



EPISODE 835

How Our Fat Cells, Technology, & Family Culture Control Our Health

With Ruben Rojas

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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 in with me today. On this episode, you're going to discover some surprising facts about your fat cells, why love and health are intimately connected. The hidden force that's controlling what you and your family is eating. How family meals can radically improve your health outcomes, even if you don't have a lot of money and so much more. All of this is from an epic interview that I did on the hit show, Live Through Love. Live Through Love is hosted by Ruben Rojas, a multi-talented artist who transformed cultures and urban landscapes into canvases of hope, inspiration, and change. Live Through Love is a lifestyle brand that ignites creativity, encourages optimism, and inspires people to see the world through the lens of love. Ruben's public artwork has been found in cities worldwide, including LA, New York, Paris, London, and more, serving as vibrant reminders of art's power to unite people.

He's also a product designer and corporate consultant. His notable clients include the NFL, BMW, Google, the list goes on and on. And again, Ruma's message of hope and love extends further through his podcast called Live Through Love. And this is what you're going to get a taste of today. Again, we're going to be covering a wide variety of powerful health topics that are going to impact your life for many years to come. Let's dive into this powerful interview that I did on the hit show, Live Through Love.

RUBEN ROJAS: One of the, I would say so top health gurus spitting game and knowledge around the fitness, wellness, and food space. Not only are you bringing your twist and your flavor and your energy to it, but you're actually using data and science and making it really palatable. And with The Model Health Show and everything you're putting out there. So as a guy who went to school for this stuff, I was going to be an orthopedic surgeon. Many people are like you paint murals and you're doing this. I'm like, yeah, I'm going to exercise science, major master in biomechanics, nutrition, all the things that were in there. I just geek out over it, and health and wellness to me is such a pillar of living through love and a model of self love and self care. So I'm really excited to have you on. You have an amazing cookbook coming out. You bring a wealth of knowledge and thank you for being here.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Oh, man, it's my pleasure. It's an absolute honor and like you said, just as soon as you said this, that connection between your creative entity and love and health, these things are really synonymous.

RUBEN ROJAS: Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: It's very difficult. It's part of the research as well. It's very difficult to express the full capacity of love and empathy and compassion. If we don't feel well, we can, love is ever present, but it can be difficult to express it or to grasp it. And most importantly, to maintain it. Because love is a high frequency. Can you vibrate at that frequency for a sustainable amount of time without crashing? And so the cultivation of health is like really foundational know. And how we express ourselves, how we connect with other people. And that's really my mission, man. I've been in this field. I just crossed my 20th anniversary of working in health and fitness.

RUBEN ROJAS: Amazing.

SHAWN STEVENSON: And I was just sharing with you. I met my wife actually in college back in St. Louis and she, our first date, every, that's the thing about food as well. Like it's surrounding so much of our lives, right? So much of our lives are centered around food. First dates, graduations, funerals. My father just passed away recently, soccer games, right? So that after the game, there's not really many things in our culture that doesn't involve food. And we've kind of devolved in a sense in our relationship with that.

RUBEN ROJAS: Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Because outside of celebration and that connection with food, a significant amount of our culture, a significant amount of our population are now eating alone in isolation, which is something that had really never existed in a great capacity through human evolution. Food was centered around cooperation. It was centered around a tribe. And today, oftentimes, and by the way, here's just one of the stats. Where family meals was the cultural norm. The majority of families in the United States, we're just talking about the U S for now we're eating together with their families on a regular basis. Today, and a lot of people are shocked to hear this, only about 30 percent of American families eat together on a regular basis. So it's something that is becoming a norm. On the endangered species list, essentially,

RUBEN ROJAS: That's interesting.

SHAWN STEVENSON: And I'm working to revive that because as we'll talk about today. There are phenomenal data driven, I'm talking, there are studies after studies affirming how eating together with friends and family is a huge protective mechanism against obesity, against eating disorders, against chronic diseases of all sorts, especially for children. And yeah, man, I'm excited about this.

RUBEN ROJAS: Yeah. That's interesting. No. And thank you. And reading some of the stuff, your research and what's going on and what you've been talking about. I didn't think about it that way. It is an endangered species, right? It's Oh that's, we understand what that means. And I remember growing up family meal time. I don't know what time it was, six o'clock or whatever. Like my mom would cook. Yeah. sit down, we would eat, move on with our day and do that like day in, day out. I mostly vividly really experienced it on the weekends, but we don't do that now. We go out to eat a lot as a family, but like at home, we're tired.

I get home from working, wife's working, pick up the kid. We cook. By the time we sit there and do this, we're exhausted. So how can we Revive this because I know the power about it. We love let's get a bunch of homies together. Let's do a sit down. Let's break bread like how we celebrated that birthday a couple months ago. That to me is everything like I want a huge property. So I can get all my friends over and we just eat and be married together all our kids, whatever. That to me is love. And we use food as a way of nurturing and sharing and spreading love as well. Not only by cooking it and sharing, but how it makes us feel. So what is it that we can start doing now as a family? Because the easy excuse is I'm too busy. I can't do this. I can't cook. Let's order in. And do we have to sit down at the table together or can we sit down at the coffee table or can we congregate in the kitchen? Is there a right way to do family time? And what does that look like now?

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah, that's a great question. It always starts with why, right? Why does this matter? And, different people think in different terms. Some people just want to know the thing. And I want to build a foundation on why first. All right. So the Journal of Nutrition, Education, and Behavior published a really fascinating study and they were looking at the behavior of families eating together and their habitual consumption of different foods. And so what they found was that, When children eat together with their family, and the number was four times a week, predominantly they were looking at breakfast because it's kind of everybody's getting ready for the day. But it can be any meal, when they ate together four times a week, the children ate an astonishingly lower amount of chips and soda, and a significantly higher amount of fruits and vegetables.

All right, and the researchers went on to find that if the television was rarely on or not on at all during these family meals, it dropped their consumption of chips and soda even further. So ultra processed foods and beverages. Now, what was so powerful about that study to me personally was that this was looking at minority children who are generally in the construct of low income neighborhoods. And this is where I come from. All right. Most of my adult years, actually, I lived in Ferguson, Missouri, Ferguson, Florissant, even when I was going to college which is what's known as this. I don't like the term food desert because the desert sounds kind of cool. You know what I mean?

