

THE MODEL HEALTH SHOW

EPISODE 752

**Do These 5 Things For Better
Health This Year!**

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SHAWN STEVENSON: Happy New Year, and welcome to the Model Health Show. This is fitness and nutrition expert Shawn Stevenson. And in this episode, we're gonna be diving into five science backed things for you to do for better health this year. Now, many of the things that you're gonna learn today are incredibly simple and pretty easy to implement. But again, these are all backed by science and I'm talking about incredible life-changing results by implementing these five things. And we're gonna kick things off with number one on this list, which is to spend time in nature each week. Let's kick things off with a recent study published in the Journal Environmental Research and Public Health, titled "Associations Between Nature Exposure and Health". After a vast analysis of multiple studies, the scientist stated "we found evidence for associations between nature exposure and improved cognitive function, brain activity, blood pressure, mental health, physical activity, and even sleep."

SHAWN STEVENSON: Now, to piggyback off of that, a randomized controlled trial published in the Journal PLOS ONE the Public Library of Science One had participants randomized into either a green environment, which is a natural park/forest type environment, a blue environment, which was a beach near a natural body of water, or an urban environment, what you might think of as a city environment. The study participants were analyzed with objective measurements after 30 or more minutes in their respective environments. And here's what they found. Compared with being in the urban environment, being in the forest/green environment led to a statistically significant reduction in cortisol. One of our body's primary stress hormones also compared with being in the urban environment, being in the blue/beach type environment led to statistically significant improvements in heart rate variability. The scientists in the study stated "this study extends the existing evidence on the benefits of natural outdoor environments for people's health."

SHAWN STEVENSON: It also suggests natural outdoor environments potential as a preventative medicine, specifically focusing on people with indications of psychological distress." Now, this one to kick things off, I thought that this was very pertinent because so many studies have come out in the last couple of years detailing how being in what we refer to as natural environments or in nature have so many incredible impacts on human health that rival even pharmacology. Now, what's so strange is that we have to even discuss that being in nature is good for human health, but we've kind of devolved in a way where we've separated ourselves on a daily basis from the natural world. We create these buildings and we can manufacture artificial light and our circadian clocks and all of the cells of our bodies are really kind of discombobulated right now. And we're not syncing up with the 24 hour solar day, which is truly, if we look at what are these biological clocks?

SHAWN STEVENSON: Well, our most recent science is affirming that these circadian clocks in all of the cells of our bodies are genes and functional proteins that control the activity of other genes and proteins. So these circadian clocks are our primary controller of our health. And something interesting happens when we are in nature, especially when we are in environments that have what they've called green environments, forest like environments and beach like environments where we're around some form of a body of water. It's like a synchronization process that happens very quickly, reducing our body's cortisol, reducing inflammation, improving cognitive function, improving and switching over to the parasympathetic rest and digest nervous system. The list goes on and on. Heart rate variability improvements. So many incredible things happen when we get synced back up or jacked into the real world. Alright? And so this is a call to action for us to make this a priority this year because this is something that our genes expect from us.

SHAWN STEVENSON: And I mean that literally, we're gonna talk about that in a moment. But there's an emerging term that's getting passed around right now called biophilia. Biophilia. Now, I knew a girl named Biophilia back in, I'm just kidding. Biophilia is a term that's coined by Edward O. Wilson to describe what he believes is humanity's innate affinity for the natural world. We have an innate affinity for it. We have an innate connection to this amazing world that gave birth to us. Everything about us is from this incredible planet. When you look in the mirror, you're seeing things that have come from this amazing planet. And so it's like we are connecting to our source when we are connected to nature. And today with the presence of artificial intelligence, despite John Connor's warnings, all right, despite all of the craziness that can unfold from that, there are some beautiful potentials in it as well, of course.

SHAWN STEVENSON: But it's really on how we are interacting with these things that are gonna tell the tale of humanity moving forward. But with the presence of AI, with virtual experiences being a top tier experience for the average person today, rather than real world interaction with nature, virtual experiences, AI, the golden age of television content, all right? There's apps on apps on apps. They're investing billions into this stuff to keep your eyeballs glued to this virtual experience living vicariously through these characters on the TV screen. And it's all right. Dabbling in this a little bit is awesome. It's one of the cool things about our world today. But when it starts to replace what our genes expect from us, and don't even get me started on the addition of social media being thrown into the mix just in the last decade. Truly, it is just skyrocketed in its integration into our culture.

