

EPISODE 626

[INTRODUCTION]

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FT: Question for you So Money Nation, how healthy are you and how do you measure health? We talk a lot about health and its correlation to wealth on this show, and our guest today is ready to give us even more insight and more advice and you might even recognize him. Dr. Partha Nandi is joining us. He is the host of the nationally syndicated hit show, Ask Dr. Nandi and he has a very new book out called *Ask Dr. Nandi: Five Steps to Becoming Your Own Health Hero for Longevity, Wellbeing and a Joyful Life*.

Dr. Nandi grew up in Calcutta and there, at the age of six years old, he encountered a near death experience and he talks about that. He goes right to that moment, how he felt and how that memory has shaken and impacted his life today. We talk about how to afford being a health hero, really, financially afford. Even though Dr. Nandi has the five pillars of being a health hero, which includes nutrition and movement and tribe and mindfulness and purpose, let's be honest, if you don't have money in the bank and you get sick, that's a problem. How do you still be a health hero in that situation, and the one thing Dr. Nandi says he cannot bring himself to buy, no matter how much money he has in the bank.

Here's our conversation.

[INTERVIEW]

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FT: Dr. Nandi, welcome to the show and congratulations on your new book.

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PN: Farnoosh, thank you for having me. No, I'm excited about people to kind of get the message and you know, we ask people to become their own health hero so I'm excited that we're able to have other people understand what we're talking about.

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FT: Yes, #healthhero. The book is called *Five Steps to Becoming Your Own Health Hero for Longevity, Wellbeing and a Joyful Life*. It just came out earlier this month and tell us about this concept "health hero". What does it mean?

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PN: Farnoosh, great question, when I do talks around the country, especially when I talk to young people, I ask them, you know, "Who is your hero?" and often I get answers like LeBron James, some people say maybe Taylor Swift, some people even say Justin Bieber. They love Biebs.

I say, "Well, what about making yourself the hero of your story?" and then once they think about that, I tell them to go one step further and so health heroes are heroes that really put their health in their own hands. They put health as the most important part of their life and then in turn, every day they do activities that really improve their health and wellbeing.

For me, you know, I was just like those kind of people that talk about celebrities. I was just like them. I used to love the sports celebrities until I was a young kid, I almost died from a disease called pneumatic heart disease and I learned at that time, your health, without health, you really don't have anything. So I think it was important.

By being a health hero, you know, I don't mean the fad diets, the crazy workouts. I mean, really doing activities, anybody can do, you and I can do easily. But it's making small changes consistently that can lead to big results. That's the whole idea behind being your own health hero and advocate and doing things consistently to help your health and wellbeing.

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FT: There are five pillars, I'll go through them. Nutrition, movement — those two make sense. You have to move, it's like calories in, calories out but also being physically active is important to get that heart moving. Tribe, mindfulness and purpose. What do you mean by tribe?

[0:04:02.5]

PN: You know, I'll tell you, before I get to tribe, I think the most important one actually, Farnoosh is purpose. The thing is, you know, when my dad who was really my ultimate hero, he was really our rock, right? When my dad got ill about nine years ago, I really learned something very important.

I became his caregiver, my family and I spend nights in the hospital. When I was in the other side, I thought I was a good doctor, I thought I really knew how to take care of patients. But what I learned, Farnoosh, is that there was a lot I did not know from the other side. So I said to myself, "You know, what can we do to really make a difference, what can we do to really change this so other would have to have it? In fact, so you don't learn it in a moment of tragedy.

So with that kind of purpose, I was able to really galvanize my family, my community, my patience, my city to becoming their own health heroes and we started one station Farnoosh, in Detroit, now we're in 215 million homes with our television shows. You know, it could really happen. When you have purpose, really, the why is there and then everything else follows, all the steps you talked about can easily be done and so, that is critical but you have to have purpose.

Then once you have purpose, you can have mindful leading, you can have purposeful movement. You know, you could have cultivation of your mind and spirituality and then finally, your tribe and when you have these five steps going for you, you're really a formidable force that's really somebody to be reckoned with. Because you — when you look at the evidence of just for example, just looking at purpose.

If you have real purpose in your life, your longevity, the amount of yours you stay alive more is about seven years, you can add seven years to your life, decrease dementia by 53%. So

imagine putting all of these five steps together, you can really change your whole perspective, not just in your mind but physically you can actually become healthier and change the whole paradigm.

