

**THE MODEL
HEALTH
SHOW**

EPISODE 391

**Break Free From The
Dieting Mentality &
Improving Your
Relationship With Food**

With Guest Kelsey Heenan

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Welcome to The Model Health Show, this is fitness and nutrition expert Shawn Stevenson, and I'm so grateful to be tuning in with me today.

I've got a question for you— how is your relationship with food? How is your relationship with food? It's kind of strange that we would have a relationship with something other than a person or our pets, and things like that, but we all do have a relationship with food. And the reason that this relationship is so powerful is because it's intimate. This is one of the rare things in our reality that we make a part of us.

We are taking something from outside of our bodies and putting it inside of our bodies and it becomes a part of our cellular makeup. That is an incredibly profound experience, and that relationship really does guide so many different areas of our lives. And so today I want to focus on this relationship and talk about how we can swing the pendulum a little bit too much in one direction and have an unhealthy relationship with food that creates fear, and worry, and anxiety, and potential disorder, and how we can swing it back the other way and potentially land in a place in the middle.

Because swing the other way is where it's just a free for all if I see it I eat it kind of situation which is how I grew up. I didn't know that there was a difference with food, if it was edible and I could eat it, it's food, I didn't know that there was a difference between say broccoli and a candy bar, it was just food, it was just stuff you eat.

But today we know that everything that we eat does create a cascade of events, it's a chemical cocktail of events that takes place based on every single bite of food that we eat. If we look at things like nutrigenomics and nutrigenetics and how our genetics are wired up to integrate and utilize certain foods better than maybe some other people who have different genetic setup and how certain foods influence the expression of our genetics-based off of every single morsel of food that we eat.

So it's a big subject matter and how food interacts with our bodies, but our relationship with food and how we view food is one of the most powerful relationships that we will ever experience in our lifetime. And so I'm really pumped about this episode and we've got an incredible gas with an incredible story to help to break down some of these parts for us.

And before we do this, obviously a big part of our relationship with food, well maybe not so obvious, is our sleep. Now I know this sounds crazy, by when we're sleep deprived we have big changes that take place with our brain and our hormones, our neurotransmitters.

And what Stanford researchers discovered is that when we're sleep deprived even one night it increases the production of our hunger-related hormones like Ghrelin, for example, and suppresses are satiety-related hormones like leptin and like adiponectin for example. And so our food choices are for us choosing things that are healthier, for what we consider to be healthier for our bodies, our ability to do that in a more mindful, intelligent fashion that goes down.

We start to lose our ability to have this executive function to understand how different foods are going to impact us and we tend to have this craving for more sugar, for more carbohydrate-based foods. And so this happens for all of us if we really take a good picture of it— so for me, if I ever experience a rough night of sleep or like a lot of travel it throws my sleep schedule off some kind of way, but if I know that I'm not well-rested I find that out by my cravings. I tend to be a little bit hungrier and I tend to want more sweet stuff.

And so for me, it was like, I can see that come up because of my relationship with food. I'm usually not hungry at this time, I usually don't have this kind of craving, and I start to analyze did I sleep well, am I stressed, because those events can influence my relationship with food as well, it's not just the food itself, it's also our other practices in our lives. So sleep is one of those things.

And for me, obviously, our sleep hygiene, this kind of term of sleep hygiene, creating a sleep environment and a sleep sanctuary and doing things to encourage great sleep is one the most important things that we can do for our health overall. Whether it's our body composition or our brain function, hormone function, whatever it might be, it has a huge impact.

And obviously, these things are important, but there are those things nutritionally that can help to support our sleep quality and one of those things is the renowned medicinal mushroom called Reishi. Now, in the Journal of Pharmacology Biochemistry and Behavior, it was found that Reishi was able to significantly decrease sleep latency. That means it helps you to fall asleep faster.

It was also discovered that the test participants had improved overall sleep time so they slept longer.

And they also had improved sleep efficiency, so they had improvements in their transition from REM sleep to deep sleep and everything in between, there's depending on which expert you talk to there are about 4 different stages of sleep that we kind of analyze and qualify as being in sleep. And so Reishi was able to improve all of these different factors— wow, that's crazy, who knew that a medicinal mushroom could have that much power?

We're looking at for a lot of people, they're turning towards synthetic supplements or synthetic over the counter and prescription medications to try to improve their sleep, but what happens is it's more like pseudo sleep when we're taking some of these drugs that have like this masking effect where we're unconscious but we're not actually going through our sleep cycles effectively and efficiently.

And so we wake up, and I know this because this was my life back when I was struggling with my health and I would be in a fog, I was unconscious for a certain amount of time but I was not feeling refreshed, I wasn't waking up feeling good and it took several hours for me to kind of snap out of that fog and I'd go through that every single day. It was torture.

And now realizing that there are certain nutrients that have been around, nutritive foods and herbs that had been around for thousands of years and we have access to today. And so for me, I utilize the Four Sigmatic Reishi elixir before bed. And it's a dual extraction, it's organic, dual extraction of the Reishi mushroom.

The reason this is important is that the dual extraction is actually getting all these compounds you hear in a study like this, was it a hot water extract, was it an alcohol extract, we don't know, but you're getting all of that with the medicinal mushroom formulas from Four Sigmatic because they're doing a dual extraction. So I'm a huge fan of Four Sigmatic and I highly encourage you to get some Reishi in your cabinet, all right.

And so for me, I love to have a couple of Reishi, you know maybe 30, 45 minutes before bed, it's just my wind-down process and it's just something that I love to do and it definitely improves my overall sleep quality. So pop over there, check them out, you get 15 percent off everything that they carry at Four Sigmatic, so their Reishi, their incredible Chaga, Cordyceps, their mushroom coffees, awesome stuff. 15 percent off everything they carry. Go to foursigmatic.com/model it's F-O-U-R-S-I-G-M-A-T-I-C.com/model for 15 percent off everything they

carry. And now let's get to the Apple podcast review of the week.

iTunes Podcast: Another 5-star review titled "Not what I thought it would be until I listened" by Petula'smomma. "Shawn is always bringing great guests and topics that help me learn how to live my best life. And his voice is so soothing."

Shawn Stevenson: Awesome, I love this so much. Living my best life, I love that so much, thank you so much for leaving that review over on Apple podcasts, I appreciate it immensely. And if you've yet to do so, please pop over to Apple podcasts and leave a review for the show, I appreciate it so much.