SHAWN STEVENSON: And there are so many things pulling your brain away from the natural inputs that your brain and body need to stay healthy. Things that your genes require for healthy expression. And again, I mean that literally a study titled Epigenetic Regulation of Gene Expression in Response to Environmental Exposures, published recently just in 2021 states "environmental exposure can cause changes in epigenetic regulation, namely histone

modifications, DNA methylation, RNA, modifications and non-coding RNA expression. Studies of these changes provide insights into the link between environmental exposure and gene expression. When we are in nature, it alters the expression of thousands of our genes. Things start working better when we are in nature, when we're in a natural environment. And I say this, I can't help but smile when I say this because it's so weird that we have nature and we have other than, but it's all really nature.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Even the buildings that were in are built from things in nature. It's just like weird kind of hairless beavers with some of us. There's some hairy folks out there, all right? But we're just kind of like building things. But when a beaver does it, that's nature. It's a beaver dam. When we do it, it's just dam! It's very interesting that we have this distinction, but you know what I'm talking about. We're using lexicon, we're using descriptions here, but don't get it twisted. All of this is still a part of nature. But when we're talking about nature in this context, we're talking about natural environments. So forest-like environments, parks, hiking trails, getting near bodies of water, just getting outdoors, getting some sunlight. So these inputs are required for ourselves to function properly. There's been so much marketing and framing around distancing ourselves from all of these things because people, companies are vying for our attention and want to get us addicted to their creations, to their products, and putting us in fear of things like the sun, putting us in fear of even getting outside and getting fresh air.

SHAWN STEVENSON: And the data affirms. And we had a board certified toxicologist here on the Model Health Show to share this information. Indoor air is two to 10 times more toxic than outdoor air, even in city environments. All right? So the fear has been mutated. It's been twisted into something that is not appropriate. We need these inputs, we need the sunlight. Of course, this comes with caveats, alright? If we haven't been acclimated to being in the sun and we're going out one day and we're just going, balls to the walls, balls to the sun rays or whatever it is, 'cause they're out here doing that too, all right? Shout out to those who are tanning their, nevermind. But there's many different ways to interact with those rays. [laughter] But just keep in mind that this is something that we evolved with.

SHAWN STEVENSON: We evolved with the sun. It is what enables us to have life on this beautiful planet. We need those inputs. And so even on the most overcast, cloudy days, those rays are still shining through certain spectrums of that light. And so keep this in mind, just getting outside, getting those biophotons, even just picking them up from being outside and they're getting pulled into our optic receptors and sending data to our brains and changing how all of our cells are operating. So this is a call to arms this year, make it a mandate every week to spend some time in nature. Again, this could be 30 minutes finding a place to go for a hike or, I live in LA now. I'm from the Midwest. I'm from St. Louis. So I grew up going on trips with my family to places like the Ozarks, for example.

SHAWN STEVENSON: And my grandmother and grandfather moved to Southern Missouri to the "country" and we spent many summers swimming in the rivers and fishing and things like that. Just having more of a close contact with nature. And when I would come out to the west coast to Cali, to speak at events and things like that, I would always every single time go by the beach. And I always wondered, like my friends that live out in LA, like, why don't they go to the beach all the time? It's just right here. It's the ocean, it's the Pacific.

SHAWN STEVENSON: It's right there. And then when I moved here, things changed because it's a thing. The LA traffic is definitely something that messes with your psychology. It might be 20 minutes or 25 minutes to get to the beach. Getting back might be an hour and a half, it's crazy depending on the time of day. And so, it's just, it's understandable. But there are rhythms to even traffic. There are ways for us to plan trips and little mini getaways to go to the beach, to go to a nearby lake or a river or, of course the ocean if you are blessed enough to have access to that, just planning that in or spending time at a park, or even, there's such a blessing, even in New York City to go to Central Park.

SHAWN STEVENSON: When I just went there recently to do Good Morning America and some other media. I had my behind at Central Park, in between just to get a break. And I had an opportunity, there's plenty of greenery and trees and things like that and, I was able to kick my shoes off and get grounded. But it might be a little different depending on where you are, because, in LA you might see some squirrels hopping around. In New York you might see master splinter out there. You might see a little rat hopping around. It is what it is. But it is a true story. When I was at Central Park this last time, I was like that squirrel's tail looks weird. And it wasn't a squirrel. But the point being, regardless of where we are, we can find a way we can plan it out, especially if we are aware of the benefits, we can plan it out, make like the solar system and plan it out ways to get access to some natural environmental inputs every week. All right? Do this for yourself. It is altering our gene expression in positive ways. It is protective, dare I say, required for our health. This is the year to do it. Make it a part of your reality. And in addition, this nature input is going to reduce your risk of getting sick this year. And in the words of Sweet Brown.

SWEET BROWN: "Ain't nobody got time for that."

SHAWN STEVENSON: We wanna be at our very best. We don't have time to be getting taken down by some random sickness, getting sick, of course from time to time it's a part of being human, it's a part of life. But so often we are depressing and suppressing the function of our immune system and our body's resiliency against infectious conditions by missing out on critical inputs. We're making ourselves more susceptible. A meta-analysis published in the Journal, Environmental Research and Public Health, titled "Nature Exposure and Its Effects on

Immune System Functioning”, stated “reviewed studies point to positive effects of nature exposure on immunological health parameters such as anti-inflammatory, antiallergic, anti asthmatic effects or increased natural killer cell activity.” One of the most remarkable things noted in this review of multiple studies is that spending time in nature appears to reduce inflammation in our bodies. Here’s the thing, if the pharmaceutical model could bottle this up and sell it, this would be another billion dollar product to get these kinds of results simply by getting our asses in a natural environment.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Our cells expect this. Our DNA expects this, our genes expect this. This is the year to put this in place. Make it a mandate for ourselves, give ourselves permission, bless ourselves with some time in nature each and every week, at least once a week, whatever that looks like for you. Where there’s a will, there’s 10,000 ways, and you could do this with the people that you care about as well, which leads us into number two on this list of five things to do for better health this year. Number two is to spend more time with people that you love. One of our previous guests and one of my favorite episodes of the Model Health Show was Tony Robbins, and he said that the quality of our relationships determines the quality of our lives. Now, to take a look at this from the big picture perspective when it comes to our health, a huge meta-analysis of 148 studies that included about 300,000 people.

