini yoga that is really bite size. You can start with three minutes a day and it can shift your nervous system response literally in three minutes a day.

So what can you offer your body in terms of that type of resiliency? Then sort of the last one I often layer in for patients because it’s a big, big, big project that is almost a lifelong project is how do we detox our environment? How do we take a look at your entire space that you live in at home and all of the products you consume and how do we just make better choices so that we can send your body a different signal every day?

[SPONSOR BREAK]

[0:20:24]

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[INTERVIEW CONTINUED]

[0:21:36]

**FT:** Kelly, I love to talk now about your perspective on health and wealth. This is a big theme on So Many. We've had many people on the show who are health experts, fitness experts and they all have really correlating philosophies when it comes to wealth and wellbeing, financial wellbeing. Do you have like maybe an overarching money mantra that has, kind of gives a nod to also your beliefs in the health world?

[0:22:06]

**KB:** Yes, so again like I said, it's far beyond elimination of symptoms, what I'm after with my patients. And so when I work with patients, I don't prescribe medication. I do a lot of medication tapers, but there is no life circumstance that's ever going to buy you a prescription antidepressant in my practice.

So I create a space that actually allows for a lot of wobbling around the stress of life and it allows patients, I believe, to walk through the fires necessary to be born into the type of

experience that they were destined to have. So my philosophy is, all you have to do is continue to honor yourself and continue to work on yourself in the ways that I've just described.

As you do that, decisions will be almost made for you and prosperity will emerge from that model without you having to architect it. I'm a big believer in getting out of your own way. I don't think we have enough data at any given time that is subjective to make great decisions from a place of intellect for ourselves.

We try to do that and many women again, like I said, come at decisions from this more masculine energy. But the truth is that our gifts and our intuition and our ability to manifest the things that might otherwise seem beyond our wildest imagination, it really comes from your being in alignment and not having any spaces of inconsistency, right?

So that alignment comes from this type of deep self-care and I have a daily practice where I do Kundalini yoga meditation every morning and I can't tell you how it changed my life. I can't tell you how I experience stress completely differently and I never have to even — I don't even have goals anymore because everything just drops from the sky.

I know exactly what I needed at any given time and it may not look at that at the moment of course but at the moment of course but exactly what you needed at any given time I believe passionately will come to you if you are working on your own alignment and you're not focused on the conditional goals for your happiness, right?

Because the trouble we can get into is if you can say, "Oh if you just have that job I'll be happy. Oh if I just make 10 grand more a year I'll be happy. Oh if I just got that book deal, I'll feel great." We all know that's an illusion because we've gotten the things we thought we wanted and we still are looking for more stuff.

So it's a very different posture to feel solid and complete and whole and abundant and it's a mindset and it's one that you have to work on it. And I believe that one of the greatest gateways to that mindset is healing your body and then one of the greatest gateways to that is through nutrition. So it's like a domino effect.

[0:25:06]

**FT:** And, I mean again, you don't need to spend money on that posture. It's really about self-exploration and meditation comes up a lot on this show when people are trying to link health and wellbeing to their financial wellbeing. I feel like meditation has some great public relations behind it in the last couple of years. I dunno what?

Look, meditation has been around forever but it has a resurgence of interest and at least I think people are talking about it more or maybe before it was just considered very niche kind of exercise. But now, more and more everyday people are admitting to it so I think it is getting a lot more valid.

[0:25:53]

**KB:** I think it's out of sheer necessity. I think more and more and more people are feeling is something is very amiss, right? Something is really wrong and off and we feel disconnected and what is being labeled as depression is very often a very appropriate response to what's happening on this planet today. It's almost like an opting out because we feel so bereft and we don't connect many of us to a sense of purpose.

I mean I was an atheist the greater part of my life and many people I know are, certainly many people in the medical community are and while it may suit you, if you're loving life and feeling great, for the most part to feel disconnected from any sense of meaning or purpose is not our native state, right? So I think it's out of sheer necessity that people are reaching for these more ancient technologies to try and connect them back to something that they know they've lost touch with.

[0:26:53]

**FT:** Another money question for you Kelly, what was your first or most memorable experience with money as a child growing up that now as an adult, you think it was a pretty influential moment?

[0:27:08]

**KB:** I think probably it wasn't a moment more than an initiatory experience which was that I have been relatively a blue collar family and I was encouraged and actually very willingly complied with very early employment. I think I was 12 when I got my first job at a bagel shop in New Jersey called Bagelicious and I got up every weekend, I was there...

