



EPISODE 877

How Food Shapes Your Body, Diet Fighting, and 3 Best Brain Foods

With Max Lugavere

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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, we're going to be talking about the number one most overlooked thing that people must change in order to change their health long term. I'm going to share with you the story of how I met my wife and the first meal that I made for her, and whether or not it turned out good. I'm also going to share two of my all time favorite brain foods and the science behind them and why some people might see me as dietary Switzerland. Plus we're going to talk about how food interacts and becomes all of the cells of your body and so much more.

This was from a conversation that I had on one of the top health podcasts in the country, the Genius Life Podcast. And I was interviewed by New York Times best selling author and science researcher, Max Lugavere. And it's always a great time hanging out with Max. He asks some wonderful questions. And so I really opened up and shared some things that I haven't shared before. And so I'm very grateful to be able to share this with you here today. Because we know that there's an intimate relationship and connection between our food and our relationships. Nothing is going to impact us more than the people around us. Your significant other, your family has a powerful influence on what you choose to eat and your eating behaviors.

And also we know that eating together with the people that we care about has some powerful impacts on our health, our health outcomes and our longevity. And so we'll be talking about that all here today as well. And now speaking of longevity, a new study. It just came out last year, was published in one of our most prestigious science journals, The Lancet. And it found that people who regularly drink tea age slower than everyone else. People who drink tea age slower than those who don't. Now I'm not talking about Lipton Brisk. I'm not talking about sweet tea. I'm talking about the time honored teas that have been utilized for centuries. There's so many varieties of teas teaming with health benefits and flavor profiles from green tea to ginger tea to rooibos tea.

The list goes on and on. But if we're talking specifically about anti aging and anti obesity effects. A study published in the journal Clinical Interventions in Aging took 59 overweight or

mildly obese subjects to see if their traditional tea called Puerh makes a notable difference on weight loss. The randomized, double blind, placebo controlled trial had participants to either receive a placebo or Puerh for a 20 week study period, and there were no other interventions noted. All right, so it's just from the inclusion of Pu erh. Here's what happened. The researcher stated, "Consumption of Pu erh was associated with statistically significant weight loss when compared to placebo. Fat loss was seen for arms, legs, and the hip and belly region". The participants who received Pu erh lost more overall body fat and what was especially remarkable, they maintained their lean mass, they maintained their muscle mass.

This should have us running to go and get some Pu erh, but don't just get any Pu erh. The quality, especially in the tea industry, it really matters to make sure you get it from a good source. The only Pu erh that I drink is from the incredible team at Pique Life. I keep it here at the studio for my guests and for my team, and I always keep it at home for myself and my family. It's triple toxin screened for purity and made through a patented cold extraction technology. Plus it's wild harvested, so it's even more concentrated in the vital nutrients that lead to the anti obesity and longevity effects. Head over to Piquelife.com/model right now and you'll receive up to 20 percent off plus.

Listen, plus some limited time free bonuses like an electric frother to mix your favorite beverages. That Piquelife.com/model is PIQUELIFE.com/model. You get to try Pique teas risk free with their 30 day money back guarantee. If you don't absolutely love your teas, you'll get a full refund. So again, head over to Piquelife.com/model for up to 20 percent off plus some special limited time bonuses. And now let's get to the Apple podcast review of the week.

ITUNES REVIEW: Another five star review titled "awesome podcast" by ash wellness. I love listening to the model health show. Sean is very knowledgeable and gives great information and keeps it entertaining. He knows how to deliver information while making it interesting. I have learned a lot from this podcast. I highly recommend it.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Thank you so much for sharing your voice over on Apple podcast. That really does mean a lot. And if you get to do so, please pop over to Apple podcast and leave a

review for the model host show. This really does mean so much. Every one of these messages I listened to, I imbue into my spirit and it really does make my day. A lot of times I hear them for the first time. When we're recording and so it really does help to uplift and add some energy to what I'm doing, and so again, thank you so much.