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FT: What's an example of a revolutionary human story? Someone who has – besides yourself perhaps and your family but people who have taken this verbatim, has it actually prescribed to this, and what happened? What results did they see?

[0:06:27.2]

PN: That's a good question. I would have to say, you know, I write this in my book too, there's a gentleman, Charles and he had seven cancers. I believe it was seven cancers. You know, people have one or two.

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FT: At the same time?

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PN: Well, one after another, he beat all of them.

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FT: Oh my gosh.

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PN: So I said, "You know, what's going on? What is it about you that you can beat these cancers?" So I met this gentleman when he had a neck cancer, so cancer of the throat because

I had to put a feeding tube while he was getting chemo therapy and radiation and then he subsequently had lymphoma, cancer of the stomach, I mean, it went on and on.

I said, “What is it about you that really changes everything?” And he said, “What I do is, when this happens, it becomes a war between me and the cancer.” His sense of purpose, his sense of meaning, his fight against cancer is everything. It just is unbelievable how he’s overcome these diseases and you know, to this day, he comes and sees me and he’s just, he’s just an amazing character.

I believe that our cells, every single cell in our body has a capacity to heal. It’s those few of us who really know how to get that going, it doesn’t mean that you don’t – you know, I don’t mean to say that you don’t listen to your doctor, you kind of say, “Okay, let me just imagine everything, it’s going to get better,” it’s not that.

It’s that you use all the resources that you can to help heal your body and that’s what Charles does. He doesn’t stop the chemotherapy, he doesn’t stop listening to his doctor but he also – he galvanizes the power of his mind, spirituality. He of course watches his diet and he’s always a go getter and what he does is his sense of purpose makes him amazing. I have learned a lot from him and people like him really have changed my perspective towards medicine. I practice western medicine but really I take the best of eastern medicine and I put it together with western medicine and I think that the combination is really the future of medicine.

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FT: You talk about having the important resources to become your own health hero. Money is not a pillar. However, I would argue that in some cases, having the resources, the financial resources to support your health, especially if you are someone who falls ill, healthcare in our country is a broken system right now and it’s expensive for many people. So how do you reconcile that? I mean, you can have the best diet, you can go run every day, you have the right mindset, you have purpose. But if you don’t have money, what happens?

[0:08:58.7]

PN: Yeah, that's a great point. So I think that our healthcare system is really a sick care system, you know? It's a very reactive system. What I mean by that is, you know, we don't do much to preserve health. What we do is we always react. You know, some people come to me and say, "Doc, you know, I need a Xanax." That's your chief complaint. Meaning that they won't really tell me in the beginning what's wrong.

What I say is, "You're absolutely right, if you're ill and something happens, obviously, if you don't have the resources, you often can't do well. But I also think the converse is true, that if you don't have your health, you cannot have wealth. Meaning, for any profession, to really achieve whatever you want, whether it's that you want to be economically super well off or if you want to get the right promotions, if you want to get the right – I don't know, the best out of your career, you have to have health.

So I think both are very important. What I will say about the fact that if you are someone who is really conscious in what you do with your – not only do you run every day but not only you do it every day but you also eat with mindfulness, you eat with purpose. It's very important. It's not just doing it, it's actually understanding the why. Here's a reason. All the data, this is why the MD is talking about. This is why I'm not a spiritual guru talking about this because as a physician, I look at objective data.

Objective data says that if you eat mindfully and as you move with purpose, one thing I'll tell you, in my practice, a story I always like to tell, I am next to this big gym. One of my favorite hobbies is vulture watching. So what I mean by vulture watching is that, I watch these cars circle this giant gym. Why? Because they want to find the closest place that they can park so they can just jump out into the gym. Because, it is not time to work out. You only work out in the gym and that's it. If someone could carry them and into their treadmill, they'd be happy.

The key is that, they're not doing purposeful movement. Everything that talks about disease, about longevity and disease-free states talks about movement with purpose and living with purpose. So absolutely, you can do everything right that you think, but it has to start with the why. Why are you doing it? What's motivating you? Are you using mindfulness and spirituality in your life, doing it consistently and using your tribe to coalesce? In ever population that uses that, people live well over a hundred. There are many scenarios.