SHAWN STEVENSON: And this was conducted by researchers at Brigham Young University. These researchers uncovered that having healthy social bonds, having healthy relationships led to a 50% reduction in all cause mortality. That means there was a 50% reduction in early death, in premature death from virtually every condition known to man. Again, if this could get bottled up, this would be another multi-billion dollar product. But the secret here, and something that in many ways this is free for us to access, is just an awareness thing, is making sure that we are spending time with people that we care about. And by the way, in that meta-analysis, they looked at things like exercise and beating obesity, but they found that our relationships were head and shoulders above or more powerful as an input, as an influence on our health outcomes than anything else. It just is. And why that is, is that our relationships influence our decisions.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Our relationships influence our sense of self-worth, and our sense of value and our sense of significance and all these other things that are determining the chemistry that we’re producing in our bodies. And also the environment is fostering our behaviors and either supporting certain health affirming behaviors, or moving us away from certain health affirming behaviors. It is much easier to live a healthy lifestyle when we are around healthy people, when we’re around people that are dedicated to a healthy lifestyle. It’s not that it’s impossible if you don’t have that, it just makes it easier. And so these are just some of the reasons that our relationships are so influential over our health. But another

really interesting thing is how our relationships impact the health of our brains. Now, investing time with friends and family is one of the most important things for improving and protecting our brain function. Our social connections literally determine how our brain develops. We're talking about from the initiation of life as a human being. Those relationships are laying down the connections, the axon terminals and the dendrites and the myelin and all this stuff that's laying down the structure of our brain itself. We know how detrimental it is to not have safety and security and healthy inputs and love, and close intimate contact with our caregivers when we are children.

SHAWN STEVENSON: And lacking on those things can create some significant disruptions or abnormalities with our brain development, but here's the cool thing, the most recent data is affirming that by exposing ourselves proactively to what researchers are calling enriching environments, we can heal these things and also understanding we're passing on these traits to our offspring. And so today, so many of us that have grown up in very difficult times are now learning to parent ourselves and to become healthier, more whole human beings, and breaking those lines of dysfunction, breaking that lineage of dysfunction and writing a new story for our families futures to come. Now again, our social connections literally determine how our brain develops and how it maintains itself, and this is even true in older age, a study published in 2021 titled Greater Social Engagement and Greater Gray Matter, Micro-structural Integrity in Brain Regions Relevant to Dementia used sensitive brain imaging called diffusion tensor imaging MRIs and found that older adult participants who reported greater levels of social engagement had more robust grey matter in regions of the brain relevant in dementia. Alright, so first and foremost our gray matter matters.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Alright, this is an important part of our cognitive function and the health of our brain, and most folks are unaware that there are multiple forms of dementia, and just one of those forms of dementia, Alzheimer's is, currently, the number six leading cause of death in the United States. This is such a serious issue, and if we are not getting these important inputs for the function of our brain, for the protection of our brains, we're setting ourselves up for a much higher probability of experiencing various forms of dementia. Now, this is another thing that has devolved in our recent society where previously our elders became prized and valued and honored in our culture, and we had a transition to where those incredible important figures in our family structure were instrumental in the survival of our species. And today, again, we kinda devolved to a place where our elders are just kind of not even seen or heard from in many different aspects and not valued as they once were, and we can change that and turn that around as well, but most importantly, most importantly, as we move on to our elder years and we are thinking about our elder loved ones, making sure that they have, and we have consistent healthy social connections.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Alright. So whatever that looks like, being more proactive and making sure that that is a certainty as we move on in years. Again, whether we're children or whether we are in our senior years, our relationships are something for us to focus more on this year, this is the year for focusing more on spending time with the people that we love, we spend so much of our lives trying to accumulate things in an effort to provide for our families, to support our families. But we miss out on the most important need of our families, which is connection with us, and so again, where there's a will, there's 10,000 ways, but most importantly today, again, there's so much stuff that is consuming our time and energy. How much time do you spend on social media? Be honest. When you're like, I don't have time to spend time with my kid. How much time do you spend on social media? How much time are you spending watching Netflix or Max or Paramount plus, or ESPN, or Amazon Prime or Disney plus, and... The list goes on, YouTube, alright, how much time are we spending doing these things now, not to say again, we can't dabble in these things and enjoy ourselves, absolutely. But I promise for 99.9% of us, we could find plenty of extra hours in the week that we can invest in our relationships. And here's the thing, the long tail effect is going to be a better feeling of health, of harmony, a feeling of fulfillment, versus us getting lost because that's what we're doing.

