

THE MODEL HEALTH SHOW

EPISODE 634

**The Top 20 Health &
Performance Lessons from the
Last 20 Years**

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SHAWN STEVENSON: Welcome to The Model Health Show, this is Fitness and Nutrition Expert Shawn Stevenson, and I'm so grateful for you tuning with me today. This is a very, very special episode. I just crossed my 20th year anniversary of working in health and wellness, and this has been an absolute crazy ride and a powerful experience. And what I wanted to do was to be able to package up something really valuable for you to help to celebrate this moment. And I'm going to share with you today 20 of the biggest lessons that I learned from 20 years working in health. Now, to kick things off, and these are not going to be in any particular order, but for me being a nutritionist, this one really speaks to my heart very, very deeply. And one of my biggest lessons in the last 20 years is that number one, your body is made from the food that you eat. This is something that was not really advocated or dissected or even glimpsed into in my university courses. When we were studying the nuclei of cells, we weren't getting the insight that this nuclei we're looking at is made from nutrients. When we're studying mitochondria, we weren't really getting the insight that this mitochondria is made from our menu.

Every single cell in our body is made from the food that we eat, whether we're talking about the cells of our heart, our brain, our skin, it's all made from food. When you see me, when you look in the mirror, you're looking at the food that you've eaten. You're looking at the food that this person has eaten and the nutrients that we've consumed or the lack thereof. And that's the power of food. So, when we're going to school for a set amount of years, investing all of this crazy money to get a university education, and we'll just say that we're studying to be a cardiologist and we're passionate about the heart, we're all about the heart, the bump-bump, the bump-bump. The cardiovascular system, that's our passion. We know that the number one killer, the number one killer is heart disease, still the number one killer in our world today, in particular here in the United States, is cardiovascular disease. And we want to do something about it. We get in the field, we put in the hours, and we get the education, but here's the problem, here's the fundamental flaw in our education system. That cardiologist, who spent an additional 12 years in learning and education and learning about the cardiovascular system and how to treat patients and medications and surgeries.

Not once is the average cardiologist when he's looking at his patient's heart, does he realize that he's looking at the food that his patient has eaten. There's a disconnect there, because he's not taught about nutrition, she's not taught about nutrition in their conventional education. It just doesn't happen. In our system of education today, food and nutrition was really... It's a soft science, alright? It's called a "soft science." It matters, but not really. We want to make sure you get some education, so you don't have a blatant deficiency, we don't want you to develop scurvy out here, we don't need... Pirates are gone, we don't need no more

scurvy. And so, this "soft science" is overlooked, and so if we are studying to be a cardiologist and we don't fundamentally understand that our patient's heart is made from the food they've eaten, their arteries, their capillaries, the blood running through their veins is all made from food. If we don't have that as a deep top of mind front and center revelation, we're totally missing the point. We're operating with something that we don't even understand because we don't know where it comes from. We think that the heart just shows up, you got a good ticker or a bad ticker. No. Your ticker could be made from Snickers. Your ticker could be made from high quality, sustainable real foods as well.

The quality of our foods is going to determine the quality of ourselves. And that's going to determine the quality of our organs and our organ systems, and the out-picturing of our health. And so, in 20 years in this field, for me, this particular revelation changed everything because when I got into this field, reluctantly... I didn't know that I'd be working in health and fitness, I was dealing with my own chronic health issue. And if you know my story, at 20 years old, I was diagnosed with a so-called incurable arthritic condition of my spine, where I had two herniated disc, severe degeneration at my L4 and L5-S1 disc, and this is something relegated to people who were in their senior years, and I was just 20 years old. And that's what my physician told me, he told me that when he put the scan up, he said, "You have the spine of an 80-year-old man." And I didn't even have any context as to what that even meant, except that sound's kind of bad. And I asked him, "Is there anything that I could do?" I was used to working with my trainers and my coaches as an athlete, I didn't have any concept of, "This can't get better." Until I asked him, "Does this have anything to do with what I'm eating? Should I change the way I'm exercising?"

And now I used to think that I didn't have any grounds to ask him this question, but what it was, I did have an university nutritional science class. Because when I initially went to school, I decided, "You know what? I'm going to go to school, I'm going to be a doctor. I'm going to take this pre-med track at this private university, because I believe that that's what I should do based on my environmental exposures." Am I saying that I knew any doctors? No. I didn't know anybody who was working in healthcare, let alone who was a physician. But what I did was I saw people who looked like me on television, seemingly happy, having a family, successful, who were doctors or lawyers. So, I just went with that. I didn't know what success meant, I didn't know what happiness meant, I didn't even know what the entire field of medicine and healthcare was really built upon and how it operated. I didn't know any of that stuff, and still people who are in it working, they don't know. So that was a driving force for me to do it, it wasn't really based on anything visceral.

And so, in that education, when I'm taking this class, my professors are not, again, making that cognitive connection to where like, "Okay, so we're learning about our mitochondria and we're learning about the makeup of a cell, and so all of these different cellular components, and

we're learning about the cell membrane, and we're learning about these protein channels, all these things." There's a disconnect because it doesn't seem like that has anything to do with me. Like, "Okay, I understand, we're studying the cell, we're dissecting an animal, a frog, but I don't understand how this relates to me and my livelihood and my experience as a human being." And so, I was kind of just disenchanted by the whole thing and I got out of it, based on television I decided another track, I was like... I saw the movie Boomerang with Eddie Murphy, he had that swagger, and it was funny and cool. So, it's Eddie Murphy and Martin Lawrence was in the movie, David Allan Grier. Shout out to David Allan Grier. Another legend. Halle Berry. It's when Halle Berry like really like... Yeah, and of course, Robin Givens was in the movie, and so he was working in marketing.

So, I was like, "Oh, that's cool." "I didn't know that was a thing. People who look like me. Like my... I'mma do that." So, I got out of this health track, but fate had other plans for me indeed, because here I am sitting in this doctor's office about a year after making that decision to change my focus on my major in school, and I have this so-called incurable spinal condition. And having that nutritional science class, again, it didn't really connect to me as anything visceral for me. And so, having that experience with food and a little bit of a university education, I asked him, "Does this have anything to do with what I'm eating? Should I change the way that I'm exercising?" And he looked at me like I was from another planet. He looked at me like I had sprouted two more heads, he was just so confused like, "What?" He didn't say what? But he had that face like, "What?" And these were the exact words that he said to me after I ask that question, he said, "This has nothing to do with what you're eating. This is something that just happens. I'm sorry that it happened to you. We're going to do what we can help you to manage this."

And so that meant... And he told me, "We're going to get you a medication to help to subdue some of this pain, we're going to possibly look at surgery for you. You're young right now. So, we're going to give it a little time." And that was it. He sent me on my way. Now, looking back on it, he said, "This has nothing to do with what you're putting in your mouth, but go ahead and put these pills in your mouth." Of course, what we put into our mouth matters because it's literally making the very tissues of my spine, that decision is coming from the end of my fork, all of my body is going to be able to actually build my tissues with. And there is an internal intelligence in what our body is doing with nutrients. Your body has this intelligence as so far beyond anything that we understand right now. It knows what to do, oftentimes, we just need to get out of the way and also provide help to support and create the environment to where your health can manifest, to where your genes... Because what we're talking about here is nutrigenomics and nutrigenetics.

So, our genetic template has a certain resonance with certain foods based on our heritage, and also every food that we eat influences our genetic expression overall anyways,

instantaneously. So, we have the power, the power isn't just in our hands, it's at the end of our forks. And so going through that process of getting well, it took two years of pain, excessive weight gain, because I was still eating my drive-through diet almost every day, I was eating fast food. And when I didn't have a couple of dollars to go to Burger King or McDonald's or even Dairy Queen, low-key I don't know what it was, I had this thing with Dairy Queen burgers, I don't know why, all right. Dairy Queen burger is where you go when you really don't have a taste for a burger. You know what I mean? It's like, yeah, it's not the best, but when I don't even have a couple of dollars for that, I got my packs of Ramen Noodles, 10 cents a pack with that packet, a little packet, with the little animals on the packet, and the Lord knows what's in that packet.

You know this got that MSGizzle in there for sure. Or I'd eat a box of macaroni and cheese for a meal, or family size can of ravioli, more processed foods, ultra-processed food. And was I in the minority of the population doing this? Absolutely not. According to the BMJ, one of our most prestigious medical journals, approximately 60% of the average Americans diet is made of ultra-processed foods. It is the norm; it is the majority of what we're eating today. And so, our society at large is making their bodies, making their brains out of very low-quality food-like substances, it's not even food. And that's part of the problem, that's why we're seeing such multi-pronged epidemics of chronic disease today. And one of the biggest revelations and one of the game changers, one of the things that I'm hoping to instill in your heart and in your mind and to keep paying that forward for the people that you're going to impact as well, is that food can change everything. Your body, every single cell in your body is literally made from the food that you eat. So that is my number one lesson here in 20 years of working in the field of health and wellness and fitness. That Revelation is an absolute game changer.