Absolutely, if you have a catastrophe happen and you don't have any money, it's difficult. Now, you have to know that in the US, you have to accept patients even if they're impoverished. Meaning that, if somebody has a catastrophic illness, you can't just say, "Sorry Charlie, you're out of luck." You still have to accept them. The difficulty happens with the follow up, the difficulty happens with preventative care. But I think that you can – Both cases are true, meaning, if you don't have your health, you don't have your wealth and if you're completely impoverished, you're going to have problems.

But I really offer to all of your listeners that people think about their wealth. If you take care of yourself and do some of the things I talk about in the book, earnestly, small changes, it can really lead to not only better health but better performance. Mindfulness experts now are in every sports team. Why? Because people perform better when they have mindfulness meditation. All the noise has decreased significantly so you can do what you're supposed to do.

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FT: Right.

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PN: There's a lot there.

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FT: You talk about longevity in the book and you just brought it up as well. Do you predict, as an MD and as someone who is reporting on the top of health risks and health concerns and health issues, is our quality of life improving health-wise? What is going to sustain us to the predicted 120 years of age that some of the data is suggesting? You know, on the one hand, obesity is out of control but on the other hand, with all the gene therapy and gene innovation, there's a lot to look forward to as well.

So where are we headed as a nation, as a world when it comes to healthfulness and being ultimately health heroes of ourselves?

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PN: That's a great question. You know, I think that here's the thing, in this part of the world in the US and the western world. You know, we just don't pay attention to the importance of — you made an excellent point. You didn't say "quantity", you said the "quality" of life. A lot of us, especially in major urban areas are just chasing our tails. Meaning that, you know, it's a total rat race, you know?

We're materialistic, meaning you know, "When can I get the bigger house?" Or whatever it is that you're chasing. But what we see again and again is that after you meet your basic needs, you know what? I think, in the US, if you can sustain yourself and make sure that you have food and shelter, et cetera, you know, your quality of life doesn't go up appreciatively and this is something that's very surprising to people, that you know, after you meet your basic needs, of course, somebody who doesn't have a home or you're really having problems, yeah if you make more money, it definitely helps your wellbeing.

But after you meet your basic needs, it doesn't help you with your overall wellbeing. The quality of our lives are really poor. Not only or we have an epidemic of obesity, epidemic of heart disease, epidemic of auto immune disease, but we also have an epidemic of meaningless lives. You know, even though you may have economic resources, you're ripped with money, you know, I know in many cities, when I've spoken in New York, when I've spoken in Los Angeles, the same questions come up as they do in Dubai. It's a meaning of life. People are struggling with it because they don't understand what's going on.

So yeah, you know, we are getting better at longevity. We're far behind though. For example, South Korean women are predicted to live to 90. We've just broken the 80 mark. Men haven't quite done that even. We're lagging behind because here's what we're not doing: we're not paying our health forward. In sickness and in health, we are not doing the things that I'm talking about, we're not following those five steps. So in turn what happens is that, we are chasing our tails.

When we get sick, we go to the doctor, right? Then they can maybe give me a pill and go for it. There's really no, you know, people don't have any nature of "what is it that I am responsible for to make my health get better?" and that's what I talk about in the book, what you can do to really raise up your health? Not just with numbers but longevity. I want real health where you're playing with your grandkids, not in a nursing home on a feeding tube not knowing what's going on. That's the key is that we have to get the quality up.

[0:16:03.9]

FT: You are an immigrant, Dr. Nandi. You were born in Calcutta, you moved to the mid-west with your family. What drove you all here and take us back to that time period if you can remember one of your first sort of vivid memories of how the country was introduced to you and what you thought the US represented at the time?

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PN: It's funny. I was a kid, I remember, this is not the US, this is the west, you know, the western world. I forget, I think I'm in London, we took a British Airways flight and then I was nine years old and in that moving walkway. I almost fell off because I saw two people kissing openly and I said, "Oh my god." I told my mom. My mom said, "Just don't look." But I almost fell off the thing because I was turned completely around. So it was interesting. It was just a comical part of what I remember.