Like I see Jodeci like in the sand, but a food desert is, it is devoid really of opportunity to find real food. predominantly I'm having ultra processed food just pushed into my face at every turn. I don't know, really, I'm lacking the awareness that there's other, and so coming from that environment, and also, I lived all over St. Louis, but we also were on food stamps. We were on wick. We had, we were getting even food from charities at some points. My mom would actually sell her blood to buy food for us from time to time. And if we're talking about a low income, living in poverty, that was us. And being in that situation, we eat what we can, right? We eat what we have access to as well. And ultra processed foods, by their very nature, they're incredibly tasty. They're created by food scientists.

RUBEN ROJAS: They're engineered for your tongue to just have an orgasm.

SHAWN STEVENSON: I can break down the science of how it works, and vanishing caloric density and all these different things. They're crafting these foods. I'll just throw in one little nugget. There was this invention called a gas chromatograph where they can identify certain flavors because flavor is just chemistry. Everything in life is chemistry. Love is chemistry. And so they can identify these certain flavors and then basically just recreate that flavor synthetically. And so that's when we have Strawberry flavor was no longer relegated to strawberries, right? You could take that strawberry flavor and add it to juice, pop tarts, soda, right? It might not taste exactly the same, but it's just enough to muddy up the metabolic waters, right? And these foods by their nature very tasty, very addictive and also very cheap.

Yeah. So this is getting into like conversations of economies of scale and this and that. But the bottom line is they tend to be very inexpensive. And with this being the case, this is going to be the thing that we naturally go to. Now with that said, had we known as a family that we could create a buffer from me, I'm growing up with chronic asthma, my little brother, extremely bad asthma. I was hospitalized maybe once a year. He's hospitalized multiple times a year. My little sister having eczema. My mother being obese, my father, obesity, my mother, diabetes, grandparents, heart disease. Everybody has something. Okay. And ultimately I was diagnosed when I was 20 with degenerative bone and disc disease where my spine was deteriorating.

And so we could have created a buffer against these health conditions had we know that simply eating together as a family more often could reduce our risk of chronic illnesses. And I'll get to that in just one moment, but we didn't know, it's just not, it wasn't apparent to us. So most of the time when we ate, it was grab and scatter, you know what I'm saying? A lot of times in front of the TV or video game. And being that we had this growing phenomenon where both parents are rarely ever there, right? So one's working and one's kind of taking care of the kids. I can count on my hands the number of times my family ate together. Okay. I

can count on my hands. Outside of holiday. Okay. Just to be clear. So the big holidays, Thanksgiving, whatever.

RUBEN ROJAS: Those don't count. That's a little bit different.

SHAWN STEVENSON: So most of the time the kids are eating by ourselves or with one parent sometimes, but usually we're not eating all together in the same space. We're eating at the same time. And with this being the case and knowing that I come from a low income environment, had we known that we can add this piece in where we sit down and eat together. Because what that does, so here's some of the reasons why it's so effective is that it brings about a level of intention. It brings about a level of planning and structure. You're going to be sitting down to eat together. This doesn't mean you're not going to sometimes sit down and eat fast food, but it's just bringing about a culture where we're eating together as a family. And that just brings about more opportunity to make real food, to actually cook. And so I want to share one more why, and I could just, we can do this part all day.

RUBEN ROJAS: No, I can tell.

SHAWN STEVENSON: One more why, and this research was published in the journal pediatrics and a couple other places. But what the researchers uncovered was that children who eat together with their family at least three times a week had dramatically lower incidences of metabolic syndrome, obesity, and disordered eating, all right? And all of these things have skyrocketed in children. All right. For folks that don't know childhood, obesity has tripled in the last 30 years. It's tripled in the last 30 years.

RUBEN ROJAS: That's something I'm sorry to interrupt, but that is something that boils my blood. And it's really easy to point fingers on certain things. Some of us have education or not. And I want you to go back into that. But I. Go as far as saying that I believe that's child abuse. Because a lot of what the kids are eating and being fed come from the parent. I'm not talking about socioeconomic status or any of that or education, but like it starts there. So let's start combating that because the kid doesn't choose it at first. It gets addicted to it later, but at first it's what you're feeding your child.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah.

RUBEN ROJAS: So like..

SHAWN STEVENSON: Cultural, it's a cultural construct. Okay. And that's the thing that we all need to wake up to is that we think we're making our decisions. We think that we're thinking

from free will. But we're making choices based on our culture. And our culture is kind of like an invisible hand or invisible guidance system or even an invisible box that we're operating in and making our choices from that. And so so often we're trying to change the food behaviors and habits without addressing the underlying culture.

RUBEN ROJAS: Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: And so it's kind of like treating a symptom of a disease without addressing the root cause. And so this is why we tend to fall back into disordered eating and just to even affirm what you just said with the abuse title. Now, this is really important is because, so often, and there's a statement that is popular, but if we just take a moment to really understand this, that hurt people.

RUBEN ROJAS: Yes.

SHAWN STEVENSON: And so a lot of times when we're inflicting abuse, we're doing it unconsciously. We don't know that we're doing it. So my parents weren't thinking about the mental constructs or the struggles that I would have later on based on conversations, based on certain things they said to me, based on certain conditions they put me in. They were just living life and doing the best that they could with the knowledge that they had. And so we can haphazardly be inflicting abuse on our children because of the cultural container. But being aware of the abuse and being somebody who's wanting to create the best opportunity for our families, for our communities, like this is the time to take control of this. And so, with that said, how do we get over the last 30 years, a tripling of childhood obesity, something that was really rare. And if everybody just thinks about this, even when we were in school, there might be like one, maybe two kids that were overweight in our class.