So now we're going to move on to number two. Again, this is no particular order, but number two on this list of 20 biggest lessons from 20 years in health. Number two is that exercise is not about looking good. Alright? Exercise is not about looking good. Now this is going to be a little bit difficult for our brain to side with. We've got a bias, we attribute exercise, we see the commercial, the sweat dripping, and the abs and the butt and the arms, and all these things. We see the side effect of exercise, but exercise is a relatively new invention by humans as well, because what we've done is we've created environments to get some physical inputs. Many of which that we would get if we were living in our natural conditions, and we were active and we were doing things like building our homes and forging and making clothes and hunting and training for the defense of our tribe and all these things. We would be lifting heavy things on a regular basis, but now we found ways with... Of course, this is evolutions in science as well, to be able to perfect some of these inputs with certain movements, to express more of the human body. Wonderful. But here's the thing, this is a newer invention, we're trying to replicate what exercise really is. We've put a label on exercise that has created cognitive association towards looking sexy, but what exercise is in its truest form?

The point of exercise is to drive two major processes in the body. Number one, exercise is designed to improve assimilation of nutrients, so for example, we know that if we're taking in a variety of key nutrients. So, I would just say something pretty superficial in its function, a multi-vitamin. And I'm saying superficial because you're generally going to be coming in the form of synthetic versions of those nutrients that would be better assimilated in food, but we'll just say that we're taking in a multi-vitamin. We know that if we're taking in this particular multivitamin and we're sedentary, versus we're taking the multi-vitamin and we're walking, we know that when we're walking and consuming this multi-vitamin, we're going to have a higher assimilation, higher uptake of those nutrients into ourselves.

So, exercise and movement is about assimilation of nutrients, number one. Number two, and this is probably the most important part because it's kind of the most visceral. Exercise is about the elimination of metabolic waste products, exercise helps our body to process and to "detoxify" certain areas, systems, cellular processes, but to help to, again, eliminate metabolic waste products. I love that distinction, very slight distinction we've got with the word exercise and the word exorcise. Now there's a slight distinction here, but these words are very similar. To exorcise means to kind of eliminate, to get things out, and exercise, just very, very similar, but it's also similar in its functionality in the real world. So primarily one of the drivers of this performance is our lymphatic system. And if you remember from anatomy class, we see this picture of a human body and the head is usually turned to the side, got the hands splayed open like that, and you see the circulatory system and all these viny things going on, maybe we even see the nervous system and this kind of essentially this tree extending down and all the vines extending through the human body.

Now what we're looking at when see the circulatory system is remarkable, and it has a pump that helps to move everything throughout our body. Our heart is kind of this glorified pump, but our heart is so much more than that, so much more going on with the heart than just pumping stuff throughout our bodies. And also, how efficient can your heart be at like really pumping blood through your toes? Just think about it, there's some other activity going on, even our arteries have this property to help to pump and move things through. Now, our lymphatic system, which has kind of a similar viewpoint where it's just kind of extending, it has this branching happening in the body, we have four times more lymph than we have blood. Our lymphatic system is really akin to an extra cellular waste management system. And this is where also a lot of our immune cells and immune activity is happening, critically important. Now, this lymphatic system that we all have, being this kind of cellular waste processing plant, it doesn't move unless we move, it doesn't have a pump. And this is why exercise is so important because this lymphatic fluid that, again, there's a lot of immune activity, there's a lot of metabolic waste that's dumping into the system.

If we're not moving, this gets stagnant, it gets polluted and it get real nasty real fast. And the out-picturing of that is going to be disease and dysfunction of all types. There's so many different expressions on what that can look like when we're sedentary. So, for one person, and this clogged stagnant lymph system can lean towards the development of cancer, for another person, the development of heart disease, for another person, the development of obesity. But overall is going to create dysfunction, is going to create the conditions to where disease is likely. And that's what exercise is really about. If we can start to truly... If we're using science-based medicine, we have to prescribe exercise to every single patient who's coming in, our genes expect us to move, our DNA, literally expect us to have this movement input consistently. Today we have the most sedentary population in the history of humanity. We're all about our creature comforts, we found creative ways to do less and less and less and less, but by doing so, we're pulling out a vital input for our health. And so that's what exercise is really about, and what we're doing today is we're trying to find ways to replicate what we would be naturally getting through our evolution.

And it's cool. Again, it's awesome, we have cars. You know what I'm saying? Some places is far to get to, but for some stuff, like we might hop in a car for something that might be a 20-minute walk. We've outsourced so many of our movement inputs to conveniences. So, it's just finding more creative ways to be more human. That's what it's really about. That's what exercise is about. Side effect, you might get a little sculpt-ty sculpt going on. Side effect might be the out-picturing of some sexiness, we'll just call it what it is it. But that's a side effect. Nice side effect, but not the main reason for exercise.

So, let's move on to number three here on my 20 biggest lessons from 20 years in health, and number three is, sleep is the irreplaceable force that binds your health together. Me being a nutritionist, I didn't give much credit to sleep when it comes to the expression of our health, our fitness, and also our disease states. But today I know that our sleep quality is in many ways more powerful than our diet and our exercise combined. And this is because sleep truly is irreplaceable, your body can adapt and adjust to so many different nutrient inputs as well as movement inputs, but as soon as you take that sleep away, everything starts to crumble so quickly.

We can go a substantial amount of time without eating food and our body can actually get better in many cases from having moments of fasting, but sleep deprivation even one night can start to totally screw up our metabolism, our cognitive function, and more. Just one night of sleep deprivation, 24-hour sleep debt, for example, has been found to dramatically decrease our insulin sensitivity and also to decrease our leptin sensitivity. So, this is why we tend to be a lot more hungry, craving, especially sweet starchy things whenever we're sleep deprived. And I know this, again, this is for me too, this is just automatic. If there's a time where maybe I'm... Got a lot going on, traveling a lot, that kind of thing, and I notice like, "You know what? French

toast is, I don't know, it's like a vibe right now." Like, it just... Thoughts that I wouldn't normally think, those crazy thoughts start coming up.

This is not to vilify a French toast, by the way. When in France, as they say, you know what I mean? But overall, I don't want that to be normalized for me. But if I'm sleep deprived, I'm going to have a much bigger draw towards low quality, high sugar, high carbohydrate foods. And why is this? Evolution. So, one of the things that we see... Research at UC Berkeley, for example, did brain imaging scans, and looked at the scan of a well-rested brain and a sleep-deprived brain. They found that the sleep-deprived brain had far less activity in the prefrontal cortex. So, this is the part of the brain that's responsible for decision making, for social control, for distinguishing between right and wrong. Emphasis on social control and being able to control yourself.

And they found heightened activity in the amygdala. So, this is a part of the brain that's more associated with emotional responses, and also it plays a big role in survival. So, we're going into a survival mode. So, we're putting our brain in a deficit, we're putting our brain in a position to where we're probably not going to make the healthiest choices for ourselves. And this happens just in one night, in one night of sleep deprivation. Now, just to be clear, it's not all like everything just falls apart. It's not like that. One night of sleep deprivation, our body recovers very nicely, a few hours even here and there. I'm talking about 24-hour sleep debt. So, that's a short-term sleep debt. And so, but it does happen quickly because if that one day turns into two, turns into three, turns into your normal state... For many people, they're not getting the sleep that their body requires almost ever and wondering why again we're seeing this epidemic of chronic disease and dysfunction. And so, what the researchers also found, again, is that with that reduced activity in the prefrontal cortex, there's also a reduction in blood flow.

There's actual reduction in nutrients getting to that part of the brain, i.e., we're getting dumber. The prefrontal cortex is not getting nourished, a less intelligent version of ourselves starts to show up. And so, what do we do if we're not getting glucose to that part of the brain that's essential for survival, we got to find glucose. Got to get glucose in the environment. And that's when we start to do our modern-day hunting of going to the bakery section or, you know what I'm saying, going to grabbing, looking through our kid's Halloween candy. So, that's what's going to tend to happen. And in addition to this, and this is a... Here's what's crazy, 20 years, Oh my gosh, ah! I can't believe, it's so weird. So weird. Over this experience in these 20 years, I... Man, I don't even know how this happened, to be honest. Like, sometimes I look at this in awe, but I wrote Sleep Smarter and yeah, wow. It's so crazy to think about what that book has accomplished. It's in libraries in other countries. It's been translated into 20... I believe, 22 different languages. Now, these are all separate foreign publishing deals that have approached my agents and that kind of... I got agents. Wow! Crazy. Alright, Stevenson.