[0:27:38]

**FT:** Time to make the bagels.

[0:27:39]

**KB:** Yes, it was literary like that. I was there at six in the morning to spend five hours there and to make my first pocket change and I feel like that was incredibly formative for me to not only experience the "value" of my own money and my time as quantified in that way, but also to start to learn about my own choices and how I can take control of this.

I mean I was raised — my mom was a stay at home mom but she felt very, very strongly in a classical feminist manner that I needed to always be financially independent and that I should never rely on another person for my independence and while we all know again, the one dimensional depths of that type of focus, that if you're focusing on financial independence you can possibly neglect other parts of your life that would offer you a sense of wholeness that is not in simply the financial acquisition model.

But with that being said, I value very much the independent spirit. I mean I am a very independent person. I couldn't wait to be in a position where I didn't have a boss. I was the first person to hang a single out of my entire residency class because I just needed out of the system but it's from these early experiences that you start to learn about your own independent potential. So I think back on that and laugh. Humble beginnings.

[0:29:22]

**FT:** I love it. I was watching you give a talk online and you said that early on you have this e-mail. It was kelbro@hotmail and you talk a lot about this masculine energy, the bro within and I very much relate to that and similar to you, I think I was grazed with this urgency or not urgency but real hope that I would grow up to be financially independent and I can't wait to have my first job when I was a kid. I just like working.

[0:29:57]

**KB:** Yes, exactly and my mom is an immigrant from Italy and a lot of that mentality, I'm sure anyone who's second generation would tell you is very present in the household. So this sort of like, "I created this opportunity for you, you'd better..."

[0:30:14]

**FT:** Don't screw it up.

[0:30:15]

**KB:** Don't mess it up, exactly.

[0:30:16]

**FT:** And that is legit pressure, I will tell you also that my parents were immigrants and I think what motivates me is making sure that they have a legacy too. That they didn't just come to the US and sacrifice everything for it all to end at their generation, that my brother and I can continue the journey. So Kelly, what's a habit that you practice outside of your health practices but a financial practice, something that you do that helps you with your money management, your financial wellbeing?

[0:30:49]

**KB:** So I am very non-business minded. I think that many, many, many doctors I'm sure ones that you have spoken to as well will tell you that we are absolutely not trained to think of our jobs as a business. Literally not one hour of training in our entire decade of medical school and residency is it every acknowledged that this is actually a business model as oppose to some philanthropic effort, right?

So I don't actually have very good habits meaning that it's almost feels like a distraction to me from what I'm here to do every day to think about money, to think about how I should be managing it more wisely, think about how should I be budgeting things more strategically. So I will say that the greatest gift that I've ever given myself in terms of creating a better structure is to work with a community. A team of people who do have these skills and abilities and so I have surrounded myself with people.

My cousin is my office manager and she's a wonder in this department and so part of it is sharing the load and acknowledging your own limitations. So that's sort of like where I have come to and I'm sure I could probably learn from you and your guests in terms of day to day practices that would help streamline my efforts. But it is important to acknowledge when it's a bit of a blind spot and when you've been acculturated around that blind spot in certain professions I find like super interesting.

[0:32:35]

**FT:** I don't think that is untrue of many disciplines that you study in school other than just business. Like I studied journalism, you studied health and medicine, and whether you studied English, you have to learn the business of that otherwise you're doomed. Or you have to have the wherewithal to get the team to help you but I think that is just a big disadvantage and it's a missed opportunity for schools to teach that.

Because I know for me, I wasn't the best writer. I wasn't the best reporter in grad school but I had a sales and business background so I was out there pitching and I didn't realize it at the time but really establishing myself and getting the confidence to go out there and do this thing on my own and I may have not been the best and brightest



student but I had the most clips, published clips when I graduated and I think that for me was much more important in the long run.

[0:33:37]

**KB:** Absolutely.

[0:33:38]

**FT:** Anyway, this is not about me.

[0:33:41]

**KB:** No, I am helping if learn something from you.

[0:33:42]

**FT:** But thank you for making me feel good about myself Kelly. Dr. Brogan, Dr. Kelly Brogan, thank you so much. We're very excited about your book. Everybody, run to buy *A Mind of Your Own: The Truth about Depression and How Women Can Heal Their Bodies to Reclaim Their Lives* and I don't think this is a book that just has to be for people who have experienced or are in the midst of depression.

I think there so many universal truths in this book for everybody to incorporate in their lives and to have a healthier mindset about what they're putting in their bodies, how they view the pharmaceutical world by the way and so thank you very much for this book and for all the work that you do.

[0:34:21]

**KB:** It's such an honor. I love interfacing with your very well cultivated audience, it's super exciting for me.

So thank you for this opportunity.

[END]