SHAWN STEVENSON: A lot of times we're just kind of checking out, we just want to lose ourselves in something and that is totally fine. But when we are constantly losing any free time that we get losing ourselves, then we might end up losing what's most important to us. And so again, number two on this list is to spend more time with people that you love, and just to dig a little bit further even, what about basic things? What about date nights? Has that been a consistent thing for you, just make a time that you're spending quality time, making that time to spend with your significant other is definitely a great investment, and sometimes again, we just kind of lose touch and we don't have that consistency and in the context of our love relationships, a study published in the Peer review journal, Psychosomatic medicine, took over 100 adult test subjects and equipped them with ambulatory blood pressure monitors to examine the effect that interactions with their significant other had on their blood pressure. After compiling the data from this one week study period, the researchers found that study participants' blood pressure tended to be lower and more normalized while they were interacting with their significant other versus when they were alone or interacting with other people. Additionally, they found this blood pressure normalizing effect to hold true regardless of race, gender, and even the quality of the relationship.

SHAWN STEVENSON: That's pretty interesting. There's something about that certainty being around that person that many times kind of knows us better than anybody, that is really great for our cardiovascular system. Now, recently in the last couple of years, the role of oxytocin, this human bonding chemical, so much data has been flooding into popular science

and popular media as well. Now, this bonding chemical that we produce when we are around people that we care about and also friendships in particular, women tend to produce more oxytocin, more of this bonding chemical hanging out around other women than just about anything. Which is pretty interesting, and this bonding chemical, oxytocin is associated with longevity, improved mental health and reduction in chronic and infectious diseases as well. Research published in the Journal Frontiers in Immunology in 2016 sheds light on how oxytocin has a major impact on our immune system. The scientists detailed the brain immune system network and the oxytocin secreting system, noting, "Oxytocin can inhibit inflammation, exert antibiotic-like effects, promote wound healing and regeneration and suppress stress-associated immune disorders." That's powerful stuff. That's powerful stuff. Oxytocin, this human bonding chemical that we produce when we're around people that we care about, has an antibiotic-like effect.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Again, bottle this up, but the question is, are we taking advantage of this thing that we naturally do, we just do it, we just do it when we're around people that we care about. Give yourself permission this year, proactively spend more time with the people that you care about, and again, this could be a date night, this could be, family get togethers, this could be, getting together with a friend to exercise or go for a walk, this could be scheduling lunch or dinners together, this could be making time for a cup of coffee, whatever the case might be. Whatever the case might be. And a little funny story, and I've never shared this before, I've never gotten a cup of coffee with someone, like out there in the streets, there are all these cool coffee shops. I've never done it. I've never done it. Alright, I just haven't. I didn't even drink coffee most of my adulthood, and this was until a few years ago when my wife, I was utilizing these dual extracted medicinal mushrooms from Four Sigmatic in making teas, but they were sending coffee as well, and my wife was just like... It was... She loved it. It was just her highlight of her morning, and I was just like, what is it? Because the last time I had tasted coffee, I was a kid, and I was with my grandmother and I'm wondering, why is this lady always drinking this?

SHAWN STEVENSON: Whatever this is, and I drank it, I took a sip and I was like, I literally... The thought that crossed my mind when I sipped that coffee when I was probably seven years old, is that something is wrong with my grandmother. There's something wrong with her. How in the world can she drink this stuff? And that was that, and I even actually bought her for Christmas a little container of her favorite coffee, which was Folgers, is what she was using. The best part of waking up. And she actually, and this was... Again, I was like seven or eight, and when I was maybe in my late 20s, I went to my grandmother's house. And that Folgers gift that I had bought her that had a bow on top was in her cabinet still, she had kept it all those years. And so there was this beautiful affinity with this, but I was just like, I'm never drinking this stuff again. And so once I tried the coffee and had it the way that I was preparing it for my wife, like blending some high quality fats into it and things like that. It was

like, oh, I get it. This is pretty awesome. But for me, I haven't gone and gotten coffee with anyone, I have gotten some tea, I have had some tea, like back in the day if somebody would wanna get coffee, I'd get some tea. But now it's because I'm kind of spoiled. I have the most incredible coffee in the world that I get from these people that I truly trust, because the coffee industry is crazy right now.

SHAWN STEVENSON: All these different microplastics and toxic molds and pesticides and all the stuff that people are just consuming every single day. And many of these chemicals are in a category known as obesogens, these are obesity-causing agents that alter our metabolic health and also carcinogens, these are cancer-causing agents, and so Four Sigmatic is all organic, the most incredible coffee, all organic, but also it's blended with dual extracted medicinal mushrooms like lion's mane, and scientists at the University of Malaya discovered that compounds in lion's mane are able to significantly improve the activity of nerve growth factor in the brain. Nerve growth factor is essential in the regulation of growth, maintenance, proliferation and the survival of various brain cells, it's pretty powerful stuff to say the least, and also there's several studies indicating its role in helping to reduce issues related to mental health, things like anxiety and excessive stress, the lion's mane is really remarkable. And that's what I actually had today, the Four Sigmatic ground coffee lion's mane blend with Chaga as well, and Chaga is a powerful, powerful antioxidant and mountains of studies affirming its benefits with the immune system. So this is what I make for myself and my wife every morning, and I highly encourage you to check them out, go to foursigmatic.com/model.