Don't think this stuff gets lost on me, 'cause all of this is super weird. I'm from... I spent the majority of my adulthood living in Ferguson, Missouri. And I'm just, again, the "food desert." And there was no gyms, there's no yoga studio, there's no access to healthy food. I had to go outside of my environment to find wellness. And now I'm doing work to help to bring wellness into the communities that need it most. And a big part of that is education. Because for me, it wasn't just about access. The main thing was about access to information and education and connectivity to that education. Once I learned, and once I learned that it mattered, I knew that I had personal agency to make a difference. And so, in writing *Sleep Smarter*, which I did have this passion for writing that stems back from my childhood and through school and my teacher Mrs. Blackmore in eighth grade, putting my poem in the school newspaper. Like, these little moments, really, these are special moments for me, really special moments. And I remember being a kid just being like, "Wow, I can actually create, I can create anything with these words. I can create something that other people can have an experience with."

And so, in writing *Sleep Smarter*, I was just... The reason that I wrote the book is I was simply addressing a need in the health and wellness space that was not being met. I actually had read some books related to sleep wellness and they're little bore... Little bore-y. Little boring. Little, they just a little... Little boring, little long winded. A little bit... It just didn't connect to me. It didn't have a visceral connection. It definitely wasn't going to be something I could pass along to my mom or to a friend, and it just wasn't making sleep sound sexy. And so, I wanted to do something to make sleep sound like something that people appreciated. To flip a switch in our minds, to create an appreciation around it. And also, to create a sense of empowerment using clinically... There's 21 clinically proven strategies to improve your sleep quality. And so, peer reviewed, scientifically validated practices that we can start implementing right now that can instantaneously improve our sleep quality just by implementing a few things. And we don't have to turn our world upside down in order to get better benefits. And so obviously the stories that I've had access to, the places that that book has put me, whether it's at Google or on national television or teaching at some of the most prestigious universities in the world, like, it's... I'm just blown away. I'm truly blown away.

But I do realize that. And this is, it's taken me almost 20 years to really appreciate this. That it's not just the information, it's also the person. And I've had to work on myself to be able to accept that, that I played a role, I was able to put myself in position to be myself, to express these thoughts, but coming from a position of somebody who's been through a lot, from somebody who has a breadth of experience in a wide variety of cultures, even myself, my makeup is a wide variety of cultures. And so that is what made it take off the way that it did, and to be in all these different countries and to make the impact. And I'm just... Every day I'm in awe about it and I'm so grateful. But within that, I shared stats on how sleep deprivation dramatically increases the risk of cancers and heart disease, and list goes on and on.

All, again, peer reviewed data that's readily accessible but most people didn't know that. Today I'm grateful to say that sleep wellness in this conversation has been normalized, in the health and wellness space in particular, this is... People's... It's nothing new, and they know about the blue light and all these different things, but they act like they've known this stuff forever. But bro, you just found out about this. But the point is to make it normalized in our culture. So, it's not just our little bubbles because... There's this thing about preaching to the choir, it's being able to expand that out. Can that idea, can that impact go outside of your little bubble of health and wellness superiority and be able to truly help other people and invite them in? Not just force them in, but invite them in. Create a level of resonance and attraction so that people want to implement these things and to get better sleep.

So again, sleep is the irreplaceable force that binds your health together. The magic is happening on that mattress. It is not, you know... Both ways, you know that. But I'm talking about sleep here. So, moving on. Again, 20 biggest lessons from 20 years in health. Number four is, we make choices based on our perception of ourselves. We make choices based on our perception of ourselves. The number one driving force of the human psyche is to stay congruent with the beliefs that we have about ourselves and about the world around us, that determines the choices that we make. We're not just willy-nilly making choices out here or deciding our thoughts proactively. Our thoughts, our habitual thoughts are based on who we believe ourselves to be. We think thoughts that are congruent with who we believe ourselves to be. Now, here's the rub. We can change those thoughts, but we have to change our perception of ourselves.

We can change the outer activities and our habits, but we have to change our perception of ourselves. And so, I even shared, I've had to work on myself to even be in a position where I could receive the accolades for... Again, it's 20 years for me. It just doesn't seem like it's been 20 years because I've just been enjoying the process and just giving, just focused on giving and sharing and educating and learning. And it's been hard. It's been... Because it's so much. There's so much to it. And there's so much to learn and to go through and to synthesize. So, it's been a lot of hard work, but I've enjoyed the process. And so, I don't look for that kind of thing, that kind of feedback or accolade. I'm not doing it for that. But it matters to just take a moment. I had to work on myself to be able to... Because from where I'm from, you just... You sacrifice yourself.

That's what you do. You sacrifice yourself. I watched my mom sacrifice her body and her health in order to feed her kids. My mom would sell her blood to get a few dollars to feed us. My mother would work overnight at convenience store to get money to feed us. And one of those nights working at that convenience store, she was attacked. She was stabbed several times, fending off an attacker, and she lived to tell the tale. But in that moment, when she went to the hospital, the doctor told her, if it wasn't for you being a heavyset woman, being

overweight, you would've died. Those knife wounds would've killed you. By the way, my mom's a tough woman. She subdued the guy until the police got there, which is crazy. But to get that input from a traumatic experience that you being fat is your protection, how easy do you think it's going to be for my mother to ever lose weight?

But she sacrifices herself. She's... That's just passed down. Sacrifice yourself. Sacrifice yourself. And so, in order to survive, ironically, you've got to be a little bit self-centered, but you're always looking out for your little tribe, your family, you got them. And so having that extreme where I move away from my family, and now I'm living in Ferguson, I'm trying hard to break the cycle of trauma and sickness in my family and graduate from college. Nobody in my family's ever done it. So, I'm met with all kinds of obstacle. I don't know what I'm doing, I'm just figuring out as I go along. But school was easy for me. Like, this one of those could be a nature versus nurture thing. That was not the issue. It was all the stuff around school.

And so, going through that process, now I'm isolated though because I'm no longer with the tribe. I'm doing something that's not acceptable, not normal in my tribe. I'm trying to better myself. I'm trying to break patterns. So now I'm isolated, self-centered, still protection mechanism because of being in an environment where there's violence looming all the time. And so now, after I get myself physically well and mentally well, I swing the pendulum all the way to the other side, back to self-sacrifice. But now at a grander scale to where I just want to give and serve and give every single thing that I have. And sometimes that can leave nothing for me. And so, I went through that phase. But being able to find a healthy balance of giving your gift and loving and caring for yourself is one of the things that I'm really going to be working more towards educating folks on, especially who are in the health space, because it's so important.

The tenet is, Healer, heal thyself. And there's so many levels to that. And so, especially for our world today, we need more people than ever who are being of service and who are educating people and helping people to get well. We've got to take care of ourselves too. And so, it's a both end world. It doesn't have to be one or the other. And if you're not aware of that, or given that education, we can swing back and forth on this pendulum. And sometimes we can find ourselves getting stuck, like a seesaw, basically, where we're up, it's kind of like an elephant being on a seesaw with the chihuahua, where this isolation is the elephant. Or it can be flipped around to where constantly giving and people pleasing and sacrificing ourself can be the elephant.

So, we have to find a place of balance, because we are here, of course, to connect, to love each other. But as we're going to talk about, another important lesson is really being able to be mindful about caring for ourselves. So again, at its core, we make decisions, we make choices based on our perception of ourselves. We do the things, the activities that we believe we're

deservant of, or that is available for us, accessible to us, all of these things. We make decisions, our thoughts, our activities, our results are based on our perception of who we are. And when we do something outside of that, that's why it's uncomfortable. It's uncomfortable to change our habits. It's uncomfortable to even change our story. We could tell ourselves that we are going to think differently, do something differently, and then our hardwired biochemistry is just like, "Nah, you're not. Nah-uh, you know yourself. That's not who you are." And it can try to pull us back.

But the great thing about you is that you have infinite capability to change this biochemistry. You have the ability to think the thoughts that you want to think. You get to literally choose your thoughts. We do have habitual automatic thoughts. Absolutely. There's even a habitual question. It's called instinctive elaboration, where we're habitually asking a question to ourselves and scanning the environment to find answers to the question, the dominant question, which could be, why don't people like me? Why am I always getting hurt? Or could be, why is my life so good? Why do I keep on having these wonderful people show up in my life? We get to choose. But oftentimes we're not given the key. Well, let me be clear. Oftentimes we're not told that we already have the key.

And so, for me, this is one of the biggest revelations in the last 20 years, is that real change starts from changing our perception of who we are and helping to create conditions for ourselves and others so they can start to see themselves differently and see the world differently. That's where change comes from. Number five, our relationships are the biggest external influence on our health and happiness. You know that. We know that experientially, if we're talking about external inputs, our relationships hugely influence the choices that we make. I remember being in school and they talk about peer pressure, "Don't give in the peer pressure." That's all the pressure there is. There's only peer pressure. That's all that's out there on the streets. Somebody's always influencing us to do something. Of course, we make the ultimate decision, but our friends, our family members, our coworkers, our exposures deeply influence the choices that we make.