If you're hanging out with us on YouTube and you are in the studio with us, drop a comment below let me know what you thought about this show, all right. I appreciate you so very much and on that note, let's get to our special guest the topic of the day.

Our guest today is Kelsey Heenan and she has an incredible story about transforming her life and her body and overcoming a very complicated connection in relationship with food which you're going to hear about today. But right now she is the co-founder of the brands Hiit Burn, Hiit Burn Max, and the Daily Kelsey, and today she's impacting the lives of countless people all over the world and she's worked with tens of thousands of people personally across the world to become healthier, happier and more fit to her workout nutrition and mindset programs.

She's worked with celebrities, professional athletes, I just saw her doing something really cool with Gronk, The Gronk, Gronkowski, and Olympic athletes, CEOs and people from all types of backgrounds and fitness levels. Her work has been featured in publications like Shape, Women's Health, Men's Health, Strong Fitness Magazine, Fox MSN and the list goes on and on.

She specializes in helping people to have a better relationship with food and exercise which is often the missing link when trying to create a healthy lifestyle. And now we're going to jump in this conversation with the amazing, incredible Kelsey Heenan.

Shawn Stevenson: I'd love to dive and kind of talk a bit about your story and how you got into this space in the first place. I think it's such an important conversation because wow, that means we just have so much coming at us today, there's so much to think about, there's so much judgment but your kind of beliefs around diet and exercise and your beliefs about yourself led to a situation where you almost lost your life. So can you talk a little about that?

Kelsey Heenan: Absolutely. I grew up as an athlete and I loved playing basketball. It was something that gave me confidence. I was always super shy and could never really express myself through words but when I started playing sports that were really when I was able to come out of my shell and just be who I was and I found a ton of confidence in that. So I played all through high school and then played in college.

College was a really hard transition for me and I think it is for a lot of people, just so many different things happening— I moved across the country, played at a high level and so it was just very competitive and all these new things at once. And through that first year I started to basically be like, "Okay if I'm not getting the playing time that I want I'm going to become the best I can be, I'm going to work out harder and work on my nutrition so I can just be better."

So I started doing some different things and working out more and it eventually got to this point where it went downhill incredibly quickly. I lost about 30 percent of my body weight in a couple of months and it got really scary to the point where I eventually went to the doctor, my heart rate was so low and they said I could go into cardiac arrest at any point because I was just so unhealthy and unstable. It was a really scary time of my life.

Shawn Stevenson: What was the diagnosis?

Kelsey Heenan: Yeah, anorexia nervosa. And then I also had a ton of exercise compulsions as well, so it was a kind of thing where if I didn't get in whatever the workout was that I expected for myself I would just be filled with incredible anxiety and would compulsively exercise for hours, and hours, and hours at a time.

Shawn Stevenson: Wow that is, wow. So there's usually a trigger though, I mean I know that you were going through a lot of transition with the competitive stuff but was there some kind of triggering thing for you that was like really driving this behavior?

Kelsey Heenan: I like to call it the perfect storm because there wasn't necessarily one indicator, but I think it was a combination of things, all at once. And one of them is a personality type, I am a type A personality, I have always been very driven, high expectations, a perfectionist. And that was something, playing basketball at a high level was really important to me, getting really good grades were really important to me and just being the best person I could be.

I think that there is a genetic component to potential eating disorder behavior and there's a lot of research that's going on right now to support that. I was actually participating at UCSD in a study because I am now recovered from anorexia. So they were doing a study in MRI brain scans on just what a brain

looks like for someone who is recovered.

And it's still going because they're trying to find more people who have recovered, it's something that a lot of people don't recover from. And so I think that personality type is definitely a piece of a potentially genetic predisposition. I think that athletics is a very interesting thing and I know so many different female athletes and athletes in general, this is something that goes beyond gender as well, that struggle with body image, that struggle with nutrition and exercise.

Because they're trying to perform, they're trying to be the best that they can be and there are certain types of sports where you have to be a certain weight or look a certain way to be able to perform better. I know so many people who have gone through this and even if it's not a clinically diagnosed eating disorder, so many people go through disordered eating behaviors.

Shawn Stevenson: Right, so many people, so many of us, and this is why I'm so grateful to have you on today, to open this conversation up a little bit more because there are levels to it, you were at an extreme level and part of that is your extreme personality, but this is why your temper was so hot too, just seeing the little clips like it was so dope to see that.

But I think also, there— well, just to kind of mirror back for just a moment, when you mentioned the studies being done, looking at the brain and this was a recent episode, we had on doctor Sylvia Tara and she was talking about the science of fat which is just super fascinating stuff, we'll put that in the show notes for everybody.

This is thrown around a lot, but the brain is mostly fat, it's actually mostly water but when we're talking about the solid structure of the brain, but we see this in folks with anorexia specifically that the brain is shrinking, it's just literally kind of being eaten in a sense.

But your body, there's a difference between like structural fats and nutritive fats, but your body doesn't care at that point when somebody is so deficient, so it's for all of us to open this conversation up, it might not be at that extreme but there might be things that we're doing that are hurting our brains.

Kelsay Heenan: Absolutely, I mean just thinking back to those moments when I was struggling, I would get out of the shower and I turned around one time and I looked at my back and it was bones and I didn't recognize myself. And it was this moment where I had this devil on my shoulder/ angel on my shoulder, and the angel was saying "Oh my gosh Kels, this isn't you, what is happening?"

And then the devil on my shoulder was saying, "You're doing great, keep it up." And it was this weird thing that was happening inside my brain and that was the disordered eating experience where it's like okay, there are moments of clarity where it's like this is not okay, but then your brain is saying all these other things that don't make sense.

And that same day, I get out of the shower and I go to put on my clothes and I get my favorite pair of jeans out and I put them on, button them, zip them up and they fell to the ground. And it was the thing where I was so terrified but also proud.

It was a really scary experience because I have always been driven, I've always been very reliable and been able to trust my instincts and it was in those types of moments that I thought, "Who am I, what is happening to me, I don't know what is going on with my brain or my body," and I just didn't know who I was anymore.

Shawn Stevenson: This is an important point and also, so I got, there are 2 questions here, but what was that thing that helped to pull you out of that? Because obviously, that is a scary place to be. So what helped to pull you out and also the work that you're doing today and all the impact and I could see all the communication, I could see just people being inspired by you. So what led from that to you wanting to speak out and to help other people and to share your story and to be the inspiration that you're being today?