RUBEN ROJAS: That truly had some kind of an issue because even now adults are like, Oh, I have a thyroid problem, chalk it up to that, or I have this or I have that. And I see that and I'm thinking back in my childhood. There was a point when I was five, I cut my foot from the arch all the way to the toe. I was bedridden for five months. My parents fed me really good food. Cuban food. Loved it. It was so good. This spot is called Las Palmas. I got chunky. So when I got, when I was a skinny little kid until I got chunky. And I remember for a couple of years, I'm like, Oh, I'm the chunky kid. Yo, and it's just, that was a lack of movement, still eating. It wasn't that it was not quality food, but besides that, the reason why I remember it so vividly, I couldn't say, look, there's a bunch of other chunky kids out here with me. I was a chunky kid cause I got hurt. Now though, it's more Oh, I'm one of the skinny kids around.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Wow. Yeah. It's flipped, wow. That's powerful, man. It just also gathered up from Billy Madison when he's like the smelly kid in class or whatever. Oh, is that big dad? He's my kid's a smelly kid in class. So yeah, man, it's such an interesting phenomenon, but we've got to understand this isn't about vanity. This is not about a vanity metric. This is about dramatically increasing the risk of chronic and infectious disease and mental health conditions for our children, for ourselves, when we're venturing into this state, this metabolic state, right?

So this is a state where, if we're venturing into obesity, our fat cells are really amazing, by the way, they've evolved. Part of the reason that we've become the apex species or apex predator, if you will, and on the planet, is our ability to utilize fuel sources to store energy and to be creative in the procurement of energy. And so our fat cells really helped us to survive and survive in different climates and terrains. They're very intelligent but we are at war with our fat cells. Now, we don't understand that they're just doing what they've evolved to do, which is a store energy essentially for when we need it. But oftentimes today we never get a chance to need it. Because we're so inundated with ultra processed foods at every turn, and creating dysfunction with how quickly those fat cells are getting filled up. Now here's the crazy part. Our fat cells can actually expand their volume. Nearly a thousand times their size.

RUBEN ROJAS: Wow.

SHAWN STEVENSON: There's nothing else that can do something like that.

RUBEN ROJAS: Think about a thousand times that is..

SHAWN STEVENSON: It's outrageous. It's outrageous. It's outrageous. It's really, it's also again, just very sobering to think about because also we might think that we're creating a lot of new fat cells. A lot of the fat cells that we have, we're born with. We're losing fat cells are dying off, but they're getting replaced, kind of like a one to one situation. There are situations where you can stir about lipogenesis, the creation of new fat. But that's a whole different conversation to get into. Most of the time what's happening when we see the outer expression of obesity or gaining excessive weight is our fat cells, the volume, their contents are expanding and filling up.

So the underlying factor that makes obesity so dangerous is that when those fat cells are expanding, especially beyond the volume that we've evolved with, it's setting off an immune response. All right. The fat cells are essentially acting as though they're infected. And so it's creating inflammation. Now, this word has been used a lot recently. It comes from Latin roots, meaning basically to, to set on fire, right? Something is a blaze and inflammation in many

ways, it is kind of an internal fire happening, but what it's doing is just drawing in energy. Drawing in the immune cells because we need inflammation to survive.

RUBEN ROJAS: Yep.

SHAWN STEVENSON: All right. If without inflammation, we're not going to heal, we're not going to grow, but so we need inflammation for repair. And when inflammation goes too far when we get into the state of chronic inflammation, that's where the problem is. And to put a bow on this, so this is the reason that we become more susceptible to infectious diseases once we venture into obesity. We become more susceptible to heart attacks and strokes. We already have an underlying state of high inflammation, chronic inflammation, and you just add an insult on top of it. Something bad can happen at any point more likely.

RUBEN ROJAS: Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: And so.

RUBEN ROJAS: It's a catalyst.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah.

RUBEN ROJAS: Plus the pressure it's building inside of the cavities before it expands. You could only expand so far. So you just start seeing this whole ripple effect.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah, and it's really what it is an adaptation. Your body's adapting to process and to keep you alive under unideal circumstances. Got a quick break coming up. We'll be right back.

If you're anything like me, you grew up drinking Kool Aid, Flavor Aid, Gatorade, Powerade, all these different aids. No, that doesn't even sound right. But the truth is many of us have grown up in this culture of being inundated by these crazy sugar dense products. Some of these products can have 20, 30, 40 grams of sugar and it is not necessarily per serving, but how much we would drink of it because I know that I drink a lot of Kool Aid.

I was actually the Kool Aid chef in the house. I would take different packets of that artificial goodness, combine them together with a cup and a half of sugar per pitcher and make that up for my family. And that was normalized. And not only are we not getting any real nutrition along with this, we're getting a little bit of a party for the mouth, a little bit of a dance for our taste buds, but we're lacking in an opportunity to actually provide real nourishment.

And today that is changing because now we can get access to truly nutrient dense juice products for our kids, for ourselves. We're talking about powered by things like acai, pomegranate, and also adaptogens like cordyceps. And all this is combined together in the Organifi red juice blend. Now, why is acai one of the primary ingredients of this red juice blend? It has an ORAC value of 103, 000. That means it has about 10 times the amount of antioxidants that other fruits have that you'll find in your produce aisle. It is packed with antioxidants. This helps to reduce inflammation, helps to nourish our friendly flora in our gut. It also helps to support our heart health, our cardiovascular system, our cognitive function, and so much more.

But the cool thing about the red juice blend is that it's backed by science. One of the other ingredients is organic beet juice. And a study published in the Journal of Applied Physiology showed that having beet juice boosts stamina up to 16 percent during our exercise. So each of these ingredients has a purpose and this blend is kid tested and parent approved. This is far different from the Kool Aids and Flavor Aids and all that stuff that we grew up with. It has real nutrition and also no added sugar. And the cool thing is it still tastes amazing. Kids love it. Again, kid tested, parent approved, and you're going to love it as well.

Get this for your kids, get this for your family, for your household. This is something that is always on our cabinet shelves. Organifi Red Juice Blend. Go to Organifi.com/model. That's O R G A N I F I .com/model. And you're going to get 20 percent off their amazing organic red juice blend. And by the way, they're going to hook you up with 20 percent off store wide. So again, go to Organifi.com/model for 20 percent off, hook yourself up with their amazing red juice blend for your family. And now back to the show.