If we're hanging out with people and everybody's like, "Let's stop at KFC," whatever, you're stopping at KFC. 99% likelihood. You're not going to be the "weird one" is like, "No, let's go ahead and actually pick up a green juice." It doesn't fit the modality when we all just left the club and we're going to white castles and you talking about finding a green juice. Especially, if you're from Missouri like I am, where you just don't find green juices out there like that. In LA, Wow! Yeah. All over the place. And so again, your environment is going to... Specifically the people in your environment, is going to have a huge impact on the choices that you make, and also how you perceive yourself because we're social creatures. And recently, and this is one of my favorite conversations I had on Dr. Daniel Goleman, who was really helping to articulate. He's the author of Emotional Intelligence. That term was put into popular culture by Dr. Daniel

Goleman. So being able to be in a position, which is, again, so weird for me still to this day, to be able to talk to these individuals and also to have them as friends and colleagues is just surreal and powerful. But he was articulating the newly discovered social human brain.

There's a part of our brain that is always constantly trying to associate and interact with other people. And researchers at Princeton University found that the human brain literally syncs up when we're in conversation with other people. Our brains start to mirror each other. Our brain activity. We are... It's not just... We just see a certain spectrum of light. We're very kind of rudimentary in how we're built if we really think about it. We've got a certain spectrum of everything that we exist within. We think that's everything. That's the problem. We think that's everything. We see birds flying in form and interacting with each other, and bees and all these other things in nature having this invisible connection and their ability to interact with each other, that it just seems like, "Wow, it's amazing." The hive mind, but we think we're different. This is how we're designed. Our brains sync up with other brains. And so, you should be very mindful of who you're sharing a brain space with. Because it is 1000% affecting you. Does this mean you run away from people you deem to be toxic? Not necessarily. Because you might be a little toxic too. We're all in process.

Does this mean we have to sacrifice ourselves if somebody is truly detrimental to our wellbeing? No, absolutely not. But we have to grow ourselves, work on ourselves to be able to discern the difference. And again, there's a part of this process is having standards about our friendships and making room. I can't stress this enough. So often we get caught up in our own little worlds that we miss out on the fact that there are billions of people on this planet. This planet is enormous and gorgeous and vast and complex and amazing, and there's so much, but we get caught up on this one person or one person's idea, one person's belief about us. And it just, it just takes over our consciousness. This person said this thing about me, and it just like messes up our whole thing. We have to realize that in order to bring in... Because even though life is so vast and expansive the universe itself, we are still a single entity. We're a single person. We're, of course, we're connected to everybody. See, this is getting into the little different pathways we can go down. But the bottom line is, as an individual, we have a set amount of time, in our construct of time and kind of expansive energy that we can allot to certain things. And so, it matters.

And so, if that time is filled up with relationships that are detrimental, that are harmful to our bodies, to our minds, we cannot truly have better come into our life if we're so focused on the toxicity. So sometimes we have to make room and you have the ability to make choices about your relationships. We're so powerful. But we can construct stories and tell ourselves that this is what I'm stuck with. This is my family that I'm stuck with. These are friends I'm stuck with. No, not true. Not true. You are part of the human family. Your family is expansive. We can all be rooted back to the same beginning. I'm not talking about like a House of Dragons, like

everybody hooking up in the family kind of thing. I'm talking distant, distant, distant, distant, distant, distant, distant cousins, alright?

But we're all related. We're all family. That's super weird. That just got into a weird place. But it's true. So, the stories we tell ourselves, this is what I... This is who I am now. No. Make room. When we make room, we create the opportunity for better to come in. But be clear, when you make room, you need to be very clear on your standards. Because what we'll tend to do is go right back to what we're used to. Because again, we are making choices based on our perceptions of who we are and the world around us. So, we start to have higher standards. Part of that, again, is working on ourselves. So, the greatest gift that I've experienced, I'm going to tell you this, I don't talk about this. The greatest gift that I've experienced in the last 20 years and starting this show, nearly 10 years ago, I had no idea that this would happen.

The greatest gift that I've received is my friendships by far. It's nothing else even remotely close to that. It's the greatest gift that I've received. And this is coming from somebody who has a tendency towards being a lone wolf who's in a research paper or reading a book, who's writing a lot of isolation, telling you that my friendships that have come from this experience come from doing this show, come from being out here and speaking at events and making an impact. That's the greatest gift that I've received. The people who are in my life right now. It is nuts. It's nuts. One of the people that comes over to my house most often is Michael Beckwith. And I can't even tell... I watched him on this film when I was living in Ferguson, Missouri with barely two nickels to rub together. And now my guy, incredible mentor, and friend. And we spend time together. It's just... How did that even happen?

And somebody else... One of the last times he was over, another person that was over at the same time was Laila Ali. Laila Ali, undefeated, undisputed boxing champion. You know that name. You know that name Ali. Her father Muhammad Ali, Greatest of all time. When I tell you it didn't skip her, oh my gosh. Like everything she does is great 'cause she left... After she retired from boxing and beating everybody, beating everybody. Goes to Dancing with the Stars, kills it on that, goes to Chopped, the cooking show, wins it. Goes again, wins it. She only knows excellence. And the thing I know about Laila that most people don't know, she does things herself. If her name is on it, she is heavily involved.

She takes it so seriously. But even within that, that could be a stressor for her because she's taken the time to invest so much of her life force in being excellent. And so even recently, like she's found one of her favorite things to do to create that sense of normalcy, is cooking for her family. She's an amazing cook, one of the coolest food experiences I've ever had is going to Laila's house and having her food, amazing. And we share with her, we've been making recipes from her for years, especially the holidays, around holiday time, we're making recipes from Laila Ali. And right now, it's even easier because we have access to her signature spice

blends that we always keep in our cabinets. So, she's got these incredible spice blends that are done the right way, no additives, no fillers, no toxicants and she actually gives you the portions that you deserve in the spices themselves.

They're 100% organic, non-GMO, no sugar, again, no chemicals, no fillers. These spices taste amazing and there's a spice for every occasion, but also holidays in particular. This is a really special time. And I talked with her, and I was just like, "We use your holiday recipes, is there something that you can do for folks to get access to some of these holiday recipes?" And so, if you go to lailaali.com/model and you get her six-pack bundle of her spice blends, you get access to her holiday cookbook, the digital copy of that for free. So, head over to lailaali.com/model. That's L-A-I-L-A-A-L-I.com/model. And by the way, you get 10% off her spice blends, period. So, any of her spice blends, if you just want to grab one or a three-pack bundle, you get 10% off everything.

But right now, this is a limited time. If you go to lailaali.com/model, you get the six-pack bundle of her spice blends, you get a free digital copy of her holiday cookbook. So just super good stuff, great just in time for the holidays. So excited. Every single holiday we're making Laila Ali recipes. So again, truly the number one thing that's just kind of blown me away in this experience the last 20 years for me personally, is my relationships. And I'm very grateful for that. Every single day in my meditation, I give thanks. I give thanks for my amazing wife. I give thanks for my kids, my mother-in-law, and my friends. And I just go through my mind, and I give thanks for each and every one of them. And of course, like I can't... You skip through some people sometimes but I'm just so grateful because it really makes life worth living, having great relationships.

And no matter where you are in your relationships right now, you have so much power to influence and to create conditions where you have great people in your life and that's what you deserve. But we have to have the audacity to have standards. And by the way, it's not like I'm batting a thousand in relationships, by the way. You're going to have a couple of duds. So, and that's part of the process. It's not a straight line to great relationships. And so, but having those standards, learning from mistakes along the way, it really helps to foster conditions where you have great relationships.

Alright, moving on to number six in my 20 biggest lessons from 20 years. Actually, number six is, achieving a great state of health and fitness is not a straight line. And this is part of the frustration that we might have when we set out to accomplish a goal. Whether that goal is to improve a certain part of our health, maybe it's to reverse our insulin resistance. Maybe it's to train our body to develop certain muscles or certain appearance or physique or maybe it's to heal from an injury.

None of these things are a straight line and somebody needs to tell you that because contrary to the marketing and the 30 days to this, whatever the case might be, we can make great change obviously in 30 days. But you are going to meet with some obstacles. You're going to have things happen that take you off your path. You're going to have stumbling points along the way. It's not a straight line, but that destination that you are going towards, if you keep moving forward, you are going to get there. We just have to, part of it is the defeat that we experience mentally when we meet an obstacle, when we meet a setback, more people need to tell you that you're going to have setbacks, you're going to have bumps along the way. It's not going to be easy all the time. You're going to have moments of ease. You're going to have moments of joy. You're going to have moments of grace and freedom and fluidity and flow. But you're also going to have moments where you question everything. You're going to have moments where you struggle. You're going to have moments where you think that you've messed everything up. But the reality is success is not a straight line.