SHAWN STEVENSON: That's [F-O-U-R-S-I-G-M-A-T-I-C.com/model](https://foursigmatic.com/model), and you're going to get 10% off all of their incredible coffee blends, if you're not into coffee like I used to be, they also have incredible elixirs or tea they're in a tea version basically, with these incredible science-backed long storied medicinal mushrooms as well, and they also have a great hot cocoa, a reishi hot cocoa that my son loves, my youngest son, Braden really loves, that reishi hot cocoa. So many great things, you get 10% off store wide, also you get access to some free shipping opportunities and stuff like that, so they're amazing. Really, really amazing. Been a big part of my family's lives for many years foursigmatic.com/model. So whatever that looks like for you, whether it's scheduling, family get-togethers, family hikes, whether it's getting coffee with your friend or your family member, whatever that looks like for you, make it a must, to make it regular, make it something that is a regular part of your week and of your life for this year. And now we're gonna move on to number three on our list of five things to do for better health this year. Number three is to get at least 4k steps in each day. Unfortunately, many people still don't know about it, they're not being provided with the education on how remarkable simply walking, simply getting a certain amount of steps in each day is for their health, their performance in so many aspects of our lives.

SHAWN STEVENSON: According to research published in the American Heart Foundation, walking for an average of 30 minutes or more per day can lower the risk of heart disease and stroke by 35%. And lower the risk of Type 2 diabetes by 40%. These researchers called walking for 30 minutes a "Wonder drug." I've made this analogy several times about, if you could bottle it up, and now these researchers are saying the same thing, a wonder drug, just walking, a wonder drug. It's because our genes expect us to walk, and if we were living in a natural context, being humans, we'd surpass 4000 steps by accident. Alright, we'd be up there closer to 10k plus steps a day, but I'm not even advocating for you to proactively go for that number, but it appears that 4000 steps appears that it's this minimum effective dose to unlock some really remarkable things. Now, walking is a key to healthy hormone function, it's a major player in the healthy activity of insulin, leptin, cortisol, testosterone and more. Take testosterone for example, testosterone is critical in body fat distribution and utilization in our bone density, in muscle growth and strength, in sexual function in both men and women, in fertility, in mental health and more.

SHAWN STEVENSON: A recent study published in the Journal Endocrinology that's focused on hormone health, analyze the connection between testosterone levels and the amount of steps people were taking each day, the researcher stated, "Percentage changes in serum testosterone levels were significantly correlated with the total number of steps taken per day." Now, this particular study was looking at middle-aged men, and they found that there was the most notable increase in testosterone at 8000 or more steps per day, but even over 4000 steps per day, the researchers noted, "Total testosterone increased seven nanograms per deciliter for each additional 1000 steps taken daily." 4000 steps is the minimum effective dose for healthy hormone function, additionally, walking significantly improves insulin sensitivity increases lipolysis, this is the release of stored fat to be utilized for energy and improves overall metabolic health. 4k steps, that's the mission, get at least 4k case steps in each day, and if you're just wondering if you wanna get an estimate, if you don't wanna just be counting steps in your head all day, you can get yourself a little super low cost pedometer, our phones of course can do that as well, but you might not wanna keep your phone on your body all the time, but getting a little low cost pedometer and you can get a good feel for how many steps you get in each day.

SHAWN STEVENSON: The last time I utilized the pedometer just to check in, I found that I had gotten around 9000 steps a day without going on a "walk," just doing my normal day-to-day stuff. I did go to the gym and lifted weights during that day, but I didn't go on a "walk" for that day, and I'd again, just found myself at about 9000 steps just to live in life the way that I do, I almost said livin la vida loca, shout out to Ricky Martin, which Ricky, if you're listening, I saw you following me on Instagram, shout to Ricky Martin. Alright, that's the crazy stuff about today, stuff like that can happen.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Shout out to Livin' La Vida Loca. All right, we're gonna move on to number four on our list of five things to do for better health this year. Number four is to eat more home-cooked meals. When much of society shut down in 2020, there was a tremendous spike in the use of apps like DoorDash and Uber Eats that continue to trend upwards gigantically since then. Take DoorDash, for example. In 2019, DoorDash generated revenues worth about \$885 million. In 2020, those revenues took a gargantuan leap to \$2.8 billion. In 2021, another massive jump to \$4.8 billion in revenues. And in 2022, they collected annual revenues of \$6.6 billion. Again, prior to this, 2019, \$885 million. Now, yes, these prepared food delivery services are awesome and a helpful innovation, but our growing over-reliance on them is inherently exposing us to lower food quality.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Even if a restaurant is using better ingredients, the vast majority of restaurants and fast food places getting delivered to our doors are cooking their food in one of the most toxic substances in our food supply. For thousands of years prior to our most recent decades, we went from the majority of our dietary fats being from minimally processed animal and plant fats to today, where approximately 80% of the fat calories in the average American's diet is from heavily processed vegetable oil. "Vegetable oil." Now, I put vegetable oil in quotes because it's used as deceptive marketing to label and evoke certain benefits psychologically, affirming that it's healthy or smart to eat, or even that it's made from vegetables at all. But the truth is, the name vegetable oil is a misnomer. It's not made from vegetables. It's largely made from industrial seed oils, soybean oil, and a whole lot of synthetic chemicals.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Take Canola oil, for example, that has just integrated itself so much into our food supply in only the last few decades. This did not exist in our food supply 100 years ago and beyond. Now, this oil is processed, these delicate oils, polyunsaturated fatty acids are extremely heat sensitive, but canola oil is processed at extremely high temperatures, scoured with chemical solvents, bleached and deodorized because of the incredibly terrible smell that it emits. It is bleached and deodorized before it's promoted to be fit for human consumption. And even well-meaning experts are still beating the drum of vegetable oil's safety. And I just wanna point to this simple fact of just describing some of the basics of how it's made, just realizing and accepting and admitting the fact that Canola oil, these, "vegetable oils," are the very definition of an ultra-processed food.