RUBEN ROJAS: And that's where we should give a shout out to our bodies. Our bodies are geniuses, right? And all of us are walking chemistry experiments. So what works for you doesn't work for me and vice versa. Like they are really smart and they're trying to keep us alive. We're the ones trying to kill ourselves and sometimes don't even realize it or don't care.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Because of culture, and that's, that don't care part is. Really a state of learned helplessness. And I would see this in my clinical practice a lot. You know where people had a story, that they've tried everything. And a lot of times when I ask people how many things they try to be like two things. Yeah, maybe three, like I've tried everything. But here's the bottom line with all this and just to tie it all together. So this increase in obesity not being a vanity metric, but a matter of health And a matter of resilience, a matter of safety, defense against chronic diseases, infectious diseases.

That increase coincided with a skyrocketing consumption of ultra processed foods. Alright, so according to the BMJ, British Medical Journal, one of the most prestigious journals in the world, they published a report recently, stating that American adults now consume about 60 percent of the American diet is ultra processed foods. That's shocking. 60%, the majority of our diet is fake foods. All right. Now here's where my new project and what I'm really out here working to educate people on. A new study published in JAMA, the Journal of the American Medical Association. looked at the trends in consumption, food consumption by children and adolescents. Okay. And they found that today the average child's diet is made of nearly 70 percent ultra processed foods. It's 67. 1 or 0. 3%. It's just outrageous what's happening with our children.

RUBEN ROJAS: But also just, I'm just thinking in the future. The habit to break that addiction, by that point, it's written in your DNA, like you're going to have withdrawals if you don't eat this, like that's mind blowing.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah. Yeah. We can talk about the addictive factor, the psychological, emotional, mental faculty, and also this really recidivism, where once we gain this weight or create this metabolic abnormality, it's hard, especially when we do it as a child. It's harder to reverse it later on, right? And so we see this, again, these are things we could just look around and see, you know if we're struggling with these things as a kid, we're gonna tend to bring that with us.

RUBEN ROJAS: Oh yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: And even as adults, if we don't really take control of our health, it becomes more and more difficult as we move on in age. It doesn't have to be.

RUBEN ROJAS: Correct.

SHAWN STEVENSON: But culturally that's what we see because there are people out here who are transforming their health at 60 at 70, like it's really never too. If your heart is still beating progress can be made.

RUBEN ROJAS: Oh for sure.

SHAWN STEVENSON: And but the mission is really to get folks educated about the current situation because this isn't, and by the way, a huge caveat for this episode is that this is nowhere in any form of fashion about perfection. It's about progress. It's about stacking conditions in your favor because your kids, they're going to be out here. They're going to be

doing stuff. My son's at basketball camp today and they're providing the lunch and I've been, he'd been taking his lunch all week, but I'm just like, you can go ahead and you don't do the thing today. And he had a real food breakfast that I made for him today before he left out. And for dinner, very likely we're going to eat together as a family, like I'm stacking conditions so that the majority of the time he's eating real food. And so I just came in yesterday, he had a basketball practice and we'd been out of town for two weeks.

And so we just got back and I'm telling you, like five parents, the coach came up to me as soon as I saw the coach, he was like, your son grew, this has been two weeks. This kid is he's the biggest kid, tallest kid on his team. And it's just what in the, all of these like regenerative anabolic things are getting expressed. Of course he sleeps well. When I was sleeping as a kid, I'm sleeping in there's gunshots, no bullshit. There's gunshots outside. There's the..

RUBEN ROJAS: You're elevated on..

SHAWN STEVENSON: Not to mention what's happening in my household. I never know what can pop off, violence, whatever fights. And I kind of had to sleep with one eye open, and so what do you think is going to happen to me? I'm going to degenerate. I'm going to break down prematurely. And that's what happened. No kid. I was 20 years old when I got diagnosed with an arthritic condition.

RUBEN ROJAS: No, I know. And just from what I studied, even if you're active that's, that shouldn't be happening. Like it shouldn't be.

SHAWN STEVENSON: No, it shouldn't. Cause I had that piece dialed in, I was at the top of my game, I ran a 4.5 when I was 15. And I've got game film at my house right now of Me breaking away like I was on like a 39 sweep or something get past the safety. And then I'm a kid and I tear a muscle and I end up falling nobody touched me. My body just started breaking down.

RUBEN ROJAS: It was that blade of grass.

SHAWN STEVENSON: I am Groot got me, it's so crazy, but again, had I known that this mattered and this is what I've, I've spoken to many kids over the years going into schools and whatnot. And it's just about tying change to something that matters to us and not trying to force change on people. Because again, we get very comfortable with the way that our culture is set up. Even if we're not happy about our bodies or our health. We're comfortable with it in a strange way. And so we're coming in trying to force change because what I noticed when I was working with all those people in my practice, all those years is that people want change. But they don't want to change that much.

RUBEN ROJAS: Exactly.

SHAWN STEVENSON: They want change, but they don't want to change that much.

RUBEN ROJAS: And that's the truth. And the second factor to that is they don't want to do the work. They want to find the pill. And I'm going to interject with this right now, because I think for what I think it's gone viral, OzeMpic.

SHAWN STEVENSON: And okay. You want to crack this open?

RUBEN ROJAS: Let's crack it open. Come on. It's interesting because let's just say, I can't name the names, but there's an entire office. They're all on it. And if you look at what they eat, it's just.

SHAWN STEVENSON: I just encourage people to look at the black box warning from the FDA on it, on the product.

RUBEN ROJAS: And it's not cheap. How are they getting money to do the, pay a trainer?

SHAWN STEVENSON: Listen, I encourage people to look at the black box warning on this medication from the FDA stating that this drug has been found to create thyroid cancer in laboratory animals. All right, not humans. That's not proven. It's not known. And that's the language that they'll use in the black box warning. It's unknown if this is dangerous to humans. But guess what? And if you think about it, even at targeting the thyroid in laboratory animals. Our thyroid is really a major hub of our metabolism. It has a lot to do with our metabolic rate, how our body's processing energy.