And now without further ado. Let's get into this very special episode where I'm being interviewed by New York Times best selling author Max Lugavere. Again, we're going to talk about the number one most overlooked thing people must change in order to change their health long term. How food interacts and becomes all the cells of our bodies and so much more. Let's dive into the special interview that I did on the genius life podcast.

MAX LUGAVERE: Well, I am really excited to have you here because, well, any chance I get to hang with you is a momentous occasion in and of itself. Off the bat though, I love to start high level and just dive right in for my audience. Cause I know that attention is sort of like the new limited resource these days. How can we use food to heal ourselves? How can we transform our health with food?

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah, I always like to, I love that zooming out and really looking at the big picture here. Like why does food matter so much? And I've really been working to impress this upon our culture. And we're going to talk about culture a lot today, by the way, because it's informing so many of the decisions that we make. But, the first step is really realizing that food is literally making up every cell of our bodies, right? So every single one of our organelles, whether it's the mitochondria, whether it's the membrane around our cells, it's all made from food. Also the information that's getting passed around by ourselves, the hormones and neurotransmitters.

Enabling ourselves to have communication. It's all made from food. And so, a couple of good examples, you know, we've both got friends who are gastroenterologists, like, award winning, all the, all the accolades. And they'll go to school for maybe 12 years and have maybe the accumulation of maybe a couple of months of nutrition education. And it's nothing in regards to actually helping to treat the patient. It's like rare things. Like if your patient, if they have a rare B12 deficiency, give them this supplement kind of thing. And so this is a field of science

and medicine. Their focus is addressing the organs that deal with the assimilation, digestion, and elimination of food.

And they don't know anything about food. They're not taught anything about food. It's just like, how is that even possible? And by the way, so diving in, in one more angle with this, you know, I've got great friends who are award winning cardiologists. And when they're looking at their patient's blood work and their patient's heart health, they're not, they're completely absent to the fact that that heart that they're looking at is made from the food that their patient has eaten. It is a primary factor in our health. And so they're not understanding really like if they're looking at the content of their blood that that blood is made from their food. The arteries themselves, the capillaries, it's all made from food. And so we're really missing the biggest piece of human health, which is like, what are you literally making your body out of?

And not just that, what are you fueling everything with? And so if we start there and like have that flip switched in our minds, like, I get to choose what I'm making these tissues out of. And true to form, we can make our tissues out of very low quality things. And we can see the outcomes of that. You know, the human body is very resilient. That's another thing we can talk about. It's incredibly resilient and adaptable. A lot of the things that we consider to be diseases or disease diagnosis or labels are just the body finding a way to operate under unideal circumstances, right? So like type 2 diabetes is a great example of that. You know, it's, it's a situation where there's this very, very abnormal amount of sugar coming into the system of blood glucose elevation.

And we, blood glucose is not a bad thing. We need blood glucose. But the amount that the human body can get into it today is incredibly abnormal. We've never experienced that kind of exposure in human history. And so with that being said, all that glucose in our body can really start to tear things up. And so the body makes this kind of adaptation as we're kind of shuttling into our fat cells and muscle cells and they're getting filled up. And it can be dangerous even for that. And so it's just like your body's like, we're going to mute that. We're going to mute that that opportunity. We're going to downgrade that signal for insulin and the crazy part with type 2 diabetes, your pancreas is still making it though.

Right? And so it's made this one adaptation over here, but something else is going to suffer. And it's really your body's just adjusting like, this is a higher quality or a higher priority thing I'm going to address this. And so that's what the condition really is. The body adapting to unideal circumstances and that just really speaks to the body's intelligence. And so, to put a bow on this man, like how can we use food to heal? It's just number one, understanding that food is a primary mechanism of healing, of building the body, of improving processes, or it's a primary asset of degradation. So it's just starting with that principle.