SHAWN STEVENSON: They are the very definition of being an ultra-processed food. And with that being said, there is tremendous, I'm talking, you can read for weeks on end all of the peer-reviewed studies affirming how detrimental Canola oil and "vegetable oils" are to human health. For instance, a meta-analysis, this is a compilation of multiple studies published in the journal BMJ Open Heart, so the British Medical Journal Open Heart, found that these vegetable oils are very likely a major culprit behind organ failure, cardiac arrest, and even

sudden death. That's not on the bottle. When you buy Canola oil, sudden death? And just to give you a whiff of their volatility, research published in the journal *Inhalation Toxicology* found that even inhaling the smell of them while cooking can damage your DNA. The biggest offender, as noted in the journal *Environmental Science and Pollution Research International*, was the inflammatory fan favorite Canola oil, aka rapeseed oil, coming in with the highest level of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons emitted into the room during cooking.

SHAWN STEVENSON: These hydrocarbons are implicated in everything from cancer to autoimmune diseases. But the crazy thing is, not only is our food supply now riddled with these toxic oils, again, just smelling their fumes can harm human health. Now, I can go on and on with these different vegetable oils "vegetable oils" another one of them is soybean oil, and scientists at University of California, Riverside, determined that soybean oil not only leads to higher rates of obesity and diabetes, but could also affect neurological conditions like autism, Alzheimer's disease, anxiety, and depression. Again, I could do this all day, shout out to Captain America, but the bottom line is, we need to be very well aware that these oils are, in fact, in the vast majority, vast majority of foods that we're getting through these food delivery apps. All right, now, again, this is not to villainize something really cool, like when I first used DoorDash, I was like I can get anything delivered right to... It took a while because I didn't, I got it late.

SHAWN STEVENSON: All right, because where I lived in Missouri, nobody delivered out to us where we lived in Wildwood. And when I moved to LA, now I got the DoorDash app, and I'm just like this is insane and awesome at the same time. But listen, when I'm talking about us leaning into these apps when things shut down and that we didn't change our behavior, I'm included in that as well. I definitely went a little bit ham when it comes to utilizing these apps, but being able to pull back a little bit, ratchet back a little bit, and most importantly, there's several reasons why, but also now we can actually have more input into the source of fats that we're using for our foods. This is one of the most important aspects of eating more home-cooked meals is that we can control the oils that are used. And not only do we see these chronic degenerative diseases on the rise in association with these highly refined vegetable oils, but also damage to our skin, higher susceptibility to infectious diseases, and the list goes on and on and on.

SHAWN STEVENSON: This stuff is just not good for us. And unfortunately, it's in most foods. Even if companies like using some organic ingredients and things like that, because Canola oil and that industry did such a good job at lying to scientists and the public and being able to manipulate food marketing, we've paid the price. And now many companies and a lot of scientists and a lot of science is just coming out so abundantly. I've been talking about this for years, years. But there's this groundswell of energy going into this right now to help to change this. But in the meantime, and in between time, having some more home-cooked

meals is definitely the solution. And the bottom line is we also wanna find some joy in that. Part of the reason we've been outsourcing more of our food preparation to companies that we can get food from through DoorDash is that we got stuff going on. And also we get acclimated. That's the thing. We get acclimated to using them, like when things shut down, and then we just never come back from that. Like we have a reliance on them, we just keep that. And that's what's seen in the numbers and also just the income of these companies.

SHAWN STEVENSON: And so I'm imploring us to make it a mandate this year. This is the year to have some more home-cooked meals focus on a system for some food prep, making some delicious meals, spending a little bit of time in the kitchen, or having your family find a strategy for that so that you can have healthier ingredients and also ingredients that are not riddled with these toxic oils. And I'm a big fan of helping to create a fun kitchen culture and family culture around food and around the dinner table. And that was really the inspiration behind my latest book, *The Eat Smarter Family Cookbook*, which I am incredibly honored to say is a USA Today national bestseller. And it was a number one cookbook in the United States, number one new release cookbook in the United States when it came out. That is crazy pants, all right? But a book like that could not do what it did without being focused on deliciousness. Yes, we've got all the science there. As a matter of fact, the science that we just shared on those vegetable oils is in the *Eat Smarter Family Cookbook*. There's over 250 peer-reviewed scientific references embedded into the book in a fun and beautiful way.