Kelsey Heenan: It was a journey, for sure. And when I was so sick I needed treatment, I needed medical attention and that was the first and foremost most important thing in my life. And for me, like I mentioned, I wasn't able to really make that decision at that point, there was a time where Dennis who was my boyfriend at the time, and is now my husband.

Shawn Stevenson: Shout out to Dennis.

Kelsey Heenan: Right. We had a couple of different moments together that were really kind of come to Jesus moments where it's like this is not normal behavior what is happening. And in those moments, that's when Dennis said, "Hey, either you need to tell your parents what's going on or I'm going to."

Because there were a couple of different panic moments around food where I just lost it, and I couldn't control myself and I was so scared to eat these types of foods that he said, "This is not okay, there's something going on and you need to talk to your parents."

One of these moments was the 4th of July and we got a pizza delivered and it was this ooey gooey cheesy pizza and most people they would open that up a be like, "Oh, my gosh, this looks amazing," and to me, I opened the box and instant panic hit me. I was terrified to see all of that cheese, all of that fat, the crispy crust, all of those carbs, all of those things that I thought were going to just be so terrible for me and it was a really scary experience.

So when I opened it up I just immediately burst into tears and freaked out. And done as, I mean, just this college kid, just hanging out with his girlfriend is like, "What is happening right now?" But even though he didn't fully understand what was going on, he knew that it wasn't okay so that's when he really was like, "You need to talk to your parents."

So I called my mom and said, "Hey I think something might be going," on she flew out the next day and that's when we went to the doctor. And they weighed me and I was terrified to see it, but also felt that same victory and in that moment that's when they took all the tests and said, "Hey, you have to stop exercising, you need to be re-fed now otherwise it's not going to be a good outcome."

Shawn Stevenson: So step one was getting help?

Kelsey Heenan: Yes.

Shawn Stevenson: And thankfully having good people around you. But it's difficult to hear them in those times. And so like you said, it was a process. So when did things kind of turned the corner?

Kelsey Heenan: After that experience, I went into treatment. So I went to UCSD and they have an intensive family therapy program. And so I went into that. Dennis and my mom came with me and it's a really powerful thing to go through that type of experience.

First of all, it was humbling because I was 21 at the time and the cohort that I was in there was a 16-year-old, a 14-year-old and like a 9-year-old and then me. And so it was one of those things where I had always been an overachiever and like, "What am I doing with these children? Why am I here, this is ridiculous." So those types of things.

But then that first night in treatment, all of the families went out and got a meal for all of the patients and it felt like one of those fear factor type situations where they got one of our feared meals. And Dennis and my mom got a huge

plate of spaghetti from CBK and I didn't have any pasta forever, it was one of the things that I was absolutely terrified of.

And so it had pasta and chicken and veggies on it, and so when they got it I was filled with fear but I wasn't going to break. And so I started eating some of the chicken and some of the veggies and the therapist said, "Wow, Dennis, what do you see Kelsey doing right now?" And he said, "She's picking around, she's not in the noodles."

And so she asked my mom to give me an amount of food that she thought would be acceptable for me to eat and my mom put in a couple of scoops of pasta on my plate. And I was livid and then Dennis said, "That's not enough she can eat more than that." And he proceeds to dump the entire bowl of pasta onto my plate and I just burst into tears, lost it in front of all of the strangers, it was the most humiliating thing I've ever gone through because it was uncontrollable.

But in that moment I was like, "I don't want to feel like this anymore, there has to be a better way, I'm sick of being sick, and we've got to work through this." And so it was a struggle, but going into treatment was one of the biggest things that really helped me go forward because I started to get the tools in treatment that I needed to continue the aftercare. And afterward, I was able to continue and I saw therapists and I practiced and had the accountability that I needed. That was a really huge thing for me.

Shawn Stevenson: Yeah, it's really, this is what's coming up is just how powerful food is in our lives to have an emotional response like that to food. And just understanding that food is, and this is the most interesting thing about food versus any other kind of addictive behavior or these called bad habits is that we have to engage with it.

We can avoid the environment for alcohol or drugs or whatever the case, smoking, whatever it might be, but the food is something that for many of us we face with this decision and interaction multiple times every day. And this can drive us crazy because we are very much in our heads about it and not looking at things from a physiological perspective, like just what our bodies need.

Food has become this, it's like a source of entertainment, it's a source of bonding, it's a source of experience and adventure, there are all these different things tied to it which can be beautiful, but it really is based on our psychology.

And so with that said, coming out of that experience, and how could you gracefully get from that spot to a spot of becoming somebody who's an influencer? Like I mean, in the true sense of the word, in a positive fashion for

health and fitness. How did that possibility take, please?

Kelsey Heenan:

Well, I don't know if it was graceful but it was a process that was important. And so in the last day of treatment, I had a dream, so the night before my last day. And I was trapped in a basement and it was super dark, it was cold, it was wet and my hands were tied together and my ankles were tied together with these ropes and they were so itching and hurting and I was struggling and I was just trying to get free because I was locked in this basement.

And the more I struggled I knew like, "Okay I have to get out of this otherwise like I'm going to be stuck here forever." And at that moment the ropes burst into 1000 pieces and the ends were completely frayed and I heard audibly in my dream that these ropes are so frayed they will never grow back together. And it was like in that moment I knew that I was going to be released from this bondage that I was experiencing.

And it's not like from that moment on I was completely healed, but that was the confidence and the grace that I needed to know that I could work through this and that I could be completely healed. And it was a really powerful thing that I clung to.

I knew at that point that I needed to, even though there were going to be hard days, I knew that there would be better ones ahead, and so I just persistently worked the program that we said we would continue after treatment. And a year after the treatment process I worked really hard and had tons of accountability at overcoming all of the foods that I feared and developing healthier relations with exercise.

I stopped exercising for at least 6 months and then eventually started working it back in to really break all of these rules and compulsions and not have any sort of restriction on anything that I was doing. And a year later I was symptom-free and just really continued to nurture that experience so that I could really be not only fully healed, but I knew eventually that I wanted to help people create this balanced lifestyle where they can be informed about food and work out to be healthy, like these are things that we need, but to not be so trapped in these experiences.

Because not everyone's going to go through the depth of an eating disorder that I went through, but if you surveyed the planet, I would highly anticipate that 99.9 percent of people have struggles with body image or not knowing how to feel their bodies well and have guilt and stress around food at some point. So that was something that was really important to me but it took a few years to really be able to get to that point.