MAX LUGAVERE: Hmm. Can you paint the picture for us of what public health looks like today? I mean because today we regularly rattle off statistics like 60 percent of the calories that your average American consumes comes from ultra processed food. So do I mean do we essentially live amidst a population of ultra processed people? If you are what you eat.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Wow. Yeah.

MAX LUGAVERE: Right?

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah, man, this is so good. So good. Yeah. So, all right. So this is, you just mentioned one of the statistics that's been passed around in our nutritional circles and this was published in the BMJ, one of our most prestigious journals. About 60 percent of the average American's diet is now ultra processed foods, and so let's talk about what that means really quickly. And we might have talked about this before but, you know, humans have been processing foods forever. All right, you know, taking a tomato and processing it, adding some spices and whatnot, we can end up with a pasta sauce, for example, or taking olives and crushing them stone crush cold processing. You have olive oil.

Those are processed foods and they're very, very health affirmative for most people, not everybody. However, compare that to what it takes to make canola oil, right? And you've seen it, you've seen how it's made. It's just like all of this high heat processing, very, very sensitive structure of these oils and that high temperature is creating all of this reactive oxygen species. And they use bleaching agents and they use deodorizing agents. And it's just, it's really a disgusting process and then framing that as a quality human food, right? It's just like

that is ultra processed. And you know that there are some people who unfortunately, there's a lot of infighting about silly stuff like this, but you know, well meaning researchers and scientists who was just like, well, canola oil is good for you, you know, and they have some data to affirm that, or, you know, vegetable oil, same thing.

And we have to really just take a step back and just, again, ask ourselves, honestly, is that an ultra processed food or not? Is that a high quality human food? If we're comparing that to something that is minimally processed as humans have been utilizing for thousands of years. What's probably going to be better for us. And so I think we can use a little bit more just rationality right now would be helpful. Now with that ultra processed food consumption, what I'm bringing forward in this new book, Eat Smarter Family Cookbook, is the data on U. S. children. All right. And I was shocked. I, well, I'm not going to say I didn't believe it, but I couldn't believe nobody was talking about this.

And so this was published in JAMA, the Journal of the American Medical Association. They tracked the food consumption of United States children from 1999 to 2018. And they found that in 1999, the average U. S. child's diet was over 61 percent ultra processed foods already. In 2018, it was up to near 70 percent ultra processed foods. All right. And so again, these, what is another ultra processed food look like if we start off with corn and then a bunch of chemicals and we can end up with Lucky Charms or pop cereal, right? Something that is so far removed from anything recognizable. That it came from anywhere in nature. That's really an ultra processed food and that's making up the majority of our children's diet.

MAX LUGAVERE: And it's like children's their palates are still developed not just their palates right are still in that state of development But it's their brains. Their brains are still developed. Their bodies are still developing. It's at an incredibly rapid pace.

SHAWN STEVENSON: So this speaks to what are we? You just said it. Are we having more ultra processed humans, you know, and this reminds me of Cate Shanahan. You know, mutual friend. I think you've had her on.

MAX LUGAVERE: I've never had her on but I want to. I know, I mean, I love her book deep nutrition.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yes. Yes.

MAX LUGAVERE: Yeah, she's an OG.

SHAWN STEVENSON: And so she shared this this study with me where they looked at biopsies Fat cells back in the earlier part like then around the 1900s and they found that the average human fat cell was made up of about 2 percent PUFAs, polyunsaturated fatty acids. Whereas today, a biopsy of the average American, their fat cell is now made up of about 25 to 30 percent polyunsaturated fatty acids. So literally the ingredients that are being used to make us are different. We have a different human recipe. So what you said earlier, that statement, are there a lot of ultra processed people walking around?