The road to the health that you desire is not a straight line. You're going to get there, just keep moving forward. Things are going to happen and that's okay. That's part of the process because what it's really doing is qualifying you. It's qualifying you so that when you arrive, you truly do appreciate it and you care for it. So that's number six. On this list of 20 lessons from 20 years, we're going to move on to number seven. Number seven is, and this is a huge revelation for me that I've been really working to instill in my friends and colleagues who are working in healthcare. And this is that no one wants to be unhealthy. I've yet to meet a single person... In my clinical practice, I never met a single person who didn't want to be healthy. They might have been dramatically unhealthy and have all the stories as to why they can't be healthy.

Whether it's a sense of learned helplessness because they've tried so many things. It might be from a lack of self-love and self-belief that they deserve to be healthy. It might be from a story they tell themselves about accessibility or a story they tell themselves about how hard it is. We construct these images to help to solidify the perception that we can't be healthy. But I promise you, I've never met one person who didn't want to be healthy. Now we also, there might be that instance where it's just like, "I'm going to die anyway, so I'm just going to drink this Coca-Cola every day 'cause I like that Coca-Cola." That person still, if they had a choice, if they could have their Coca-Cola and have the body of their dreams and the health and all the thing and all, they would take it. It's not that they don't want to be healthy, it's that they... Again, their value system might be distorted. There's going to be reasons why people have the story. And unfortunately, as health practitioners, we will construct these things as well. That they won't do it. They're not going to listen anyways. That's a huge part of the problem where today we have almost 70% of our citizens are on pharmaceutical drugs. At least one, at least one drug class.

Now we're talking about 40%-50% being on two or more drug classes. It's absurd with all of the downstream side effects, because as we know, if we are prescribed a statin, we see about a 30%... And we'll put the study up for everybody to see. We'll see anywhere in the ballpark from we'll just say 20% upwards of 99% increase incidents of developing diabetes in observational studies and in clinical studies we'll see upwards of near 20% increase risk of developing diabetes when taking a statin. We know about the cognitive decline; we know about the muscle atrophy and pain. It doesn't come without a cost. What we're doing is mis-educating our citizens on their biomarkers, number one. And also, we're trying to treat a symptom with a drug instead of helping people to remove the cause. And we do that because we'll tell ourselves they're not going to change. And if we're really about this work, our job is to help to create conditions where they choose to change.

That is the most important job. That is the most important job that we have as healthcare professionals, helping people by creating the conditions in which... Because ultimately, it's not... We can't make them change. Whenever you make somebody do something, they're going to rebel. It's helping them to choose it for themselves. Doctor means teacher. It's not about getting back to that. It's about moving forward with that wisdom, that that's what it's about. It's not this parental thing, it's not this controlling relationship. It's not this superiority. It's about service. It's about teaching. It's about empowering. So that's one of the big lessons for me. No one wants to be unhealthy.

Moving on, 20 biggest lessons from 20 years. Number eight, disease, and dysfunction is a multi-trillion dollar a year business. In fact, here in the United States, our healthcare system is extracting from our society over \$4 trillion annually. Here in the United States, we have the most excessive and expensive healthcare system from our citizens pulling in. And yet we have some of the worst health outcomes in the developed world.

Something isn't adding up. Trillions of dollars, if just a fraction of that was directed into prevention, into wellness education, into access to exercise and healthy foods and community centers and community. The thing is the system would crumble. It would crumble if people were well. We have a system of healthcare that is dependent... Trillions of dollars are being made from the collective sickness and ignorance of our communities. That's the problem. So, I didn't understand early on when I got into this field, I knew that there was a disconnection with health education because I was diagnosed with this incur... So called incurable condition, and now I didn't have that condition anymore. So, there's clearly a gap, there's something missing in education for our healthcare professionals, but I didn't know the extent of it was... And also, the system being constructed in such a way that that disempowerment that I was fed keeps me as a cog in the system.

I'm a customer of that pharmaceutical company as I'm going to get my prescriptions, which I did for two years. I was on a plethora of different drugs. And to even think about that that was me, so weird, I can't believe that was my life. That was crazy. Did any of that sh*t get me better? No, absolutely not. As a matter of fact, I had side effects from the sh*t that I was taking. And if there was... Like, for example, taking Celebrex, side effect I had restless leg syndrome, it didn't have its own drug yet. If I would've told my doctor and the drug had come along for restless leg syndrome, guess what? Here's a script for that. We'll take care of that. And all I want to do as a patient who's unaware of what the hell is going on in the body that I live in, I just want to get out of pain. I just want to feel like my legs aren't going to get up and leave me when I'm laying down trying to get a little nappy nap, get some Zs at night. That's how I felt like my legs was just like, "Yeah, I'm not really into this sleep thing. Let me just, I'm going to go ahead and take a little jog." So weird. I can't believe that's my life.

So again, disease and dysfunction is a multi-trillion-dollar a year business. And it is the business of sickness and the business of the creation of sickness as well, and the business of treating symptoms and never helping people to truly get well and never helping people to remove the cause of their sickness so they're no longer a part of the system. Alright, moving on. Number nine of this 20 biggest lessons from 20 years. Number nine is that there is a war being waged with food. I did not know the extent of it. I wasn't really aware of my conditions. Again, making this health transformation when living in Ferguson, I'm surrounded by all of this garbage.

As soon as I walk out my apartment complex, there's a liquor store is the first thing that I see. Then I'm not exaggerating, every fast food that you can name practically, I mean, of course there's going to be some... We didn't have In-N-Out in St. Louis, but like all the usual suspects, they're within a two-mile radius of my apartment. Like that's all I see when I go out. And so, for me, when I got well... I was too busy being well, I didn't realize that. I was just like, oh, I was leaving the community to go to the one Whole Foods that was in the entire city of St. Louis, which is a big ass city, going to Whole Foods and Wild Oats, and I was just busy being well and I just got into being busy helping people and being of service. So, I didn't realize that there was a war being waged against me. I didn't realize that those conditions were put in place intentionally. It's not like that everywhere else.

My community was being targeted by these processed food companies, by these fast-food companies because they know, "Hey, this is where the obesity is hot. This is where diabetes is hot. This is where these low-income communities... Guess what? You got this dollar menu we could, we can make a killing here." Literally, poor food is now established to be the leading cause of death and dysfunction in our world today. A massive meta-analysis published in The Lancet, and this was in 2019, just a couple years ago. And the title of the study was Health Effects of Dietary Risk in 195 Countries. And it looked at the links between poor diet and the skyrocketing rates of chronic diseases in our world today, the scientists determine that poor

diet kills 11 million human beings around the world every year. 11 million people are killed from poor diet. They're killed from food. The researcher stated, "Our findings show suboptimal diet is responsible for more deaths than any other risk globally, highlighting the urgent need for improving diet across nations." Now, we might think that the biggest issue is lack of food and starvation.

There was a time through media framing where starvation was the big issue. There are people, absolutely, who are not getting access to food. However, today the bigger problem is people having access to too much in consumption of too much of fake foods. Today, according to The BMJ, the average American's diet consists of 60% ultra-processed foods. And that's even worse for our children. A new analysis was just published looking at the consumption of processed foods by our children. This was published in the Journal of the American Medical Association, and about 67% of our children's diet is now consisting of ultra-processed foods. Foods that are so distorted, so filled with artificial ingredients and stabilizers and chemicals and artificial colors and artificial flavors and is so far derived from any natural origin. We can't even recognize where it came from anymore. And we're making our tissues out of this. We're poisoning ourselves. We're poisoning our mitochondria by the consumption of these things. That is the leading cause of death today. It's not the lack of food, it's the overabundance of too much low-quality food that again, there are entities that are profiting mightily, trillions of dollars from this processed food industry, trillions of dollars from the pharmaceutical industry, and look at the state of our health today.

So now that I'm aware of this, I'm operating with a whole new perspective and I'm coming with a whole new energy. And you know, again, that's why I believe that even with this platform, that it really resonates. And I'm so grateful for you being a part of this because you are part of the change. Now, moving on number 10 here on my list of 20 lessons from 20 years. Number 10 is, it's difficult to free yourself from a prison that you don't know you're in. Again, I've never met a single person who didn't want to be healthy. I just believe that poor health and disease was what's to be expected because that's all I saw around me, with 85% to 90% of my family members being obese and the chronic asthma and allergies and diabetes, and the list goes on and on with the different things that my family was experiencing. I just thought it was normal. And I didn't know that food made a difference. I just thought that food was just stuff you eat. There was no association. I didn't know I was immersed. I was born into an environment that literally breeds sickness. I was born into it. I didn't know that there was another way. It's like being born in a toxic pond and developing all these weird mutations. I don't realize there's a bigger world out here. There's an entire ocean that exists, because I'm in my little toxic pond and this is all that I see. I don't know anymore.