But here's what I remembered about the west is that, you know, I love the fact that I was old enough to remember enough about the east. So for me, yoga wasn't new age, for me, prayer and spirituality wasn't something that those people do, it's what everybody did. I saw it you know, when I was in India I still remembered it. Then when I grew up, we prayed twice a day, we understood meditation.

I was so excited now, I didn't know then but I'm so excited now that I had those memories. Because what the west offered is unbelievable innovation, unbelievable advances in medicine. What I loved is that, I can have the combination of both of them, together. I remember, as I went

through medical school and practiced and it's the amazing combination of both eastern and western medicine that really galvanized me. Like I told you, I had a really big scare when I was in India, I almost died when I was six years old.

So that really got me in tracking towards becoming a health hero. The doctor that saved my life and my appearance really showed me what a health hero was. So I already was in the path despite me not quite knowing exactly what that was but I wanted to be like them. So when I got the opportunity to really get the best training in medicine in the world, which is the United States, married with the thousands of years of unbelievable tools that we can all use, boy, what a treat and a privilege to be able to do that.

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FT: When you were six years old and you were in the hospital bed, what did you remember from that time-frame? What did your six year old mind tell himself? Were they keeping things from you? Looking back now you probably know everything but at the time, were you scared? Were you confused?

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PN: I was petrified. I was absolutely petrified. I was almost always held down as they were doing tests after test. It took six people to hold me to draw blood and it was a nightmare because I didn't know what was coming next or to be able to understand. I remember I got ill and I went to — I must have been half a dozen doctors Farnoosh and I was actually covered in garlic. We went to traditional doctors, we went to alternative doctors and nobody knew what the heck was going on.

So I was actually covered in garlic for an entire day. I was covered in mustard oil for an entire day. Nothing made me better. So when I saw this doctor, Dr. Chandler Shaker who saved my life it was Christmas Eve and I remember it. It was Christmas Eve in India when I was age six. My dad got us a fruitcake so I knew it was Christmas Eve. Every Christmas we got a fruitcake, which was really funny. So Christmas Eve, I go in to see the doctor and he said:

“You have to admit, you have to be in the hospital today” and I was like, “Wait a minute, usually they give me something. I don’t get better.” This time he said, “You know, we don’t have much time” so they admitted me. For a six year old, it was an absolute nightmare but looking back at it, it really saved my life. I was on bed rest for almost a year and a half. I was home schooled. I was puffed up like a Michelin man.

My face was totally bloated from steroids. It was a pretty hairy experience but it’s what I had to go through to be in this place that I am. It was what was needed for me to understand how important it is to really take care of yourself in sickness and in health. You got to do it beforehand to understand some of the things that you could to prevent these catastrophes from happening.

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FT: And I think it is how you are so successful in your career as someone who connects with people on a day to day basis to have to have that empathy, right? That has to be probably the most important thing that you lead with in your conversations and in your show and in your books and in your practice. I think that having gone through that, that’s inherently something that you’re very good at doing and having.

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PN: Thank you.

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FT: Sure, well what would you say is your relationship with money? You have a great relationship with health today, your personal health. But the show is about money, so let’s go there.

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PN: Well absolutely. It's totally appropriate. You know, I think that people have these dichotomous relationships meaning that there are some people that are like, "Oh I don't like money at all," even though you need money to live. The problem is that I don't think – I think having wealth is an amazing thing because you can define wealth in many different ways and having money is one way of defining wealth.

I think if that is your goal and that helps you absolutely by all means. What I don't like is the aimless search for money for really no purpose to yourself. There are many of my patients that come in and they have seven figure incomes. They still don't know what's going on with their lives. So I take a step back and I said, "Can you give yourself more free time so that you actually make more money?"

They say, "What do you mean?" I say, "Well, you know, I want you to be able to say that how much free time do you have per dollar that you actually could possess." So that to me is the most, to me the best ratio and measure of your money or your wealth. So it is not just the dollars that you make or the absolute money that you have or your worth but rather, the money per time spent, meaning how much time can you have to actually make that money do what you want it to, right?

Because money is there for you to be able to do what? Give you purpose, give you happiness and give you joy in some way. Obviously you need it to live and all of us do, economics play a huge role, I know that and you know that, but it goes beyond that. The people who just aimlessly go for money and then forget about their wellness and so to me, the optimal ratio is when you have adequate time and then have money to be able to be free enough to be able to do the things you enjoy and then you get real health and wellness.