And in 2014 I joined Dennis, my husband, online doing fitness staff and that was a really amazing thing to be able to get to that point. And over the years we just really fostered the voice that we want to put out there and people have resonated with that.

Shawn Stevenson: So what, I mean you went to, what was your degree, in sociology, right?

Kelsey Heenan: Sociology, yeah.

Shawn Stevenson: And the this is so crazy, I mean there are so many people who were in the health and fitness space that didn't plan on landing here, but when did you know this is the thing that you want to do? Because you, and we were talking about this earlier but so many people who I love and respect and who I have had on the show like you've been doing stuff with for a while like Don Saladino, shout out to Don, superhero Don.

All of these episodes are in the show notes, Michael Morelli, Eric Leija who was just on the show recently and you're just, you're out here like connecting and inspiring people and putting together programs. What made you believe like this is the thing that you want to do and dedicate your life to?

Kelsey Heenan: Well, when I studied sociology I knew that I wanted to help people and I didn't know exactly what direction that was going to go in and so I tried a bunch of different things. And eventually, after my healing process, I just knew I had found so much confidence and empowerment through sports and athletics that I knew that that could be translated into fitness and help create this ecosystem for people where they could be fit and healthy and look the way they wanted to look, but also just experience freedom in life.

And so after treatment I really knew that that's what I wanted to do but I knew that I needed to really go through that healing process fully and then go through all my certifications and all of those things and just be fully informed to help people help themselves.

Shawn Stevenson: One of the things that you advocate for is, and believe in, is this practice of intuitive eating. Now, when we hear the word "intuitive" that's really big I guess a far cry from like calorie counting and counting macros and a lot of the other rules in diets. So first of all, what is intuitive eating? And why are you somebody who's a big advocate for this?

Kelsey Heenan: Yes, so intuitive eating basically is learning how to honor hunger and fullness and having the absence of dieting rules. So there are lots of different ways that

people put this into practice and there really are some different phases.

So for me, going through a history of disordered eating there was a really long phase where I was not worrying about nutrients whatsoever because mentally I needed to get over having all of those rules in place and that was a really important process for my healing.

And then afterward it's there's nothing wrong with being informed about nutrients, I think that's actually very important so that you can understand how to fuel your body well and understand that protein is using your body differently than carbohydrates and all of those types of things.

But you can be informed and also not have all these really super strict rules, you can be healthy and still be able to honor your body's hunger and fullness because our bodies are smart they know how to run well but we so often restrict and create a disruption in our bodies because of all this prior history of dieting. So I think it's really a beautiful thing once we learn how to become more in tune with what our bodies are telling us and intuitive eating is so important.

And I think that it can be learned but it's the kind of thing we're born knowing how to do this but we just, we don't trust it and then we go through all of these different things. And so people think often, "If I eat intuitively I'm just going to eat pizza all the time I am just going to eat cookies all the time," and it's you know, if you did that you'd realize that you don't really feel that good when you do that. And so that's where you can be mindful and also honor your body at the same time.

Shawn Stevenson: Yeah, yeah that was a tough word for me early on, being a very analytical person, science-minded person, when I would hear intuition I'm like, "Huh, I don't know." But there is something that like we all experienced and I experienced but I couldn't describe it so I just like sweep that under the rug.

But for me, I feel like the best definition of intuition is advanced pattern recognition and just being able to recognize the patterns and paying attention to your internal conversations, internal feelings, you could see the patterns like, "Oh this feels good/ that doesn't feel good. This is attractive/ this isn't attractive," whatever the case might be.

But with intuitive eating, you're also opening it up to experience all of it and that's so freeing because it's breaking away from which we'll also talk about which is the dieting mentality. So what is that?

Kelsey Heenan: Dieting mentality that's a great question, because so many people live in this,

every single day, no matter what way of eating if you experience fear and anxiety and guilt and stress around eating, you're probably experiencing some sort of element of dieting mentality where you're having strict rules and regulations about the types of foods that you eat and what you don't eat and there's often a morality tied to it.

So I am good or I am bad if I eat or don't eat this food. So this food is off-limits, or this food is allowed, and it just is this whole this or that, right or wrong, and it becomes something that can be really detrimental to people.

Because it's one thing to, again, be informed about nutrients but if something is working for you physically but your mindset is a mess and you are so stressed all the time and feeling guilty and hating yourself, that's not really working for you, you need to have all of it working together.

Shawn Stevenson: Yeah, yeah I remember running my clinical practice and every week people would come in and they say, "I was bad today." And like that never felt good and I wasn't at the place that I am today in this communication but I always just immediately jumped to, "It's all right, it's okay like this is whatever," and then we move on. But people start to connect their eating behaviors to their definition of who they are as a person. "I was bad so I am a bad person," is that kind of what you mean?

Kelsey Heenan: Absolutely, and it's something that is so hard to hear other people say that and we do a lot of challenges with people. And the first week is always so hard because people are experiencing so many feelings about how they have failed over and over and over and they just don't like themselves and it's something that so many people go through. And this isn't just in the eating disorder community, this is the general population, people who really suffer every single day because of this dieting mentality.

Shawn Stevenson: Let's break down some of the pieces of the dieting mentality. And again, you mentioned this already, we have the preface that these things do matter, but it's just are we controlling them in a healthful way or they're controlling our lives. And so part of that is calorie counting. So let's talk about that.

Kelsey Heenan: Yeah, so I understand absolutely and that there are so many different things that can work, but calorie counting and macro counting was something that really led to my personal demise and I've worked with thousands of people who have experienced this incredible anxiety because of it, because they want it to be perfect and they just don't want to screw up, and I get it.

And so I've been there. So calorie counting, it can work to get physical results

but I do believe that it can really be taken to the next level where people just aren't in a good place mentally because of it.

Shawn Stevenson: Yeah, definitely it can create like a neurosis, like we can become obsessed, obviously with the macros and then within those construct there's this other side where— and I did a show on this a few years back, but "If fits your macros" episode and within that context, well think that the quality of the calories doesn't matter as long as it fits my macros.

And then we have this other side where they're managing and measuring their entire lives to try to fit the macros, and both things, again, these can help to get results but we just need to be mindful like are these creating disorder behaviors where we're getting into this place where we fear food.