And it also, your thyroid is really existing along something called the HPA axis, which a lot of people have heard about, from science class, but it's the hypothalamic pituitary adrenal axis. It's like this information super highway. Your thyroid is along that super highway. And in direct communication is your hypothalamus and your pituitary. All right. And they're even feeding out, like there's a communication with, TSH, your thyroid stimulating hormone and T4 and all this, reverse T3, all this stuff. They're that's communication.

RUBEN ROJAS: It all has to work together for it to work.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Now here's where it gets crazy. So researchers at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine found that once we start to gain excessive weight. I really want people to get this is very important. What they found was that once we start to gain excessive amounts

of weight, carrying specifically more excess belly fat and venturing into obesity, it's creating more inflammation in our brain. Our brain is feeling the result of that the insult because there's a chronic inflammation in the body and..

RUBEN ROJAS: Increasing brain fog that's happening and..

SHAWN STEVENSON: All manner of symptoms is going to depend on the person. But here's the most important point of this. So excessive body fat creates inflammation in the brain and inflammation in the brain was leading to excessive buildup of body fat and insulin resistance. Yes. So it becomes a vicious circle. All right. And again, we come in and try and do like a point system or some diet foods or whatever, and not understanding we've got to break this chain.

We've got to break this pattern of inflammation. What nutrition program is telling people, we need to address the inflammation in your brain in order to get you healthy. And why isn't this more of a popular part of the conversation? It's growing now. All right. Part of this is because the brain is very, it's so beautiful. Michio Kaku is kind of like a modern day Einstein. A lot of people would refer to him as he said that the human brain is the most complicated object in the known universe. All right. And we have one of them, it's so powerful, but we don't necessarily know how to use it very well, and this organ is very protective.

So it's hard to understand. It's hard to track and to study. And there, of course, we've had some advances in the last couple of years, but nothing is really dialed in on what's happening in the brain. The brain is the only organ that's fully encased in hard bone, right? So it's got like a built in helmet. And also our brain is very ravenous. So part of the metabolism, food consumption equation that goes with the brain is that. Even though the brain is only about 2 percent of our body's mass, it's consuming upwards of like 25 to 30 percent of the calories we eat.

RUBEN ROJAS: Yeah. Have you read Sapiens?

SHAWN STEVENSON: I have not, no.

RUBEN ROJAS: I read, just to interject on that one moment, he basically writes this book, it's a huge book about the evolution of man and homopods and everything, and that there was a few different Homopods out in the world and certain of them had bigger brains, smaller brains and the height, he's kind of ending up on how our brain size ended up being our size.

And some of the other Neanderthals and other bipeds had way bigger brains and they didn't last. It wasn't about intelligence. It was about how much food your brain consumed and the lack of food that was out in the world for you to consume, to keep yourself alive.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah. Yeah.

RUBEN ROJAS: So that was interesting. Evolution just by.

SHAWN STEVENSON: And that part brings in that conversation of like, how did humans devise these ways to extract even more from the environment and also to become very crafty and thrifty at consuming, like absorbing calories and storing them, right? This is what our competitive advantage was, right? And the advent of cooking helped in many ways. And then we can get into conversations about agriculture and whatnot. There's a double edged sword with some of this stuff. But the bottom line is that. With the brain consuming so much of this energy, it's a hotspot for metabolic dysfunctions to take place.

Now, we do have a guard system, kind of like an internal security system for the brain, the blood brain barrier. Now, my friends and co. I just did a talk for the neuroscience department at NYU recently. All right? My friends and colleagues are the top people in their game, whether it's Wendy Suzuki at NYU, also Dr. Lisa Mosconi is another really good friend. Dr. Daniel Amen. That's my guy. He wrote the forward. I'm sorry. He wrote the opening quote for my book. We're always going, man, I love these guys. And Oh, Dr. Caroline leaf. I can go on and on. So what these researchers have really come to understand is that our brain is incredibly protective, but yet susceptible to insults.

And when I was talking about the metabolic dysfunction, this is the bring it all full circle. The specific part of the brain that's getting harmed when we are gaining body fat or creating dysfunction, let me say creating dysfunction is the hypothalamus. So it's hypothalamic inflammation, not just neuro inflammation, hypothalamic inflammation.

And so what that part of the brain is really kind of like an internal thermostat. So it's like determining, and this is what's also cool, and there's researchers at Yale found this out, is that your brain can inform your gut, basically there's information going back and forth. The vagus nerve is a big part of this, and based on your brain's assessment of what your gut is saying about your nutrition needs. Your brain can down regulate the absorption of calories from the food that you're eating.

Your brain can tell your gut to lower the amount that you're absorbing of nutrients and caloric energy, right? So again, the calories in calories out model. It's it's very rudimentary.

There's a part to play with it But there are epicaloric controllers that determine what your body's actually absorbing from the food that you're eating.

RUBEN ROJAS: I've never knew that. Thank you for sharing that.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah. Yeah, and so but also at the other side, it can increase. It's the absorption of calories based on the assessment of what you need. So we can be in a state of obesity, but still be starving, right? So our bodies can be starving of essential nutrients that your body needs to maybe again, help to heal some kind of brain tissue, to build new neurons in your hippocampus, to clot your blood, whatever the case might be. And so your biological thrust is to eat more food. You need to get these nutrients in, even though we have so much stored. So this is the irony that we're in today. And so again, breaking that chain for our families, and that's what we can get into now is going to take a cultural shift. And so that's what, your initial question was, so how do we do this? And so that's what I want to dive into, of course.

RUBEN ROJAS: Yeah. No, to recap all that again, guys, I'm an, I'm a nerd when it comes to this, like I studied it. So right now. I'm loving this conversation. So thank you for sharing this because we don't hear any of this out there, right? In my head, half the stuff I'm saying is like, why don't we know this? Why don't we know this? And some of us that have studied it, we still don't know this. And you're saying one simple solution for all of this is just eat with your family and that's choosing love. And that's choosing love. That's kind of like a mind blow emoji right now. That's what's happening here. And that downregulation, that's also playing into homeostasis, right? This is why you run hot or cold or this or that this whole vicious cycle of it going together. So that's the why.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah, you just said a couple of keywords, even with the downregulation and homeostasis, we're talking about shifts in your chemistry. We're talking about shifts in your biology. So your brain is literally shifting over from this. fight or flight sympathetic on system to the parasympathetic rest and digest is the nickname part of your nervous system. And so one of the studies that I referenced in the eat smarter cookbook is a study that was conducted with office workers at IBM, right? And so they found that if the employees were able to just get home and have dinner with their families, it created this really remarkable, So number one, increase in their work output and their performance at work and dropping down burnout. But what it was really was reducing their stress levels. So making it home for dinner was a buffer against chronic stress. And what they found was that as more workload came on and they were less able to eat with their families, their dissatisfaction with work continued to increase. And so there's again, something about sitting down with the people that you love, the dinner table is a unifier.