And so, part of this is being able to question our structures, being able to question our environment, being able to question normalcy, and being able to look within, because that's

part of the process. When you realize that you're born into certain conditions, it changes everything, because if you're from the outside looking in, you're just like, "Why don't you just eat healthy?" Or "Why don't you just go to the gym?" We start victim blaming. People who don't even know that that exists. I didn't know that there was a difference. I didn't know that there was a difference between these highly processed fish sticks that barely have any fish in them and a wild caught salmon, to me, it's just food and they're both seafood. I see it and I eat it. I didn't know that there was a difference, because for me, being fit meant I was healthy, I didn't realize, again, that I was making my tissues out of the lowest quality materials, things that is, I struggle to even call food. But I didn't know.

And so, if we're blaming people for literally not knowing, we're just perpetuating the problem, we're not connecting, we're not helping to change the situation. So, I realize that it's... One of my big lessons is that it's difficult to free yourself from a prison that you don't know that you're in. That's why I struggled all those years with my health. I didn't know that I was in this toxic environment that was just manifesting just through me because I didn't know that there was a different way. A better way.

Alright, moving on. Number 11 on my list of 20 lessons from 20 years. Number 11 is that stress is the hidden culprit behind our health epidemics. Stress is the hidden culprit behind our chronic disease epidemics. And we'll put the study up for everybody see today, it's been affirmed that approximately 80%, upwards of 80% of all physician visits today are for stress-related illnesses. And it sounds crazy, 80% of physician visits is because stress is behind so many of the different out-picturings of disease symptoms. Poor diet is a physiological stressor, a metabolic stressor. Struggles in our relationship, struggles with social connections, struggles with inactivity or excessive activity, for our society today, it's inactivity though.

All of these are stress inputs that go into our overall stress load, our biology is just taking in all these stress inputs, we need stress in order to grow to evolve, to become better, stronger, all the things, but when we're experiencing chronic stress, our system has not evolved to handle all of these strain stressors, even being in doors, it's a new thing, it used to be indoor outdoor. We're just part of it. Today it's cool, it's great to have safety and comfort and cool amenities and all that stuff, we have to realize we're part of nature, and so breathing in processed air in a sense, the air that we're breathing, all the toxicants that are put into the environment, by the way, indoor air quality is orders of magnitude, far worse than the air outside in even some of the most polluted cities in the world, it's a little not so fun fact. Still, there's something about nature and its ability to kind of process things, nature finds a way to sort things out, actually, I just saw there's a discovery of this weird little worm that can metabolize plastic and break it down. What!

Nature finds a way. When we manifest a problem, the solution is there. It's like two sides of the same coin. But we need to lean more into those solutions, we see a lot of problems, but the biggest problem being stressed and how we're associating with stress. Again, stress isn't bad in and of itself, but the stressors that we're exposed to today and our inability to process these stresses is really weighing heavily on our biology, and so when you really unmask the villain behind our chronic diseases, it's kind of like the Scooby Doo scenario, where you pull off the mask and it's stress under them, the out-picturing looks like anxiety, or the out-picturing looks like type 2 diabetes, but if you pull the mask off, the Scooby Doo, the villain here is type 2 diabetes, we finally got him, you pull the mask off and it's just like... "I would have gotten away with it too, if it wasn't for you kids and that mangy dog," and underneath the mask is really stress. That's created this conglomeration of input, stressful inputs that manifested in the symptoms of insulin resistance.

So of course, we talk a lot about that here on the show and the importance of healthy stress inputs or maybe stressors inputs with exercise, and even there's nutrient that are stress mimicking nutrients that help our body to become more resilient, it's not that all the stress is bad, but chronic stress is a big problem, of course, our diet can be a huge biological stressor, but our diet can also be something that helps to build up stress resilience.

Part of the issue when we're talking about abnormal stress response that can weaken our immune system, for example, or create dysfunction, just kind of wipe us out, create fatigue, all those things, is because our adrenals start to dump out key nutrients that help to modulate our immune system like Vitamin C. Our body just starts to release so much of it and it gets utilized, so our storage of these things and we have to replenish, but what if we are consistently getting high quality vitamin C in our bodies, and matter of fact, especially during stressful events it can help to increase our resilience. As a matter of fact, this study, this was a randomized placebo-controlled study, they found that vitamin C helps us to recover more quickly from emotional and physical stress, which may otherwise weaken our adrenal glands and increase fatigue. The study found that, and this was done with marathon runners who, again, that's a pretty big biological stressor, receiving a dose of vitamin C and they recovered their cortisol levels more rapidly than those who are taking a placebo.

Alright, helping to normalize and modulate stress, another study, this is another randomized double blind placebo control trial, this was published in psychopharmacology on the stress of public speaking. Alright, for some people, again, it's like they'd rather kick the bucket, they rather clock out on life than do public speaking. So, the stress of public speaking and other stressors, and the scientists found out that those who received vitamin C supplementation experience less stage fright, maintained more balanced blood pressure, and had a faster recovery of their cortisol levels.

Now, not all vitamin C is created equal. It's another lesson from my nutritional science class that I didn't get, we're telling people and we're supposed to tell patients make sure you're getting vitamin C. There's a difference between synthetic vitamin C. Matter of fact, there's multiple types of vitamin C, just naturally occurring in nature, there's multiple types of vitamin B12, there's multiple types of omega-3s that have kind of been deconstructed now, every single nutrient that we talk about, essentially, there's multiple versions of it. And so, the most bioavailable form of vitamin C, this is highlighted in a study published in The Journal of Cardiology. They had people have a biological stressor, they used smokers in this study, and they had them to consume Camu camu berry daily over the course of a one-week study. This is one of the highest botanical sources of vitamin C.

They found that it led to significantly lowered oxidative stress and inflammation in the body of these smokers, and they measured C reactive protein, for example, as a biomarker of information by utilizing Camu camu berry. But what's more, and this is the most important part of the study. There were no changes in the test subjects who were receiving ordinary vitamin C supplements, so synthetic vitamin C supplements you might see as are checking out at a grocery store. For the researchers, this indicated that the combination of other antioxidants from the Camu camu berries had a more powerful effect than standard Vitamin C products alone.

I utilize the essential C complex that has Camu camu berry, Amla berry, and Acerola cherry, three of the most dense sources of botanical vitamin C, bioavailable Vitamin C from Paleovalley. It's one of my favorite things. Always in my cabinet, I utilize it several times a week, and man, I just... I love it. They do things the right way. All organic, no binders, no fillers, no weird stuff like that. It's just, I think it's really essential for us to have, especially in our world today, go to Paleovalley.com/model. That's P-A-L-E-O-V-A-L-L-E-Y.com/model. And you get 15% off. Their essential C complex as well as their tumor complex is amazing, they've got this grass-fed organ complex that's just so remarkable, and they just do stuff the right way, incredible human beings, and they do stuff the right way from top to bottom, they've got some incredible snacks.

I always have them here at our studio and also for my kids, so when we go to the movie sometimes, we just saw Black Adam, for example, and I'd be lying if I didn't say I snuck into the movies some treats from Paleovalley. I'm just being honest. And by the way, the episode that is coming out after this episode, there is a connection to Black Adam, the DC Universe for you, that episode, that special guest, I'm telling you it's going to blow you away. So, make sure that you are ready for what's coming, because even with this celebration today, I'm just getting warmed up. I promise you, I've got so much in store, and I'm just so grateful for you being a part of this mission. And again, for that vitamin C complex go to Paleovalley.com/model for 15% off.

Let's get to number 12 here. On our list of 20 lessons from 20 years. Number 12 is health and fitness is not a destination. Health is not something that you arrive at and you made it, health is something that you attract to yourself by the person that you become, health is something that is a continuous process, it's an evolution, it's an unfolding, that's another thing that's not really taught, and our main stream conversations around health is that this is a process, you're not going to achieve a certain result or a certain state of health and just stay there, it's a continuous process of figuring things out, of adjusting, of listening to our bodies, of experimentation.

And so sometimes it can frustrate us and handcuff us when we think that we arrived a certain state of health, and it's just something that we are just entitled to, again. It's an unfolding, it's a process. It's interactive. And it can be a joy. It can be an absolute joy to lean into this evolution, or we could fight against it, we could think that we found something that works for us and just try to keep doing that one thing forever, and it's probably at some point it's going to have diminishing returns and/or we need to adjust the way that we're interacting with the thing and/or incorporating new things. And letting go of things. So again, health and fitness is not a destination.

Number 13 of my biggest lessons from 20 years in the health and wellness field. Number 13 is that extreme bias is the killer of logic and science. Extreme bias is the killer of logic and science. I promise you, any health and wellness belief that you have, you can find peer-reviewed data to support that belief. So whatever particular spectrum into the spectrum you might be on, there are peer-reviewed papers affirming that Canola oil is good for you, and this is facts, and of course, we've deconstructed this, we've had on leading experts, we're talking about the best and brightest in the field in various extraction methods with oils and the science behind them, how they affect our biology, for example, put Dr. Cate Shanahan's episode for you in the show notes. But at the same time, there are a plethora of studies showing that these highly refined seed oils or "vegetable oils" like canola oil, corn oil, soy oil, for example, have very detrimental impacts on human biology.