And I know that, like you mentioned, like I'm pretty sure the vast majority of us if not all of us have felt some kind of worry or fear or concern around us eating and making food choices, which again this can be an indicator of something that can guide us but a lot of times it can be like a warning sign that there's something we can address.

Kelsey Heenan: Totally. And I guess it depends on your definition of flexibility too, right? Because a lot of macro counters are the If it fits your macros crew it is flexible dieting, right you have flexibility as long as it fits in your macros, fair game. And there are a different kind of weight blanks of it, some people understand needing to have the energy balance of eating more whole foods and just incorporating the pop tarts and whatever only periodically, but there still is that element of being captive to a rule where if it doesn't fit your macros, what then?

Like is there still guilt and stress and anxiety that you're experiencing because of that? And I know so many people who have experienced that so and that's why it's just hard because I know what it feels like to be there and I know it doesn't have to feel that way forever. And so I've just worked with so many people who have gone through that, that it's yeah, it's a challenging thing for sure.

Shawn Stevenson: When you said pop tart, if people felt the little arousal, a little like, "Oh," you know but this was like I would never— I mean, I was there, I was a kid when pop stars came out and I remember, because you know like every day we would have like cereal or sometimes my grandma would make eggs and bacon or whatever. But pop tart was a game-changer.

Kelsey Heenan: Oh my gosh, what was it flavored?

Shawn Stevenson: The cherry.

Kelsey Heenan: Okay, I'm a cinnamon sugar girl.

Shawn Stevenson: I wasn't into that, I thought that that was for like my granddad, you know what I mean? That's like old people flavor.

Kelsey Heenan: Me and your granddad.

Shawn Stevenson: But today I probably would be more attracted to that. But you know, even recently, it was a couple of years ago, but and there is this song like, "Have you ever had butter on a pop tart," is I think it was like one of the like a TicToc or something.

Kelsey Heenan: Okay.

Shawn Stevenson: Anyways, but there was like some pop tarts at this, it was like organic, whatever. And my son had never had any, you know. And so I'm like, "Yeah I am going to get these pop tarts," and just go ahead and like have this experience. And because it's like, it's okay, you know, and that's the thing, but I'm not going to regularly eat pop tarts because I do value feeling good I'm not going to be like 5 percent pop tart, but if this is something that's attractive to me I'll give myself permission.

Because, of course, it's like you talked about of doing the work and being able to modulate and understand ourselves and our body and understand that everything is open, I think that's a big part of intuitive eating.

Kelsey Heenan: It is, it really is. If you have, if you truly had no food off limits you would allow yourself to really understand what foods help me feel good physically, what foods give me energy, what foods help me be able to build the muscle tone if you're wanting to build some muscle tone you really can experience that.

And then you can also not have the guilt or the stress if you decide, "I want a pop tart and I want my son to experience this pop tart because that was something that was really fun for me as a kid," and you can experience food as fuel and you can experience food as a part of your culture or something that is a sweet memory and not feel guilty about it. Because you can really create moderation and just the balance in that way and that looks different for everybody.

Shawn Stevenson: Yeah, that's so powerful. This just reminds me and again, I saw this so many times in patients I was working with and in myself as well, it's so much more freeing, we tend to make better behavior choices ironically when we allow

ourselves to have whatever it is that we want.

Because there's this thing about the human psyche, we do not like to be told what to do, we don't like to be imprisoned, we don't like to have rules which sound crazy because like rules help to create society. But when we are boxed in our natural tendency is to try to fight back.

And so if you are pressured, like if you really love pasta, like you mentioned, if you really love pasta and it's just like you can't, the person you work with is like, "You can't have pasta ever, if you're going to do this fitness show, you're going to do whatever, pasta is no longer a part of your life."

You are like, "But I am Italian." You are like, "This is in my DNA," or like maybe you're not Italian but you're just like, "Well, I work at pasta house," you know what I mean, "Those free breadsticks is my thing." But when we tell ourselves we can't, it just starts to grow this like festering rebellion that at some point it tends to just explode, right.

And again, it's not saying that spaghetti is a great food for you to base your diet on, it's just saying that if you tell yourself you can't do something, you take it off the table, it creates a greater attraction to it whether you're conscious of it or not. And yes, so wow, thank you.

Kelsey Heenan: I know so many people who, and I have experienced this myself where it's like if you say I can't have the pasta or whatever and then all of a sudden you're at this event and you have one bite of pasta and you think, "Well, this is going to be the last time I'm ever going to have it so I'm going to go bananas and eat 4 plates full of pasta because I'm never going to have it again, this is my last time, I swear, this is it."

It just ends up being this yo-yo of over-indulging rather than it like, if you go to a Christmas cookie party and there are all of these options and you're like, "Those couple look the best, I am going to have a bite of this one, this one doesn't taste that good, so I'm not going to eat that one but this one was delicious so I am going to have a second." It really allows you that clarity to eat what you enjoy and fully be present instead of just trying to not break the rules.

Shawn Stevenson: Yeah. I want to talk more about this because I believe that if we don't have some structure coming into this, that some of us we aren't at a place where we can make these kinds of decisions in a healthful way, so we're going to talk a little bit more about some of the pieces of intuitive eating, we'll do that right after this quick break, so sit tight, we'll be right back.

Today we're in the midst of a new revolution with our understanding of food. We used to just be focused on this macronutrient paradigm proteins-fats-carbohydrates. Carbohydrates and proteins got a pretty good name, but fats were drug through the mud.

Why is that? Because it's called fat! The name implies something different than the other 2 because when we hear the word fat we think about fat on our bodies. Fat in food and fat in our bodies are 2 totally different things and it's like thinking, "If I eat blueberries I'm going to turn blue," when you think that eating fat is going to turn you fat. It just doesn't work like that.

And any of those 3 macronutrients can actually put fat on your body if you eat too much or the wrong types. Healthy fats, which I'm proposing that we start to call lipids or even energy are incredibly important for every single function in your body.

Your cells, every single cell in your body, we have upwards of 100 trillion cells that make you up require fats to just maintain the integrity of your cell membranes, we're talking about the thing that holds your cells together and enables your cells to communicate. It's very important. Also your brain, your brain is mostly fat and water, this is why fats are so important. When you're deficient in fats especially the right kinds of fats, you can see some big issues.

