

Ep #323: Dr. Hiru Mathur - How to Differentiate Your Leadership with Patients, Staff and Community



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David Phelps: Good day, everyone. This is Dr. David Phelps of the Freedom Founders mastermind community and Dentist Freedom Blueprint Podcast. Today, I'm just really privileged and honored to be able to interview our guest today, which is Dr. Hiru Mathur. Hiru, how are?

Hiru Mathur: I'm doing great. Thank you, David.

David Phelps: The reason I want to have Hiru here today, Hiru is a Houston periodontist. We'll talk a little bit more about her story and her practice, but she's also a member of our community Freedom Founders. She and her husband Sumit have been members for almost two years, I think, coming up here this summer. And we've just enjoyed so much watching your growth, Hiru, with the iterations that you've made. I think starting with the way you think about your life, your practice, your family, and obviously, some of the big things that came out of COVID last year.

One thing we're going to talk about that came out of COVID last year will be our topic today. Also, just, your leadership, your leadership in the industry as a whole, in your dental community,

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and also in Freedom Founders. Really it's what I think in terms of, when I talk about the five freedoms, it's going up that pyramid and not ever staying stuck, but realizing that we all have additional passions and talents, and we can integrate those into the actual clinical training that we, we start out with in life, in this case, dentist or specialist, as you are, that's what we got started, and that's kind of who we are and our identity. And we go to do that and learn well and take CE to do that well, but there can be other iterations of that other ways that you can also add value that can change the routine of your life as well, and I think that's what you're blossoming into.

Even though you weren't doing that before you came to freedom Founders, for sure, it was already in your heart, and I think you just embellish that. So without going further, we're going to talk about today in particular, the book that Dr. Mathur authored and published this year, the title is, It's all About the Gums, the Mouth and Body Connection. And Hiru, let's talk about first, why you decided to write the book. Why did you decide to do it?

Hiru Mathur: Okay. Firstly, I want to thank you, David. I'm glad to be here. So as a periodontist I see a lot of patients with chronic gum disease and most of them, whose disease is severe or keeps coming back, they seem to have some kind of a systemic problem, which most of us know in dentistry. But unfortunately, I was surprised to see that most patients didn't know, and also, I was also surprised that most of the physicians were not in the know of this whole problem that we have. We all know that inflammation today is causing every disease, every cancer that we are aware of. And the biggest source of inflammation today is the gut, which is our digestive system, but also the mouth. And in periodontal disease, those bacteria are constantly

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causing inflammation, constantly affecting the rest of the body, but somehow, most people just seem to be unaware of it.

So my goal was, what I feel as a caregiver, one of the biggest thing I need to do is to educate my patients, to make sure they understand what is causing the problems that they have, and how they can be empowered with that knowledge and even discuss with their physicians and, hopefully, prevent some major issues like diabetes and heart disease. So I thought this book would give them an easy to read guide, and I was hoping the dentist and hygienist can hand it over to all their perio patients, so they can better control, not just the gum disease, but even the rest of their health.

David Phelps: So obviously there's lots of ways that we can attempt to educate our patients, and onsite in the practice, you, your hygienist, you're well-trained staff all have a part of that. But what is it about, do you think, now that your book's out, it's been out for a few months, but what do you think that doing it in the form of actually a book that you have now authored, what else does that add to the element of your ability to educate the patients, and as you said, also the medical community at large?

Hiru Mathur: I think what I've noticed with my patients is that they look at me as an expert a little bit more than they used to. And so many of them seek me out now after looking at the book, because they feel like I'm interested in their overall wellness. So it's really helped me send the message across in a much more powerful way than I would do by just talking to them. And I feel I'm reaching out to more people who are not even my patients. A lot of my colleagues are happy because their patients look at the book, many times my colleagues are not able to explain in detail like we would, so they hand them the book, and they look

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at the book, and they understand what's going on. So it makes it a lot easier, even for my colleagues who work with me.

Lastly, I think for my staff, I feel it makes them feel very validated, like they work in a practice where we believe in very excellent care for our patients, and writing it down, just gives them more information as well. So they can... Actually, they all read the book and now they feel like they know a lot more than they did before, because it's very clearly outlined for them to understand it easily.

David Phelps: Yeah. But the credibility and additional authority positioning that it gives you as the author, you're right, I think it enhances your communication, that you... well, it differentiates you and your practice, as you said, and your staff. Number one, they've got to be proud of the fact that the doctor that they work for, work with is a published author. And it, also, I think, decommunitizes what, unfortunately, a lot of healthcare can become, and-

Hiru Mathur: So true.