SHAWN STEVENSON: But also when it boils down to it, it's really about the delicious recipes. There's a hundred incredible recipes and something for everyone, absolutely. But listen, from what I'm seeing, this book is making its way into people's kitchens and it's just staying there, all right. So we're seeing pictures all over the place of people getting the *Eat Smarter Family Cookbook* and it just becomes a staple in their kitchen. There's so many delicious things to make from that book. And right now, you can actually get your hands on the *Eat Smarter Family Cookbook* as a free gift with the New Year, New You Superfood Bundle from Organifi. The Superfood Bundle has three components. One focuses on energy, the other focuses on recovery, and the other focuses on a radiant appearance, which includes healthy skin. For energy, you get the Organic Red Juice Superfood Blend. In addition to this berry blend, which includes blueberries that have been found to directly target fat cells, and this is according to researchers at the University of Michigan, one of their other ingredients used in the Red Juice Blend is beets.

SHAWN STEVENSON: And a study published in the journal *Applied Physiology* showed that beet juice boosts stamina up to 16% during exercise and training. So the Red Juice Blend is all about energy and kids love it as well. It's one of my family favorites for sure, and it's been a huge upgrade to the Kool-Aid paradigm that I grew up in, and I know that you probably grew up in as well. Kool-Aid and their Flavor-Aid. Kool-Aid is already cheap, but if you didn't even

have Kool-Aid money, we got Flavor-Aid. And now, in addition to that, so we've got the Red Juice Blend in this incredible bundle for this new year, but we've also got the Gold Blend. And the Gold Blend is centered around the power of turmeric, and it's an incredible turmeric latte. And in particular, a study that was published in the European Journal of Nutrition uncovered that compounds in turmeric can down-regulate inflammatory cytokines and up-regulate the activity of adiponectin and other satiety-related hormones.

SHAWN STEVENSON: And turmeric has been well-established to improve insulin sensitivity, reduce blood fats, and directly act upon fat cells. And in addition to this organic turmeric blend, there's also things like Reishi Medicinal Mushroom and cinnamon and other incredible ingredients that have been documented through peer-reviewed studies to improve our sleep quality and improve cognitive function and recovery. And finally, in this amazing bundle, for a radiant appearance, in particular for healthy skin, and it's derived from the very best and most bioavailable sources there really isn't any collagen better in the world than Organifi's Collagen. Now, a study published in the journal *Dermatology Practical and Conceptual* titled *Collagen Supplements for Aging and Wrinkles: A Paradigm Shift in the Fields of Dermatology and Cosmetics*. This was just published in 2022, affirming collagen does in fact work at preventing and reducing the signs of aging of our skin. Improving the elasticity, reducing the appearance of wrinkles, and there's this huge component that often isn't given a name, but we talk about the glow of the skin and this kind of radiant appearance of the skin.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Collagen is critical in that. And so you get all three of these incredible superfood blends, Organifi's Red Juice blend, their Gold blend, and their Collagen blend, you get all of these together for 15% off, plus they're going to give you a free physical copy they're gonna send to you of the *Eat Smarter Family Cookbook*, the USA Today National Best-Selling Book for free. It's absolutely amazing. Head over there right now and take advantage of this. While supplies last, go to organifi.com/smarterkit. That's O-R-G-A-N-I-F-I.com/smarterkit, all together as one word, smarterkit. And take advantage of this. Again, this incredible bundle that they put together just for this, for us to kick off this new year right, to provide some incredible resources and incredible nutrition as well. Organifi really does go above and beyond. I love those guys. So again, take advantage of those resources and take advantage of the *Eat Smarter Family Cookbook* and make more home-cooked meals for yourself and your family this year.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Protect yourself and your family from these cultural contagions with these low-quality toxic food ingredients that are primarily found in ultra-processed food, but also in healthier versions of things. Unfortunately, again, because of the marketing by these ultra-processed food companies and the war on fat, where we have these polyunsaturated fats that are very volatile, rising in popularity, and we can do so much better. And our food can be more delicious and more health-affirming. And so that's one of the things for us to

implement this year, moving forward. Now, as we move forward into number five on our list of the five things to do for better health this year, number five is to build some muscle. 2024 is the year of muscle. Leading muscle-centric physicians like Dr. Gabrielle Lyon have affirmed that we don't merely have an issue with excessive body fat.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Our primary body composition issues as a society are due largely to a lack of muscle. Muscle is the primary site of glucose disposal in the human body. The healthy action of insulin is dependent on its relationship with muscle. Here are just a few of the benefits seen by building some high-quality skeletal muscle seen in peer-reviewed data. Number one, muscle significantly improves insulin sensitivity and overall metabolic health. Number two, muscle improves immune system performance. Three, muscle protects against injuries and speeds recovery. And four, muscle defends against age-related degradation. Now, these are just some of the outward benefits seen by building more muscle. But also when you lift weights, you're training your muscles and your brain. A randomized controlled trial published in the Archives of Internal Medicine found that resistance training promotes cognitive and functional brain plasticity.