And I just want to also again, remind people, it doesn't matter if it's dinner, it could be lunch, it could be breakfast. But I'm on a mission to, for everybody to take on this mandate that you have three meals a week with your family. The data finds that number, that's really the sweet spot. And it could be any of the meals, just three times a week, sitting down and eating with your family. And now the question is, how do we go about making this happen in our world today? A couple of simple things that we could do. And just understanding that a lot of us spend time, we've evolved from eating together. Do you remember being bored as a kid? Do you remember?

RUBEN ROJAS: Just being bored as a kid?

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yes. Just being bored.

RUBEN ROJAS: I couldn't tell you that I can actually pick a memory of just being bored.

SHAWN STEVENSON: But you knew it existed.

RUBEN ROJAS: Oh yeah. Cause we would call people boring, but I don't remember myself physically being bored.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Of course. We're not going to remember those moments of boredom. We're going to remember the moments of joy and revelation and sadness and all these things. But you had time to be bored.

RUBEN ROJAS: Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: And then with that boredom would bring about creative ideas. And that's the thing about you even posing you that question I knew I was like this is gonna bleed into some creative sh*t because you're going to create a way to feed that space because that boredom is an opportunity, right? Today a lot of people, especially our children, never really have moments of boredom. They're constantly having a screen in their face

RUBEN ROJAS: So the reframe of you're really saying, do you remember moments of stillness, moments of quiet moments of non distraction? That's how I'm hearing it, right? Like now it's like screen time for the kid, wherever it's at, strange, I'm like, we regulate screen time accordingly and it's definitely not when he's in emotional disarray or whatever. Huh. That makes sense. Cause I seek it.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah. I seek that time. Deep work. Yeah. As well. it's a great hook

Our microbiome plays a huge role in the health of our immune system brain health metabolic health. And so much more and there's one beverage that has been proven to support the health of our microbiome. A recent study published in the peer reviewed journal nature communications uncovered that a unique compound called dia brownin found in traditional fermented teas called pu erh has some remarkable effects on our microbiome.

The researchers found that Theo Browning can positively alter our gut microbiota and directly lead to a reduction in something called lipogenesis, or the creation of new fat. Another study published in the journal of agriculture and food chemistry found that Pu erh may be able to reverse gut dysbiosis by dramatically reducing ratios of potentially harmful bacteria and increasing ratios of beneficial bacteria.

What's so remarkable about pu erh is its concentration of polyphenols that are incredibly important for healthy gut flora. The only pu erh that I drink is a fermented pu erh that's wild harvested. Making it even more concentrated polyphenols, and it's also triple toxin screened for one of the highest levels of purity. Not many folks realize that a lot of conventional teas, even organic teas, contain things like heavy metals and toxic molds. This is the only company that is going above and beyond to make sure that this is the highest quality tea available. And I'm talking about the folks at Pique Life. Go to piquelife.com/model. That's P I Q U E L I F E.com/model. And you're going to receive up to 15 percent off free us shipping, and you can even get a free sample pack of 12 teas along with their wonderful Puer bundles. You're going to get access to over 20 delicious award winning flavors. And of course they're amazing Puer and Puer blends.

Go to piquelife.com/model again. That's P I Q U E L I F E. com/model. Use the code model at checkout for up to 15 percent off plus many other bonuses. And now back to the show.

SHAWN STEVENSON: We've been on a bit of a tear, with travel. But my son, he spent, of course, like he's got summer camps and basketball and whatnot, but he's been spending more time than usual prior to the last two weeks on his iPad, gaming and, maybe watching cartoons and things like that. And we had a lot on our shoulders, again, my father was on life support and it was a lot going on and we took some time off and all of us just hung out together. For a week, right? And while we were having dinner one day, my youngest son, who's 11, we were just all talking.

He's yeah, I feel like my life is moving really fast. And I was like, say more, like in my head. And he said it. Once he had the space, he realized that him being on these devices and not really being present in his environment made him feel like his time was speeding up. He's a kid I know us as adults, we tend to think that time is moving faster, right? But as a child, for him to

catch that, and for me to catch it as well. He's feeling, that's a stressor, right? Everything is feeling constricted and so proactively creating a space. Now, I'm saying all this to say that we're addicted to these things, we got to call it out. That's the first step.

RUBEN ROJAS: I'll say it myself. I pull out my phone for no, I'm like, nothing happened. Nothing happened. Why? I don't know. What is wrong with me? I go walk the dog. I pull it out three times. What? And I don't even care what space man. Yeah. No, for sure. And I don't even care what's on. I'm not searching for any, I don't think maybe subconsciously. Yeah. I think we've, it's all the physical habits. I'm a physical hands guy. So to me, it's Oh, This is, there's the physicality for something, but then if something does happen, boom, the brain triggers, the dopamine hit, the thing.

SHAWN STEVENSON: The reward.

RUBEN ROJAS: Yeah, exactly.

SHAWN STEVENSON: What's said is that neurons that fire together, wire together. So like you said, with the movements, even if you put your app, for your social media or whatever, Instagram on one of your back screens, you gotta swipe, you'll pick up your phone swipe, and you'll get to it. Like I was just, let me try and put it somewhere where I'm not going to, You'll create the muscle memory, the motor memory to just go right to that thing. And what's happening again is that we have really brilliant engineers who are creating systems that just understanding how the human brain works in our nervous system and understand that every one of our thoughts even is creating chemistry in our bodies. And so even our thought and our perspective about these things and what if a big driving force of humanity that's helped us to evolve is something called instinctive elaboration, right? So it's kind of like questioning an internal question.