David Phelps: ... dentistry is not ruled out. It's people think of, well, I go get my teeth drilled and filled and crowned, or I go to the periodontist because my dentist told me I have "gum disease." Well, it doesn't hurt, and what's a little bit of bleeding here and there, it doesn't seem to cause me a problem. And now you have established the fact that there's more to that. And if people who care about their health and the majority of people today do care about their health. They realize that they have to take it in their own hands. We can't play the Western medicine of, well, we've got a drug or antibiotic for everything that'll just fix it. I think most people, the majority are starting to think, I can take more in my own hands.

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Now you've created a communication that says, it's not just about going in and have your teeth cleaned every six months.

Hiru Mathur: Perfect.

David Phelps: I mean, it's like I need a professional to actually help evaluate because there's so many other aspects that could-

Hiru Mathur: So true.

David Phelps: ... be affecting my health, that I don't even know. And my doctor, who's trying to treat me with XYZ, doesn't know, and all of a sudden, there's this connection that maybe now I'm taking more control over my future, and your patient can take this to their doctor, as you said-

Hiru Mathur: Yes.

David Phelps: ... and say... they might... I bet you've had these conversations, patient says, "Really? I've been going to see my physician and we've been dealing with this. And I wonder if there's a connection there." Does that happen?

Hiru Mathur: It's amazing how many of them are not aware at all. I have some patients who are severe diabetics and they keep coming back with gum disease, and when I explained to them the connection, they get the biggest shock ever. They're surprised that there is a connection. And so I wish... I think today physicians are so busy that they really don't have time to go into detail to their patients. And I think the aspect of prevention is really missing in the medical world, where they can actually sit and say, "Okay, I'm not just going to throw these prescriptions in your face, but I'm going to actually explain to you how you can actually cut down your medications and how

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you can prevent it from getting worse." But really there's no time. Most of them are rushing.

So I feel like as dentists, we have so much more time with our patients. My hygienist has a lot of time with the patients. So, if we can take that responsibility where we can explain, yes, we cannot take the place of the medical doctor, but we surely can explain the connection. And so the patients with that knowledge, they can go ask their physician and actually ask for answers. And hopefully not go into any severe conditions that they are suffering from.

David Phelps: You've got a very busy practice. You've got several associates, I think, looking to bring on another one. So things are working well for you because you do provide great service and you have created a culture and team around you that, no doubt, the experience people get they're going to come back, they're going to refer their friends to you. You've been in a place where, actually, you love to teach. You love to do, but you also love to teach. It's in you. You've been a clinical professor, actually, you do other courses, right?

Hiru Mathur: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

David Phelps: For colleagues.

Hiru Mathur: Yes.

David Phelps: You've been doing this for several decades, really?

Hiru Mathur: Yes. For over 20 years, yes.

David Phelps: Over 20 years.

Hiru Mathur: Yes.

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David Phelps: So your ability to communicate to either your colleagues, professionals, or your patients, lay people, has really been part of you all along. So this is just enhancing that, this book is enhancing what was already within you. And I'm curious, obviously, patients can get this book from your practice, do you give patients extra ones to give out to their friends or family or other people? I mean, is that part of getting the word out, to trying to get the book in as many hands as you can?

Hiru Mathur: Yes, I do. So I have been actually giving it to my patients, some of them, and some of them actually ordering it for their family members. And I actually have some patients who their daughters wanted to go to dental school because they came and met me, so they are so excited. So they are buying books for them as graduation presents. So it's pretty cool to see the enthusiasm from the patients. They're already excited about it. So, yes, we've been giving a way to... I mean, a lot of them are ordering from Amazon, but they can also get it from our office.

David Phelps: Well, you're such a great role model, I mean, certainly as a specialist in dentistry, but again, I think as a female role model for our young women today, who aspire to be whatever they want to be. But I think, we've broken that barrier of, can women do what they want to do? Absolutely they can. Absolutely.

Hiru Mathur: Yes.

David Phelps: Don't set a limit on what you want to do. And I think it's great that you can carry that torch as well for young people that want to follow in similar footsteps, I should say, maybe they don't have to be the same, but similar. They go, "I could be this too, because look at my dentist or my periodontist or my mother's periodontist," or whatever it might be. Right?

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Hiru Mathur: Yes. It's really cool to see that.

David Phelps: Yeah.

Hiru Mathur: It's very nice.

David Phelps: Talk about actually sitting down to write a book. For most people, I think that maybe something... I'd love to write a book, but my goodness, how do you start? I mean, how did you go about it? Because you started doing this back a year ago when a lot of the world and certainly health practices, dental practices were in that shutdown mode for several months. Is that when you started it during that downtime?