So in order to address that some of my favorite things today are MCT oils and specifically if we look at emulsified MCT oils that actually taste amazing and these are medium-chain triglyceride oils that are extracted from things like coconut, palm, and these medium-chain triglycerides have a thermogenic effect on the body which means they are able to positively alter your metabolism.

That's number one, the thermogenic effect from MCT oils, positively altering your metabolism. Number two MCTs are more easily absorbed by your cells, so unlike conventional food of any type that has to go through a pretty arduous process of digestion turning that foodstuff into you-stuff, MCTs are able to go directly to your cells and provide almost instant energy.

And number 3, MCT oils are very protective of your microbiome, there's so much research today about the importance of having a healthy microbiome and the integrity of our gut. MCT oils are one of those things that help to support that because they are especially effective at combating viruses, parasites, bacteria, there's so much goodness that is able to be found in these MCT oils but you want to get the good stuff.

And for me, that's why I go to onnit.com/model, that's onnit.com/M-O-D-E-L

to get the emulsified MCT oils which is like a coffee creamer. These are great to add to your coffees and teas, smoothies and things like that to get in a little bit of extra flavor plus all the benefits of MCT oils.

They're easy to stir, so you don't have to throw everything into a blender just to get a nice coffee drink, but also they taste good and they make the process of being healthy fun and enjoyable. So head over check them out, they've got vanilla, coconut, cinnamon swirl, and strawberry, it's one of my favorites.

So go to onnit.com/model for 10 percent off your entire purchase, not just for the MCT oil but all of the health and human performance supplements that Onnit carries and all of their fitness equipment, gear and so much other cool stuff. Head over there, check them out, onnit.com/model. Now back to the show.

Shawn Stevenson: Alright, we're back and we're talking with Kelsey Heenan and this is a powerful, awesome conversation. And before the break we were just getting into like what are some of the tangible action steps or the kind of structure around intuitive eating to help us to be able to be more free and have a better relationship with food. And so I want to go through a few of these. One of your tenants is no more dieting, right, no more dieting. What does that mean? This is like a big thing to say.

Kelsey Heenan: It is. And it's something that sounds scary when you first hear it if you're used to having dieting rules, but it's actually incredibly empowering when you start to practice this. Because like we were kind of talking about before if you truly had absence of rules and allowed yourself to feel the difference and how your body responds to different nutrients, you would be so much more empowered because you'd be fueled better once you learn those types of nutrients that really fuel your body well, and you wouldn't experience the mental breakdown that so many diets cause.

Shawn Stevenson: Yeah, yeah. Just the word dieting, it is a part, words have power, they have meaning, they have neuro associations that we often aren't aware of you know, there are certain words that just make us feel good, there are certain words that create and kinda conjure up fear, deprivation, restriction like dieting in and of itself is a word that comes with restriction mentally.

Kelsey Heenan: And dieting in definition really is a limited time, it's really not meant to be a lifestyle. "I'm going to go on a diet," it's just that type of phrase means short term verses, "I'm going to be this way for life." And it's something that if you are trying to get ready for a vacation or whatever, like okay, but it's also like there are so many ways that you can live a lifestyle and feel amazing year-round, be able to look the way you want to look and not have any of these mental barriers.

Shawn Stevenson: Yeah, These are some really good warning signs we can catch in ourselves, like if we're doing something with the purpose of like, "I'm getting in shape for my wedding/ I'm getting in shape for this vacation," whatever, you can, there is a higher probability, and I've seen this firsthand many times over again with clients I was working with, that your diet and your dedication to this lifestyle has and end date built into it.

And so it's really looking at like, "Okay, I'm taking on this new lifestyle that I am going to carry with me into this relationship with this experience," this can be a catalyst, absolutely. I think it's important and we can utilize goals for things like that but it's having it more, so— and let's talk about that because I think it's a really like broad thing to say this is a lifestyle versus a diet. What does that mean?

Kelsey Heenan: It's a great question because so many people go like, "Okay well then what do I eat? How do I be able to feel my body well, how do I be able to reach certain goals, and also honor your body in the process." And like we were saying, it's you can be informed about nutrients.

For example, if I get in a crazy hard leg workout, I did some lifting, I got in some interval training and I am just crushed. I know that my body is going to need some protein and some carbohydrates to really be able to refuel, repair, build that muscle and it's going to help me be able to be more energized.

And also I love carbs, and so that's like a beautiful way to look at it where it's like, "I know that this is going to feel my body incredibly well, help me work towards my goals and I can also honor my body," and I love rice, I love being able to eat sweet potatoes and potatoes and all these things that are so delicious. And so it's a great way to be able to create that balance.

Shawn Stevenson: Another one of these tenets is to burn your never ever list. And we talked about this a little bit already, but can you just define that a little bit more for us?

Kelsey Heenan: Sure. So a never ever list is the list of forbidden foods that a person has, and this obviously looks different for everybody and I had my own list when I was going through my eating disorder. And so I quite literally went through the list and accomplished overcoming these feared foods because, for example, I didn't eat red meat for 6 years because for whatever reason I was like, "I'm not going to eat it, not as good for me," whatever.

So I cut it out and there was this point where Dennis said, "Kels, I'm not cooking 2 meals," he loves to cook, I hate cooking, he said, "Kels, I am not going to cook 2

dinners anymore, you have to eat this meat, you cannot do this anymore." And I said, "Okay, let's do it." And I ate the meat and I was like, "Well, I actually like beef more than chicken."

And it was something that was, it was really powerful for me and me in my perspective is just, is something that is really important and helpful and I do believe that no food should be off-limits because then you can really create that ecosystem.

But going through and not having foods that are forbidden allows you to be able to enjoy foods periodically and not have like we were talking about the episodes where you just go on yo-yo's where, "I'm not going to have it," and then all of the sudden you overeat it because of that.

Shawn Stevenson: Right, right that's such a, man that is so powerful, you know. Because again, it holds a psychological dominion over our lives. And I love, Shaun T, so we were just talking about him before the show, he has this thing now, it's called doughnut Fridays, right and it's become like a phenomenon.

And for him, it's like again, being that fit, he's the fitness guy, he's been in more people's homes on their televisions than like anybody else in fitness. And maintaining that, like he had of course, he went through these phases with the dieting being very restrictive, but now he just like opened this door of like this is what we do, and even he's got twins, they are 2, they just turned 2, but they're like, "Doughnut Friday," like they know doughnut Fridays too.