As opposed to saying, "You know I have a great car. I drive a Tesla but it's only between the hours of 10 and midnight because I leave at 4 AM and I get home at 10 o'clock." That is crazy but you and I know, that is not an unrealistic thing but for many people their lives are like that and I see people around me that do that and that to me is not really getting wealth. It's just looking at the numbers and that to me is not healthy. You are not wealthy nor are you healthy.

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FT: Yeah, that's just accumulation.

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PN: Yes.

[0:23:39.5]

FT: What was your So Money moment in your career and what does the future hold for Dr. Nandi, what's your goal?

[0:23:47.3]

PN: Yeah, you know, so what I do when I grow up? My So Money moment really happened when my dad had a stroke and then people say, "What do you mean by that?" I said what it did was it really ignited a passion of when I really had to understand what it took to really be a true caregiver and why is that a So Money moment? Because to me that unleashed what I really was here for. I love practicing medicine, I still do. I still practice full-time but I was able to get the other side of me.

The side of me that really even more than I did before, needed to empathize, to understand what it takes and so that made me more wealthy in the sense that I was able to give more to my patients and what happens is that when you give more to anything in your career you get better at it and I was busier as a physician. I was recruited as a speaker and everything else got better. Again, it's a consequence of my purpose and that is a very big distinction.

It's a consequence of my purpose and not the other way around, right? So the money wasn't, my So Money moment wasn't the reason why I did this but rather your wealth in every way. Not just money comes when your motivation and your purposes is clean and in the future for Dr. Nandi is this, I'd love for more and more people to know all the tools that I know so they can live the life that I have.

If you listen everything I say in the book, everything I am saying to you is how my family lives every day. We are as a community don't do anything that we can't ask our family to do and so the future for me to more and more people to be able to understand what we're talking about. I love people that write to me from Africa, from South America to New Orleans to be able to understand some of these techniques and it doesn't always involved having the biggest bank account or the best physician or best hospital. But rather it comes from within, it comes from understanding that your own body has amazing powers that are waiting to be unleashed and when that happens, everything follows including material wealth, including physical health and wellness.

[0:26:12.1]

FT: You've been very successful career-wise, health-wise, financially, is there something that you still cannot bring yourself to buy?

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PN: You know, I can get myself to buy these ostentatious cars. I see people and again, much love to all the people that love them but I just can't get it. I don't get how somebody could buy a car...

[0:26:37.2]

FT: What do you drive? What's your car?

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PN: We have a Chrysler Pacifica and we have the CTX or something. So they're not bad, the cars but I can't come and get, I can't get used to people buying these \$200,000 ostentatious cars, I can't do that. I just think it's a waste of money. I don't know.

[0:27:01.1]

FT: I was with my younger brother, he knows everything about cars. He worked for an antique car site at one point in his youth. So he can identify a lot of ridiculously expensive cars and we were in the Hamptons and that's where you usually find these ridiculously expensive cars and he pointed one out and he goes, "That car is \$3 million," and I said, "What idiot? Really?" I mean I guess I am insulting you at this point.

I don't care how much money you have but \$3 million? I don't like to judge people on how they spend their money, but come on. I hope you are also spending three million dollars on charity to tend your soul.

[0:27:39.6]

PN: You need something that will give you more sustenance because the car is just a material thing but I mean a lot of people that I know that have those cars, it gives them like so they could point at it and say, "Look I told you I'm successful". So what happens is that all of the sacrifices you make and things that you can't really say, I wish I could do this, I wish I could do that, that car often replaces it and it is not a good replacement.

And so you should look within yourself and say, "You know what else can I do to really make myself happy?" and so that's me and that's my perspective. There's worst things in life to do with the money but that is something I can't come to it. This just comes from my immigrant background and my how I was raised. You know we were raised to understand the value of resources, the value of family so that's where it comes from.

[0:28:30.3]

FT: Dr. Nandi, thank you so much. Your show is called Ask Dr. Nandi, a a very popular syndicated show. The new book is *Ask Dr. Nandi: Five Steps to Becoming Your Own Health Hero for Longevity, Wellbeing and a Joyful Life*. Congratulations and thank you.

[0:28:47.3]

PN: Thank you for having me. It's been a lot of fun.

[END]