RUBEN ROJAS: Instinctive elaboration.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah. And so we're always driven to find the answer to things. Okay.

RUBEN ROJAS: Curiosity.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yes. We're innately curious right now. This can be used intelligently and I don't want to label good and not so good or evil, but if you're not aware of this, because we're going to be driven to seek things out. Now, with this instinctive elaboration, our drive to seek things out, like for a good example, is we're living in like the golden age of television

now, right? And these writers and producers, they're using open loops. To keep you going to the next episode, right? I gotta know what happened. What happened to Shirley, right?

I don't know why I said Shirley, but that was from Martin. It was Cole's girlfriend, I think, Shirley. We have to find out what happened. We need to close the loop. We need to know. And so what's so fascinating about social media is that we're driven there. People think that dopamine is the kind of thing that makes us do the thing, but it's not like that. There's a cocktail of neurochemistry that's driving us to do that. And there's a, let me put it like this. There's even an agitation. All right. There's even like norepinephrine and epinephrine or adrenaline, noradrenaline. There's things that drive us to pick up our phones.

And also we seek solace in the phones as well. There's a partial relaxing mechanism where we're finding a relief, right? How often do we work and then we're like, I need to take a break and we pick our phone up. And so it's like a relief from what we're doing, but it's not restorative. There's a difference between relief and restoration.

RUBEN ROJAS: It's taking one fire hose for another. Nothing really happens in between. That's different.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah. You're still getting blasted. Yeah. And different parts of your brain are going to be incredibly active consuming because we're in this, when you pick up that phone, you leave the present, you leave reality. You're now in, dare I say the matrix, you're now in this other reality. And you've seen this where people can be doing this thing and trying to have a conversation to talk with you in there. You can't do that. You're not really there and present. And so..

RUBEN ROJAS: On both sides though.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah, of course. And now, so to, to tie all this together when we're picking up our phone, right? So what happens is something called just checks, right? So I've just checked real quick. I'll just check, and it becomes like a part of that muscle memory, right? And this chemistry that's bubbling up, like it's kind of like a withdrawal if we're not on it for a while. And we need a hit. So we'll just check, right? And if we just check and then we find some sh*t, that's when dopamine happens. That's what anchors it in that when you check occasionally, you're going to get something that you like. And even from a lower, if we just want to talk about, a lower version of this or a repetitive kind of version where you have this stress build up and even just swiping the action of swiping, because we're drawn to seek things out as humans.

Every time we seek something, we're getting, it's Oh, this is the big one I want to share with people is the opioid system in our bodies is getting triggered. All right. So it's like a painful, it's like a pain that is getting, is getting a treatment essentially. It's kind of like I have this pain or this uncomfortability because I'm not doing the thing and now I'm getting the pleasure. I'm getting the thing that takes the pain away. Now we might not label it as pain.

RUBEN ROJAS: The blocker, the yeah, whatever.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah. But it's driving us to do the behavior. And so now we're getting a hit from the opioid system. We're getting the dopamine because every time we seek something, we're drawn to seek, we find something every f**king time we swipe, we seek, find, seek, find. And every time we're doing that, we're building that neural network and making it stronger. This is all laying this foundation to say that listen, this is not easy to, if you're kids, if yourself, you're used to being on your device while eating and now you're like, okay, that's it. We're eating together as a family, this guy on the, these two handsome guys was talking. I want to be more handsome.

You know what I mean? You can't do that. We have to understand and intelligently make culture shifts, but I do want to be clear as parents. For me and just being able to work with so many people over the years, we have to understand that being a parent in our world today, we don't want to seek democracy at this point. It needs to be a little bit more of a monarchy, a little bit more of, a system of dictatorship. All right. With a benevolent dictator, who's loving and listening to the people taking it.

RUBEN ROJAS: Yeah. Don't come from fear. Come from love. And if you're coming from love, the intentions there, but like you are the authority, you're the apex of the family.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah. Yeah.

RUBEN ROJAS: And it's a balance.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Bro. You just said it. You just said it. It's embracing that because we have also shifted into a culture that is really catering to the child and what the child wants. But with that said, the child doesn't really know what they want because they've so been so inundated with all of these messages and devices and cultural influence that they don't even really know who they are and what they want.

So understanding your power, like you are the parent and being able to make some firm decisions with love, with grace. Finding some grace in this. And what I like to do in some of

the strategies that I talk about in the book is inviting kids into the plan. And so for example if you're choosing, we'll just say even a meal option, and you'd be like, we're going to, we're going to eat together as a family. Do you guys want to have blank or blank? So instead of we just, we're eating together as a family, that's final. Like we just throw out the options and like you probably know what your kids like at this point by the way. You know and just give those options like oh, yeah, we want you know whatever We want the sweet potato casserole or whatever it is. So give them invite them into the process of building the culture Also, you can ask them for example, like what?

Okay, so we're gonna have family, we're having family dinner on Wednesday nights, what do we want to do afterwards? Are we going to, and this is the part where you get to start to intentionally create your family's culture. And so true story. A lot of times after dinner, for whatever reason, I don't know how to start it. We'll have a rap battle, sometimes some dancing competitions will break out. Like it's so it's just wild, but this is...

RUBEN ROJAS: Play some bars at the end of this.

SHAWN STEVENSON: It's whatever. Okay. It's just it's kind of built into the fabric of our family. And there's so many great resources and tools. There's also cards that you can get that have a family question that you can use at the dinner table. And everybody kind of goes around and answers the question. If you had, if you could have one superpower, what would it be and why? And so just these conversation pieces because again, unfortunately we've been pulled away from each other.

We're constantly consuming. Sometimes our kids don't get a chance to process things and to share their perspective and their thoughts with the people who matter most. And so these are just a couple of things. There's many more to start to cultivate and invite everybody in together to eat together more frequently.