But that doesn't mean that the overall structure, I mean the overall, yes I could say structure, but he enjoys feeling good as well, so he eats the majority of his diet foods that make him feel amazing but it just so happens that he is having his doughnut every Friday, a couple of doughnuts makes you feel good as well for a different reason.

But the majority of his diet is real whole foods, all the stuff we talk about. And so burn your never ever list, that reminds me of the story you mentioned when opening that pizza. So does it feel like that now?

Kelsey Heenan: Oh my gosh, no. I truly feel thankful that I don't experience those things anymore because so many people continue to do that, but treatment and therapy and practice and continually being like, no if I, for a long time I would, if I had a fear or any pain or anxiety around a certain food I knew that I had to eat it, I had to overcome it in that moment and if that gave me fear I was ordering it and I was going to do it.

And so the more I practice that, the easier it became. And then I didn't experience fear and I started to be like, "Wow, that was fun, I enjoyed that, that was a great time with my friends." And when you do that, when you practice that, it really it takes the fear and the power away from those disordered thoughts with that type of practice.

Shawn Stevenson: So what would you say to somebody that are like I'm burning my never ever list but I just do, I do want a pizza all the time, I want to eat pizza every day.

Kelsey Heenan: Yeah so a great foundation is to just figure out what does the majority look like in your life? And so for the majority of your meals try and choose foods that are whole nutrient-dense foods and then maybe have a few meals per week for your really enjoying those foods and honoring hunger and fullness is a huge piece of that.

And when you're really starting to listen to what your body is telling you, as far as, "Oh, I'm starting to get a little full," or, "I am still hungry," it's a really powerful thing because a lot of times people will under eat and they'll say, "I can only have a couple of bites of this," or whatever or even a nutritious meal, they are only allowing themselves a very small portion of everything. They end the meal still hungry. What happens later? They're still hungry, they're still thinking about food, food is constantly on their mind.

But what if they really allowed themselves to just satisfy their hunger where their stomach isn't too overly full but you're not experiencing hunger that kind of nice satiated feeling when you practice what that feels like you're not going to be thinking about food for the rest of the night and then reaching for whatever is in the cupboard afterward, it allows you to really be more mindful and that actually helps your body respond better.

Shawn Stevenson: And also I've heard you say if people are feeling like you want to have pizza every date try it, go ahead and give it a shot.

Kelsey Heenan: Honestly, that's what I tell, like if someone says that's me I say do it. Eat the pizza every single day and then report to me in a week how are you feeling, what is going on and it's a really cool thing because you see the walls, well first it's anxiety, like why would someone tell me that and then after a while they're like if they do practice that they're like, well that pizza kind of started to lose its luster after a while.

And a lot of people do experience that where it's like if pizza doesn't become this coveted thing that you can't ever have, it really takes the power away from it where you can pick and choose the moments where you enjoy it and it just

becomes so much easier.

Shawn Stevenson: I love this so much. And so you just mentioned, this is another tenet with intuitive eating to learn when you're hunger is satisfied, and this is just some of the things we can do is just of course slowing down, not being distracted when you're eating.

And this is something I would just see people are eating great food, high quality like all the stuff that they're "supposed to eat" but they inhale it, like it's gone, they are done 2, 3 times faster than everyone else, so they don't even get the chance to know that they've had enough, right. So is there anything else that people can do to be a little bit more attuned into what their body is saying when they're eating?

Kelsey Heenan: Yeah so those are great, those are great tips because so many people eat so fast, they are in the car, they are in front of the TV and they're not really feeling fullness. And so that's something that's really important to practice, it's just being mindful about how am I feeling, what are the types of foods that I'm eating, how is my energy after this meal, am I tired, am I lethargic, do I feel energized, what are these things that I'm feeling and being, just taking notes for a while on how your body is responding to these different types of meals it's really important.

And then pausing throughout the meal like you were saying is something that's really good and then also, if you find that you can't feel the fullness, that you don't know what that feels like, that you're constantly thinking about food, maybe go back and have a couple more bites of something, maybe that's something that you're experiencing mentally, sometimes if you just go back and have a couple more bites it's like okay I'm not thinking about food anymore, I'm good to go.

You could also think about am I tired at 2:00 PM, how am I feeling like maybe I'm not getting the right nutrients to fuel me well. There are just so many different elements that you can go through that are really helpful when you're learning what it feels like to listen to your body.

Shawn Stevenson: Perfect. There are several other ones that I would love to talk about but we'll just talk touch on 2 more really quickly. One of them is, and this is so huge, is the cope with feelings outside of food. Why is that?

Kelsey Heenan: So many people utilize food when they are feeling stressed or depressed or tired and just as a way of relaxation. And, of course, food is a great thing said enjoy with friends and it can be fun but sometimes it can be something that is just

used as a coping mechanism.

And so really being aware of that is a powerful thing because then you can get down to the root of how you're feeling to be able to cope with it in other ways, so food doesn't become the go-to source. So if you find that you're just mindlessly going to the cupboard or just continually eating and not really feeling that fullness and you're like, "Oh my gosh I ate way too much," finding other things outside of the food is so important.

So if you find maybe calling a friend or going on a walk or figuring out other types of activities to help you be able to feel the feelings and work through the feelings outside of the food is really important.

Shawn Stevenson: Absolutely, so important. Just a little quick tip here, again this, everything is still open and available even if you are stressed you're like, "You know what, I'm stressed I need some chocolate." Like this doesn't take that off the board it's just understanding like let's work with these feelings so we're not in this position as often.

But the best time to have that chocolate or the pizza is actually when you're not stressed when you're feeling good because your body's going to digest that food differently and that's one of the little tips that we talked about on another episode, but that's so good, so powerful. And this one is super important as well, is to acknowledge and respect your body and shape, to acknowledge and respect your own body and your own shape. Why is this an important factor to take into consideration?

Kelsey Heenan: Yeah, so many people have an ideal of what they want and don't have and it's so easy to compare with what someone else has and say, "I wish that I looked like this or like that." But if you really start to appreciate what your body does for you versus just what it looks like it's a really powerful thing.

And that's why I love to help people focus on building strength, like when they're trying to maybe make body composition changes or just feel better about themselves in general when we switch to focusing on strength versus a number on the scale or even like inches around your body, you're going to start building muscles, you're going to start dropping body fat and maybe looking the way that you want to look, but it becomes about what you get added to your life versus what you have to take away.