One of them, for example, is published in the Journal of Inhalation Toxicology that found that just inhaling the fumes of vegetable oil while cooking can damage your DNA. That doesn't sound good. Now again, the folks who are championing the belief that Canola oil is actually really health food because of their bias, they might not look at that study in inhalation toxicology. Now, here's the thing, because you can hear a perceived bias from me that Canola oil is bad for you. But here's where the beauty is, I have to be open to the fact that the people who are promoting canola oil as a health food are right, I have to be open to that. I have to check my bias at the door and accept that this data exists and look at it and say. This is not

what I believe to be true but let me look into this more. Be open, be receptive, and also being able to change. Which we get so dogmatic when we think that our way is the only way.

Now, here's what we do, because again, this is where science and logic leaves the building is when we are so tied to this particular story, we can't see anything else outside of that, and you've probably experienced a lot of that the last couple of years during these pandemic times when people are so firmly cemented in their belief about how a certain thing is, that they can't even see that something can be at play other than what they believe. Now, with that said, what we have to do with understanding that there's scientifically validated information on all of these different subjects, so we'll just talk about the polar ends of a subject, what we need to do is, number one, check our bias, accept and be open that our perspective might be wrong, look at the breadth, look at the range of data and see what has the most, where is the majority of data point, number one. That's a good signal. So maybe the majority of data is pointed to Canola oil is f*cking you up, so we got the majority of data and they can't ignore this other data exists, that would be ignorant, that science leaves the room when we do that, okay, so now I've got something to more affirm my logic and scientifically validated point majority of data says this, but also we have to learn to discern the quality of the data.

We have to be able to discern how was this data extracted, who was behind the data itself, these are all things we can't just... We live in a day... This is 2022, we're almost in 2023 as of this recording. We can't just... It's the Internet, we can't just take things at face value now, we just can't do that. You can't grab a headline; you can't just even pull an abstract from most study... That's not research, that's not... That's not how you are actually a seasoned research scientist, you can't just look at this, this guy is... Here's what the study summarized and said, "For you to be truly versed in and have a certain literacy and understanding peer-reviewed studies. It's going to require hours upon hours, unfortunately for many people who are not... They don't want no parts of this... Hours of your life every day," that is my life every day.

There's a random day off here there. But for the most part, if you check in with my family, my friends, I'm researching, I'm on these databases and studying peer-reviewed research and looking at trying to weigh different things. And here's another secret, also proactively looking for things that dispute your belief, that takes a lot of courage to do, but that's doing good science, and so once you have all that, then I can extract and articulate the most viable information for people to use today, which unfortunately even at the day and age we live in with the age of the internet, we have somethings, some peer-reviewed data, really high quality data, huge data set, randomized control trial, finding the efficacy of, we'll just say, "We've got a lifestyle intervention that is reversing diabetes at a higher rate than... Or improving blood sugar levels at a higher rate than Metformin." Even though we have this scientifically validated study, which is and by the way, I'm talking about a real study here of improving or preventing

the development of diabetes that Dr. John Abramson, share with me, and this is also in his book.

This particular science, even though it's real and validated, it can take at least on average 10 to 15 years for this to be implemented in university education for physicians. It takes such a long time for the books to change, even at the age of the internet, so that's why I do the work that I'm doing, because I don't want you to have to wait around 10, 15 years to find out that, again, Canola oil might be f*cking you up. Alright, so again, 13 on this list is extreme bias is the killer of logic and science.

Number 14, this was another big one for me in this last couple of years, number 14 of the 20 biggest lessons that I learned in 20 years of working in the health and wellness space. Number 14 is that everybody wants to be a warrior until it's time to go to war. Everybody wants to be a warrior, a health advocate, until it's time to really advocate for health, until it's really time to be about that life and stand up for the things that you believe in, the empowerment of patients. The freedom of choice, helping our communities to get healthier, helping our communities to become more resilient in the face of a virus, being able to look at the data and say, the number one risk factor for death from this particular virus, the number one risk factor.

Huge data set from the CDC, over 500,000 patients, over 800 US hospitals, analyzing the data, the number one risk factor for death from this virus is obesity, the number one risk factor, and many of the people who are profiting with their weight loss programs, with their advocacy, buy my this, buy my that. When it came time to really step up and to advocate for our citizens to really lean into like, "Hey listen, we've got to get our citizens healthier," they ghosted, they disappeared, they went radio silent, they got scared. When they saw people getting deplatformed or stuff's getting censored, whatever, they tucked their tail between their legs, and they ran off. So, one of my biggest lessons, and I'm so grateful for this, everybody wants to be a warrior until it's time to go to war, until it's time for you to actually stand up and represent what we say you believe, a lot of people are not about that life and that's okay, that's okay.

Because even though that's not where my ethics stand, I have to understand that everybody's not wired up to go against adversity like that. Fear can make people do things that are not congruent. And this is not that there's something inherently wrong with them or their choices, whatever, they're just... This is just a lesson that I needed to learn, and most people shift their perspective when the majority shifts their perspective, they don't want to be the person who's standing up and saying, "Hey, this isn't right," and those people throughout history who do that are the ones we remember, those are the ones we talk about, we share their stories, it sounds all glamorized, they stood up against this adversity, but when they were going through it, everybody f*ckin hated them, when they were going through it and going against the

popular narrative, people were likely trying to kill them, silence them, defame them. And we get a little resistance on social media, and we get scared.

So, I'm very grateful for this experience because I really got to see and experience that everybody's not going to be congruent under all conditions, when it really matters, to step up and to be about that life, and to be an advocate for our families and for our communities. And so, I'm grateful that my life experience put me in this position to be able to be the man that I say that I am, in those moments when sh*t gets hard, and I'm grateful for that. And I'm going to continue to be there because that's all I know. So, another big lesson. That was number 14.

Number 15. This is a huge one. This is super powerful. Number 15 is that your mind is the most important controller of your health. Your mind is the most important controller of your health. Hippocrates said... Hippocrates is known to be the father of modern medicine. When a physician's taking the Hippocratic Oath, this is something derived from this individual's perspective about health and about medicine. Hippocrates said, "It's more important to know what sort of person has a disease than to know what sort of disease a person has." "What sort of person has the disease. That's more important." That's where... If we truly understand this, the mind, the human mind is the most powerful faculty when we're talking about our health outcomes. And this is because this is where all of our choices, all of our decisions are springing from, but also in knowing that our thoughts are creating chemistry in our bodies instantaneously.

Your thoughts have so much power over your metabolism, over your immune system, over your cognitive function, over your heart health, over everything about you, your kidney health, over your sexual health, over your skin health. The list goes on and on. We have entire fields of psychoneuroendocrinology, psychoneuroimmunology, just discerning how powerful our psychology and our thoughts are, our minds are, over our health outcomes. And so, it's such an important message, such a breakthrough for us to understand this. And we've had wonderful... I'm talking about the best of the best people in their respective fields, when talking about this subject, and the mind, and the biochemistry and the outcomes, and health stemming from our mind. Like Dr. Caroline Leaf, for example, decades as a neuroscientist and expert in this field. And to have her here, to be able to share her insights, is just priceless. And we have access to all this today, right there in the palm of our hands for free. It has never been easier to be empowered and to be healthy. At the same time, it's never been easier to be sick and disempowered. So, it's The Tale of Two Cities. It's the best of times. It's the worst of times. But we get to choose which train we're getting on. And our job is to normalize the best of times. Our job is to normalize health and wellness.

Number 16. 20 lessons from 20 years. Number 16 is, you are the author of your life story. It's one of the biggest lessons that I've learned through experience. Because we have the power

to decide what we do, what we think, who we want to be. It's like, literally, I loved, when I was a kid, the choose your own adventure stories, where the story, the book would take you to a certain point. And then you'd be presented with a choice. You could decide what path you take. Are you going to go and follow the clues into the jungle? Or are you going to go and get into your car and head back towards the village? It presents an opportunity for you to choose your own adventure, choose your own path. But what's different about those books and our real life is that our choices are infinite. There's so many different things that we can choose to do. We get to write our stories. The pen is in our hands. We are the author.

But we are programmed in our society to believe that we are an extra in our own movie. We're an extra. We're standing there. We're the person walking, the scene is on the... The other people are the stars, not us. No, you are the star of your own movie. You are the star. You are the leading character. You're the main character in your own story, and don't let anybody tell you otherwise. But to embrace that, it comes with a responsibility because now it is on you to stop lying to yourself that someone else is preventing you from making a choice. Or to stop lying to yourself that you can't choose something else, you can't decide something else because, because, because, because of all these reasons, that might be valid that they make things complicated. But you still have the power to choose. And here's the thing, too, with being the author of your story. What you focus on... Because it's not just about the power to decide. It's the power of your intention and your focus in understanding who you are.