Hiru Mathur: Yes. So see, David, I always wanted to write a book. And if you remember, when I talked to you and Candace in 2019, I mentioned that I wanted to book. So I feel like everything comes out of a desire, and then you need to have some resources, and then you need to have time. So I always had the desire, but I didn't really have the resources, and then I remember talking to you, and both of you gave me a lot of guidance and also some resources I could talk to, to get working on the book. And so I was armed with all that, but I still didn't have the time. And then, of course, during the lockdown, during COVID, when we shut down, I was amazed. I had the most time I ever had in decades. So I was like, "Okay, here's my chance. I can sit down and put everything down in writing, which has been buzzing in my brains for so long."

So I sat down and wrote everything down, and eventually, by the end of the year, got it edited and then published early this year. So it was a process, but COVID really helped me. I mean, that time was fantastic. I could just peacefully sit down and put everything together.

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David Phelps: It's interesting how sometimes events in our lives that we don't plan on, that come out of the blue, kind of blindsides us, like COVID certainly did-

Hiru Mathur: So true.

David Phelps: ... but how those events can turn into new opportunities. We don't see them at the time. Obviously everybody was scrambling back when COVID, literally, scrambling for health reasons and for business reasons and everything else. But you have the wherewithal to say, "Hey, I can control what I can control. I can't control the timing and going back to practice. I've got time now to do something else." And you had it already on your dream list of something that was there and you stepped right out and made it happen. Have there been any other side benefits that have come from doing the book that we haven't already talked about? Anything else that's like, I didn't know that was going to happen? Anything?

Hiru Mathur: I think another good thing that has happened is my kids are so proud of me. So my son's, they keep telling all their friends and they have... In fact, now my older son is starting to write a book, because he's so excited that it's possible. I think I have shown most of my family members at least that you can do it, because I'm the first one to publish a book in my family. So now I think I've created that path for everyone to believe that, hey, we can all do it. So that's very empowering to see the positive influence, not just on your patients, but also your family and loved ones. It's been really fulfilling.

David Phelps: As I was saying, do you think you might have another book in you at some point?

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Hiru Mathur: Absolutely. I'm already thinking of that. My goal was to write several books. So this is my first one that paved the path, and I'm already thinking of my next idea.

David Phelps: Yeah, that's great. So that's the next idea for a book and I can't wait to see that one. What about for you, as the person you are, the professional you are, mother that you are, spouse that you are, what do you think is next for you on a bigger plane? You're not thinking about like retirement or anything, but where do you think you kind of want to go with what you've already done? What would be a next step for you if you could just kind of wave that wand and say, "In two years, three years, I'd like to be doing this"? How would your life and practice style change, if at all?

Hiru Mathur: So I love what I do way too much, so I know I won't retire for a long time. But, yes, I would like to cut down my clinical practice, but I don't think I'll ever stop doing it in the near future. But with my associates in place, if I can get more time, write some more books, and hopefully speak some more. And also, I would like to actually get more involved in some charities and a little bit more social work, which I feel like I don't physically do. I do more in terms of financial support. So I think I want to be more involved in charities and just help my environment and the social situation around me. So I want to get involved more than everything else, so I can help the world at large, not just the industry. And besides that, one of my favorite thing to do is to travel, so I would love to probably go to Italy for a few months and learn Italian. And so I have a lot of other things that I want to do too, besides dentistry, for sure.

David Phelps: Well, Hiru, book authors need to travel to add to their stories for their books and-

Hiru Mathur: There you go.

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David Phelps: ... additional... so there's an aspect of that, that I think you need to do that. So if there's-

Hiru Mathur: Absolutely.

David Phelps: For sure, for sure. Well, listen, so great to talk to you today, to talk about the book, to talk about so much that you've done in your life, and how you still aspire and inspire other people to also look at their lives and say, "Hey, there's more that we can do. There's more that we can be, if we just open the door and explore these frontiers that we all have in front of us, and sometimes life just seems to shut things down and you feel like, gosh, I'm just stuck here. And it's like, it doesn't have to be that way." And you're certainly a role model for that attitude-

Hiru Mathur: Thank you.

David Phelps: ... and that mindset. So I just want to thank you for being such a great contributor to Freedom Founders and a great contributor to your patients, your staff-

Hiru Mathur: Thank you.

David Phelps: ... your community, and our colleagues, just super. Dr. Hiru Mathur, thank you so much.

Hiru Mathur: Thank you, David. Thank you so much.

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