And so when someone really just comes to peace with who they are as an individual what their body does for them, all the amazing things about them outside of how they look they've become so much appreciative of who they are

and it just takes that stress away so much more.

Shawn Stevenson: Yeah. And what I really love, and this was the moment I was like I absolutely have to talk to her and have her on the show, is you did a post and you actually posted up some the comics that you get, the haters right, so the treasure trolls out there— no disrespect to treasure trolls, I'm sorry, treasure trolls got the jewel, they're cool.

But they are "internet trolls" and it was a lot of people don't do that, they don't highlight or share like what other people are saying to them and somebody who was kind of out in the public eye and people posting like, "Your shoulders are too muscular, whatever and all this judgment," and whack person is like even ill, and most people that would see you and even myself like I see you I think you look amazing, you're strong, you're functional, you're inspiring like you just, it is just apparent that you care about yourself and especially to know your story and where you are now like it's super inspiring for me.

But just people out of nowhere, they'll say stuff that they would never say to your face. So what about that aspect? When you're talking about to acknowledge and respect your own body and shape but yet we've got people that will judge you, how do we deal with that?

Kelsey Heenan: I love to use those opportunities to show others that it's okay that everyone experiences these things, no matter what you look like someone is going to say you're too this or too that for them, there's no one right way to look.

So other people are always going to say and have opinions about how you look and because it's so easy to look at someone else and be like, "Oh they're perfect," I never get hate or anything but it's really important to know like people often, sometimes they're just rude to be rude, but it really is often a reflection of how they feel about themselves.

If they're willing to say that to me, a stranger who they have no idea who I am, imagine what they're saying about themselves in their own head. And just the horrible, terrible things that they're experiencing because so many people go through that, even if they're not physically typing it into the comment, if you just go through social media it's so easy to be torn down by not only the looks of others but the lifestyles and the success and all of that through the highlight reel.

It's so easy but when you really take a step back and use those opportunities to show, "Hey, we're all human, let's learn from this and be able to appreciate what our bodies do for us," it's yeah, it's powerful.

Shawn Stevenson: Yeah, awesome. You are powerful and it's been really great just now following you and seeing what you're doing, it's opening up a really important conversation that we've touched on a little bit on the show but today I was just really grateful to have you on and to talk about this a little bit more because again, I think so many of us have fears around food, we have worries and concerns.

And you know of course just being honest about the fact that there is a difference, like when I was growing up I didn't know there was a difference with food, that's the stuff that you eat, that's that, it's food.

But there's a big difference in how it interacts with your cells, what it does with your genes and your DNA and cellular repair all this stuff, we get that. But it's also important to understand our psychology around this stuff and not allowing these things to kind of drive our lives and create more fears.

Kelsey Heenan: And those 2 things can co-exist, you can be informed and also respect your body and respect your preferences, those 2 things can co-exist and I think that a lot of people need to take a deep breath and allow that to sync in.

Shawn Stevenson: Yeah, it's so true. So where can people take a deep breath and hang out with you online?

Kelsey Heenan: Yes, so my personal Instagram is the DailyKelsey and there you'll see about my life and also I talk a lot about the relationship with food and exercise and your body and just creating a healthy, joyful life. And then you can also find my website at Daily Kelsey. And then my fitness website is HIIT Burn, so H-I-I-T-B-U-R-N and that's really the X-es and O-s of workouts and things like that.

Shawn Stevenson: Yeah you got some great programs, and one of my good friends who has been on the show as well, Michael Morelli, so you guys have Hiit Burn, is there HIIT Max as well?

Kelsey Heenan: HIIT Max as well, yeah. So we just brought our companies together to try and help more people.

Shawn Stevenson: Yeah and that's what you're doing. And thank you so much for coming to hang out with me, but more importantly, truly thank you so much for sharing your story and for working on yourself.

I know, even just hearing the story and kind of I'm a very visual person, just put myself in that situation where you're just breaking down in front of this pizza,

wow it's like a huge prison that you were able to become free from and it's just like super inspiring that you're opening up and sharing this story with so many people, so thank you.

Kelsey Heenan: Thank you for having me, I really appreciate it.

Shawn Stevenson: It was my pleasure, totally. Everybody, thank you so much for tuning into the show today, I hope you got a lot of value out of this episode. And hopefully, this got your wheels turning a little bit about your relationship with food and one of the big things for me is that we can have both, there is a big thing on social media, "get you a girl who could do both, get you a guy who could do both."

Get you a diet mindset that can do both, right, so we know about all these incredible intricacies and science with nutrition that we talk about here on the Model Health Show, nutrigenomics and all the different antioxidants and their capacities and all this cool stuff that we are still just scratching the surface on, it's really awesome. And it can empower us to create the bodies and the health that we want.

But we can also live a life of freedom and not be in fear of the things that we're quote "not supposed to eat" because for me all food has value and everything has value in life, Because the if anything it gives us contrast, right because I know for us we could think there are some pretty gnarly or bad things out there in the world but it gives us contrast, we can't have the sunny days and the appreciation of that without the cloudy ones.

And so at some point, even the Twinkie, for me it was Chocodile, I was a big Chocodile fan when I was a kid so it's the Twinkie covered in chocolate if you don't know. And that has value, all right, it's not wild-caught salmon, it's not organic broccoli, but if there's a zombie apocalypse and we're struggling to find food, that Chocodile is going to have a shelf life of about 1000 years, you know what I am saying, so it can keep me going for a day, like it still has its place and it has value.

Am I going to turn to the Chocodile on a daily basis— probably not because I value feeling good, but it's still something that's here that is an option for us to eat and it's just saying you know what, I accept that that's an option for me, I appreciate that's an option for me I just choose this, it's a much more powerful, empowering way to think versus like that's off-limits and I would never.

And creating that restriction for ourselves because it could just create some unhealthy behaviors. And I'm just using the Chocodile as an example, there's so many other things. Ding dongs, Ho-ho's— what's with the names, by the way.

Anyway, that's for another day. Listen, guys, I hope you got a lot of value out of this. If you did please share this out on social media, tag me, tag Kelsey and just let everybody know what you thought of the episode. I appreciate that so much. We've got some epic stuff coming your way very soon so be ready. Take care, have an amazing day and I'll talk with you soon.

And for more after the show make sure to head over to themodelhealthshow.com, that's where you can find all of the show notes, you can find transcriptions videos for each episode and if you've got a comment you can leave me a comment there as well.

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