SHAWN STEVENSON: This is our brain's ability to grow and develop and adapt, and we can fortify this benefit for a lifetime. Two sessions per week appear to be the minimum effective dose noted in their research. While a 2014 study conducted by researchers at Georgia Tech revealed that strength training for as little as 20 minutes can improve our long-term memory. Now again, 2024 is the year of muscle. And if you think about even 2024, you got the two twos, you add it together, that's a four. And you got another four. And you think about the four, the four kind of looks like somebody standing up straight and flexing on you like that. And if you're into numbers and all that kind of stuff, but just thinking about the appearance of that number four, it looks like somebody standing up tall and flexing with one of their arms to the side and just doing their thing. Like you know that they got that muscle, all right? They got the muscles on them.

SHAWN STEVENSON: All right, so just keep this in mind, program your thinking, make this a mandate. This is the year to build muscle. Muscle is literally a reservoir. It is a reservoir for what we dub as anti-aging hormones. And what that really means is hormones that help to accelerate healing, that help to prevent degradation, that help to fortify and support the function of our overall metabolic health, and so much more. But if we don't have muscle, we don't have that reservoir. We don't have that protection. And the myokines that are produced just by contracting our muscles are now being studied for their impact on everything from our immune system to reducing rates of cancer, to improving our cognitive function. And we're still discovering more and more cool things that muscle does. But unfortunately, we've been barking up the wrong tree when we're talking about our society's issues with obesity and metabolic health.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Because yes, we have some issues with excessive body fat, but the research is now pointing to the fact that the most overlooked thing is the lack of building high quality skeletal muscle. Building muscle is the key to improving our metabolic health and being able to utilize and eliminate that excessive fat. If we're just doing that trying to do activities to get rid of fat without focusing on building and sustaining our muscle, we will be in this yo-yo paradigm because it's simply not sustainable if we don't have high quality muscle. And muscle is so expensive for our physiology. It requires so much energy to maintain itself. Muscle is automatically going to raise your metabolic rate and you're going to be burning off more energy throughout the day than you would if you didn't have as much high quality muscle.

SHAWN STEVENSON: It's one of the secrets that should no longer be a secret. Make it a mandate this year. Build some muscle. Put some muscle on your frame. Adding two, three, five pounds, 10, 10 pounds? If you added 10 pounds of muscles to your frame, you would have a completely different body, completely different body composition, different physique, different cognitive health, different metabolic health, different cardiovascular health, different immune system health. The list goes on and on. You'd be a different person, all right? Or should I say, you'd be an upgraded version of yourself, your true potential. So make it a mandate to build some muscle this year and integrate some strength training into your practice. If you're already strength training, let's get serious now, all right? Let's get physical, physical, all right?

SHAWN STEVENSON: Shout out to Olivia Newton-John, all right? Shout out to Olivia Newton-John. Take it seriously, build some muscle. That also requires you making sure that you're getting those building blocks that builds and maintains your muscles. You got to make sure that you're getting plenty of high quality protein, high quality amino acids. All right, so we wanna build that muscle, we have to actually add in the building blocks as well. So we get the trigger, we get the resistance, we get the input that initiates the building of muscle, but we need the building blocks as well. Now, after going through these five things for us to do this year for better health, one of the things you may have noticed is that all of these things can actually be done with family and friends. So many of these things can actually be blended together. As a matter of fact, you can potentially get most if not all of these things in one day of the week.

SHAWN STEVENSON: For example, getting that nature time in, we can go for a hike with our friends and family for more time with the people that we love. And we can, of course, we're getting in our 4K steps, going on a hike together. Not to mention, we might bring along a picnic basket. All right, shout out to Yogi the Bear. And right there, we're getting four of those inputs in, in one experience. As a matter of fact, we could probably get five. Recently, I went to

Venice Beach for the first time and I took my family along, all right? So right there, we're outdoors, right by the ocean, we're on the sand, all right? Got my family there with me and of course, we're walking around, walking around the beach. We explored a lot of the Venice Beach area and also Muscle Beach is there, all right? So there was some rings and some bars out there. We were doing muscle ups and all this cool stuff together.

SHAWN STEVENSON: And the only thing that we could, we could have brought the food along, some home cooked goodness. But at the time, I wasn't thinking in these terms and we just searched up a high quality restaurant in the area, it was like a farm to table joint. And so again, there are creative ways to stack a lot of these things. And this investment in ourselves for this year doesn't have to be a huge investment as far as a time requirement or turning our world upside down. It's about intention, it's about awareness and it's about application. And I highly encourage you to schedule these things, put them on your calendar, and make them real. Take that first step and make it a priority. We schedule all this other stuff that is less important. Schedule these things, give yourself these gifts, give your family these gifts moving forward for an epic new year ahead. Thank you so much for tuning into this episode. If you got a lot of value out of this, please share this out with your friends and family.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Share the goodness, share the inspiration. You can send this directly from the podcast app that you are listening on, write to a friend or family member in a text message or of course, you could take a screenshot of this episode and share it out on social media, you could share it in your Instagram stories and of course, you could tag me. I'm @seanmodel on Instagram and I always love to see people sharing over on social media. And we've got some epic, I'm talking about epic, masterclasses and amazing guests lined up for you this year. Make sure to stay tuned. Take care, have an amazing day and I'll talk with you soon.

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