You are so much bigger than this little life that you perceive yourself to have. You're connected to everything. You're connected to everything in this entire universe. You are a part of it. It's not that you are a part of it, it's all you. That's all you are. And what you focus on expands, truly. We have the power to put our attention on things and move in that direction. And the thing is, it's just like there's this magnetic field that occurs... And it truly is. There's magnetic fields. That's what life is, is just the electromagnetic fields. There's an electromagnetic field that extends from the human heart. It's called a tube torus. Ooh, this is that stuff. It expands about eight feet from your body. When we talk about people's energy, we feel that. It's a real thing. You're connected to what you are focused on, there's an attractive force that happens.

When I shared earlier that the greatest thing that has occurred in these 20 years that I'd had no idea would even... Because I was not interested in having good friends. I just wasn't that guy. I had this story. I'm by myself. I got my lady. I got my kids. I'm good. I'm going to save the world by my damn self. It was crazy thoughts. Crazy thoughts. Because, again, I grew up in those conditions. Watch your back, don't mess with people, the whole thing. To say the greatest gift, I am not exaggerating, has been my relationships, but it did not happen on accident. And it wasn't just because it's me, and I'm doing... I can't even stress to you. I watched Michael Beckwith on the screen. Millions of people were trying to get in touch with this guy. I start doing the work that he talks about. I'm listening to his audio program, The Life Visioning

Process. I'm doing the work. I'm constructing my life. I'm being intentional. I'm working through and becoming the type of person that I need to be to have the life that I wanted to have.

Cut to I'm invited to speak at this event that I aspired to speak at, in another country. I've never even left... I've never been to Europe. That was just on TV to me. I'm in Portugal, and that's where him and I meet. And it wasn't even just on the grounds of my neighborhood, not even at an event. We are in another country. And we... It was a... Immediately, just like cliqued up. Yeah, 'cause I'm familiar with you. He's familiar with me. There was a resonance that was already in action. So, we could try to deconstruct and say it's a coincidence, there's this, there's that. You just... No. I didn't know that that was going to happen. I just was focused on those teachings, that energy, and focused on walking in that direction, doing the work, qualified myself to be the person that I needed to be to make the impact that I wanted to make. And now, the people that were and are my mentors are now my friends. And it's just crazy.

So, what you focus on expands. Where's your focus? Where's your focus? When you get distracted, keep bringing yourself back to the life that you want, the people that you want to have in your life, the things you want to create. Keep on bringing your focus back here, despite your circumstances. This is what makes us so special. We have the ability, as human beings, to think outside of our circumstances. And when we do that, it is real. I'm not just saying this. It's not just like you're imagining a genie's popping out of the bottle. It's not like that. I'm talking about your thoughts have substance, and your thoughts infect the environment... Affect the environment around you. This is facts. We are just now starting to develop technology to be able to understand this, but human thoughts and human emotion, human DNA itself, affects the environment around us. And there is a nice body of evidence that is affirming this, but our ancestors were on this for thousands of years. So, you are the author of your life story. You have the power to decide. What you focus on expands.

Number 17, the greatest teachers of my biggest lessons. Number 17, the greatest teachers are also eternal students. So having the opportunity to spend time with Dr. Daniel Goleman, Dr. Caroline Leaf, Wendy Suzuki out of NYU, Michael Beckwith, Lisa Nichols, Eric Thomas, the list goes on and on and on, but I see that every single one of them are ravenous students. Most people want the glitz and the glamor, but the real work is happening behind the scenes. What you're seeing when the people show up is all the work they're putting in behind the scenes. And they're students. They're learning. And so, it's one of the greatest lessons that I learned in the last 20 years is that the greats, the greatest teachers, the reason that they are a great teacher is that they're also a great student. They're excellent students.

Number 18 of my 20 greatest lessons in 20 years in this field. Number 18 is our bodies are synced up with the entire universe. Ooh, here I go. Our bodies are literally synced up with the

entire universe. If we're talking about circadian medicine, the field of growing... Rapidly growing field of circadian medicine, every cell in our bodies is synced up with the 24-hour solar day. What time of day it is literally determines what our cells are doing. So, our endocrine system, our hormones, our neurotransmitters, our sexual function, our digestive function, our cognitive function, all of this is being influenced by what time of day it is because we're synced up with all of life. The problem today, obviously, we can try to hide out from life and manufacture day and night. We have the ability to just kind of throw a glorified monkey wrench in the whole system. This is what, again, is manifesting disease and dysfunction. We're out of sync with life itself.

And we know today... Again, it seemed like a soft science back when I was in college, when talking about your circadian clocks or your circadian rhythms. But no, no, this is some of the most deeply rooted, powerful science that everything stems from because today we know that our biological clocks... That we give this term, biological clocks. We have proven, within the cells of our bodies, we have clock genes and proteins that create other genes and proteins. It's so powerful. So again, it's a huge lesson that I learned in these 20 years, that I think about a lot today. I contemplate, and I do my best to find some synchronicity with it. It's not going to be perfect, of course, like being in a studio environment at a certain time. It's the little curve balls. But making myself more resilient, and doing my best to find grace, and dance with and fall back in tune with that synchronization as much as possible.

Number 19, 20 biggest lessons in 20 years. Number 19, our screens can strip us of our greatness. Probably the most outermost symptom that we're seeing right now is the shortening of our attention span, so our attention span is just being depleted, our ability to focus on something. And I just talked about the power and importance of focus, but our ability to do that is being pulled out of us, and it's reducing our ability to think deeply. To truly have critical thinking, we have to think deeply about a thing. We have to spend time on a thing. That's all our ancestors had was time to think. They didn't have Netflix. They just had time. They just had time. They just had their self. They just had time in that head of theirs. Now we have so many external things that can pull our attention out. But in reality, it's still happening inside of our minds. And so, our screens are stripping us of our greatness. We're also watching people be excellent, which is great. We could do a little bit of that.

But we're not investing in our own excellence. We're living vicariously through characters, through our phone, through our television set. We can get inspiration. We can get entertainment. But it's become so deeply normalized where folks were spending the majority of our days on screens, and it's stripping us of our greatness. Big lesson I've learned because when I got into this field smartphones weren't around. So, I see the advantage and disadvantage today, whereas I might have been more focused on trying to build attention metrics, like these numbers on these platforms, versus I was spending most of my time, again,

15, 20 years ago, working on being excellent. I was spending most of my time researching and learning and articulating and deconstructing thoughts, and constructing ideas, and again, just working on excellence. Whereas today, it's so flash in the pan, idea... You just get ideas. You just do the thing. We're not spending time in really honing our excellence anymore.

And you don't have to participate in that. You could say no. You could have that time where you're not bound to a screen or a device, and focus on you, focus on that inner world. Which leads me to number 20 of my 20 biggest lessons in 20 years. Again, this was no particular order. Number 20, your outer world is a direct reflection of your inner world. Your perception is your reality. Your outer world is a reflection of your inner world. And so, the number one place that we need to be spending some focused attention is going within because working in honing that is going to determine how we're seeing everything else out here. It's going to determine the experience we have engaging with life itself. Because we can have the most amazing thing happen and feel a deep sense of depression and lack because we're not well internally because we've outsourced our thinking, and we're so externally focused. And so, this is why tools that our ancestors are passing down, that we have access to today, that we've always had access to, like meditation, to be able to go within, to find a familiarity and a comfort with ourself.

It's so difficult for us to even be alone when that's all we knew. We evolved at times... There would be times when you're by yourself. But also, of course, we evolved in tribes as well. So, there's times when you branch off from the tribe, maybe you have your responsibility, just you and your thoughts, and coming together with our tribe. Today, we're outsourcing our thinking to all of these people who have propaganda and want to control what you're doing and control your thinking instead of empowering you or reminding you that you are automatically empowered and directing you to the most important voice in your life, which is your voice. So again, your outer world is a reflection of your inner world, so your perception is your reality. We get to choose how we perceive things. We get to choose how we perceive ourselves. And I'm not saying this is easy. It's not always easy work. But you have the opportunity to cultivate a great relationship with yourself, and that will automatically out-picture itself in the world around you.

I hope that you enjoyed this. This is a special episode, and we just went through 20 of the biggest lessons that I've learned in 20 years of working in health and wellness. And I'm so grateful that you made me a part of your life and a part of your story. It means everything to me. And I promise you, we are just getting warmed up. We've got so much in store. And again, I just appreciate you so much. If you could, it'll be amazing to help to celebrate this moment if you pop over to Apple Podcasts and leave a review for the show. That would really mean a lot. And of course, make sure that if you are listening to the audio version, pop over to YouTube, subscribe to the YouTube channel, and help us to beat the algorithm over there on YouTube. Our podcast platform, our audio podcast, is one of the top shows in the country, really in the

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