RUBEN ROJAS: Yeah, no, it's, and it's easy. It's more of a habit. And just saying that we asked, we're like, we're going to cook dinner. What do you want? And like the proteins kind of what we pick, but we're like, do you want zucchini or corn? He's okay, he's like corn. He's no, I want sprinkles. I'm like, we're not going to eat sprinkles right now. We'll have those after. So we're kind of in integrating him in that, or he likes, we got him a little stool thing. So he's up on the counter with mommy or daddy as we're trying to cut things and stuff. And going from there, but I like the addition of what you added because sometimes we're really good at starting things, right?

We as humans, we can start. We could always start a new training plan, a new nutrition plan and youth. It's staying consistent and finishing through or stacking on to it. So what's that secondary thing and the aha moment you just gave me is like what do you do after dinner? Start creating the culture of your family and it, one day he's going to be old enough where it's homework. And if they eat, then they're going to go to the room and do homework. No, let's have that moment. So I'm going to take that back. That's huge.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah. And also again, we have to abandon our victim story as well. Like this is all impressed upon me. I can't change the structure with my kid and their homework. You are so powerful. We just create stories that make us comfortable. But you can literally start writing a new chapter for your family starting today and create a new history for your family, right? You're, we're writing what will be history right now. But so much of what we're doing is unconscious, right? It's just like life is just happening and next thing so much has passed by and we missed out on the things that matter most.

RUBEN ROJAS: Yeah, thank you so much. That was a sermon on everything and take it all back. The one thing to do right now. It is so simple. Eat with your family three times a week. Three times. You can do that. Saturday, Sunday is easy. Make all three one day, baby. I don't know. I don't know if that counts.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah.

RUBEN ROJAS: Three times a week, eat with your family and then go. We think that it has to be this crazy giant obstacle, but yeah, Eat with your family. I am going to, I need to cook a recipe out of that. So Shawn, thank you. There's one thing you said, and then we've got the final question, but you said that there is a direct correlation and relationship with the food you eat and how you express or receive love.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah.

RUBEN ROJAS: What is the specific block there? Because I think that's the first time I read anything like that and thought to myself. Wow, I could see that's why one of, we have one of the major inhibitors here.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah. One of the consistent bestselling books is the five love languages and people having the revelation that people give and receive love in different ways. And part of the conflict in a lot of relationships is that people express love in one way and their partner doesn't really receive love in that particular way and it's a mismatch. And so the author is encouraging us to understand our partner's love language, understand ours, and start to

speak to people and connect with people through their love language. And hopefully it's returned in your language, right? But also we don't have just one love language. We all experience all of them.

RUBEN ROJAS: And it's seasonal and moods and..

SHAWN STEVENSON: But food fits together deliciously in the different love languages, whether it's acts of service. So when my wife gave birth to my youngest son, my mother in law made a bunch of food and brought it over to our house. It's just something, again, it's like Harambe, it's part of Kenyan culture. But for us especially for me, cause I didn't really experience that, like from other things that I was exposed to growing up. He's you have a baby, you're on your own, and her doing that, it was an act of service.

It was her expression of love. Mhmm. It's her, it's also gift giving. So that's the way that my mother in law expresses her love. She might not be the most touchy feely person, but she loves you. And you'll tell when you bite into that food. Yeah. And, the same thing holds true even with affection. So that's another love language is touch. Okay. What touches us? It's closer than the food that we're eating.

RUBEN ROJAS: Literally down the softness through the, yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: All right. Now we can get to do the sexy stuff. All right. That is, but food literally becomes a part of you. All right. So we're literally taking something from the outside environment and making it a part of our human tissue matrix. That is crazy. That's physical touch. So that love language, which tends to be a love language for a lot of men. From the relationship context and seeking that physical touch, food fits into that as well. And so again, just making those similarities, food fits into the love languages, whether it's again, acts of service, physical touch, giving gifts.

RUBEN ROJAS: Cause you're also give in service, you give the food, you receive the food, you get touched by the food. Yeah. Never thought about that. They say what the weight of the man's heart is through his stomach.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Whoever said that, I'm..

RUBEN ROJAS: Ahead of their time.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah. I hope they at least got like a gift certificate or something, royalty on a t shirt. So I tie in all of those as well to the five love languages in the book. Pretty

much everything that we've touched on today is melded together in a really beautiful format in the Eat Smarter Cookbook. And right now, this is actually. This moment right here I'm beginning this, there's a big movement, but this right here, this is the initial seed. And so I'm grateful to sit here with you to do this under the umbrella of love. Truly.

RUBEN ROJAS: Yeah. Thank you, Shawn.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Absolutely.

RUBEN ROJAS: Final question. No red answer. It's just your answer. How do you define living a life through love?

SHAWN STEVENSON: That's easy. That's easy for me. It's... this is also one of the things that is most attractive to me and other people is being someone who expresses congruency. Being someone who walks and lives their word, your thoughts, your word, and your actions are in alignment. We need so much more of this today because a lot of, especially today with social media and things can appear a certain way to be somebody who is truly, and also even the word authenticity, like marketers can screw that up. You know what I mean? Like it'd be more authentic and then you like, it's a thing.

It's like a marketing tactic or something. But really just having the audacity to keep your word, to be about what you say. Yes, you can make mistakes. You apologize and you get back to being about your word. Yes. So living in alignment, because when you're in alignment, you don't have to hide. You don't have to operate from fear. Love is just on tap because you're not hiding from the world. So that's what it would be for me.

RUBEN ROJAS: Boom. Mic drop. Amazing Shawn., thank you so much for being here, dropping the science, you, your story, sharing your heart. Take advantage everyone will have all the links. Everywhere we put this all out and I'll see you for dinner in about two hours. Yeah?

SHAWN STEVENSON: I'm hungry already

RUBEN ROJAS: Let's go.

SHAWN STEVENSON: I hope that you enjoyed this special interview that I did on the hit show Live Through Love. If you did, there's an extended version of the interview where we talk about specific recipes, ingredients and of course, there's beautiful images and even just to see Ruben's studio. It's so vibey, it's got a lot of his artwork there. Definitely pop over to The Model Health Show, YouTube channel. Just go to [themodelhealthshow.com/YouTube](https://www.themodelhealthshow.com/YouTube). And you

could see again, the extended version of this interview. Listen, we've got some amazing masterclasses. And world leading experts coming your way very soon.

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