Yes. We're making different recipes. And here's the thing, it's just again, it's not that, it's not that it's all bad, all right? We might be, it might be some kind of evolutionary advantage some kind of way. You might, X Men might start to pop off right now. We don't know, all right? But from the looks of things, we're not doing well. We're experiencing far higher, multi epidemics really. I can't say epidemics, multi epidemics of chronic diseases. I CDC's numbers from last year. The CDC came up and they got this little cute little infographics. It's so annoying, man. But their new data shows that 60 percent of US citizens now have at least one chronic disease.

MAX LUGAVERE: Wow.

SHAWN STEVENSON: And 40 percent have two or more.

MAX LUGAVERE: Wow.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Right? And so it's just like, sickness is now normalized. Chronic disease is now normalized. And it reminds me of this quote from Krishnamurti. It was.

MAX LUGAVERE: Omg, I love Krishnamurti.

SHAWN STEVENSON: It was essentially that it is no measure of health to be adjusted to a profoundly sick society. Right? Because that's the thing. Like we want to be well adjusted. We want to, we want to feel integrated. We want to have family and community and connection. If we're, if we're adapted to that in a severely sick society, what does that say about us? And this is really where the conversation needs to go because for years, I've been in this field for over 20 years, man.

And I spend a lot of time trying to call out all of the different systems that were leading to these poor health outcomes. Whereas today, I realized that in, you know, working with patients over the years, we would try to target any well meaning practitioner is going to try to target behavior change, like just do this, do that, you know, avoid this, that kind of stuff. And we need that, absolutely. But how much more difficult is it to make that behavior change in a culture that is severely sick and dysfunctional?

And that's really the solution, is addressing the culture, right? And the macro culture and the micro culture. So here's what I mean by that. The macro culture, and by the way, let's define culture, all right? A culture is defined as the attitudes, behaviors, values, and beliefs of a community that is then passed on to future generations, all right? So it's a shared collective of values, ideas, beliefs, behaviors that we share collectively. And we, we inherently pass that on to our offspring, right? So that's what culture is.

In the United States right now, we have the most chronically ill culture in the history of humanity, documented human history. We've never seen this level of chronic disease. We're not doing well. And this also, not to mention the mental health epidemics. Infectious diseases, that's something we thought we had a handle on. It just continues to get worse. And we have to ask why, like what is happening here? And so, for us and my mission moving forward is yes, we need to address that kind of global culture. And I want to circle back and talk about this because I come from a community living in Ferguson, Missouri, just, you know, all over St. Louis and living in a glorified food desert basically. You know, and we were getting food from charities and this and kind of, you know, I could talk about that in a moment, but I

know about what the culture can influence as far as your choices. But what I want to point to is that we have a very powerful ability to change our microculture, right?

So the culture within our household. With controlling the controllables. What is the thing you have the most control over? It's yourself. And so instead of trying to change the environment around you start with you. But like really put some energy and intention into that because in my clinical work, when people were coming in and they were vocalizing, like what is stopping them from making that behavior change? I'm telling you, man, it was a daily basis. And I would just, I'd be like, here, here it comes. My husband won't, if only my kids would, you know, if my mother won't, my, my father won't. They were always talking about other people close to them, making it harder for them to be healthy. Right.

Like I want to do this, but my kids wouldn't be on board or my husband makes this kind of food, right? And it's not that it's not valid. It's just that you have so much more power than that you're just outsourcing it and pointing fingers. And also, we have to understand that change and you getting the health that you want, the body composition changes you want, the changes you're in your blood work You're going to have to be a different person you're going to have to change and it's going to be uncomfortable because you're used to being you and you might not like you, but you're used to it.

MAX LUGAVERE: Hmm.

SHAWN STEVENSON: And so I would start to keep on pointing it back to that internal power that really, that's empowerment, right? So that they start to feel stronger in the conditions around them. Now with that said, I also, as I, as I moved on in, in the years and in my work, I would start to find ways to integrate. And get in touch with get get feelers into the household, whether it's with their kids, their significant other parents, whatever it is, they would know who I am, you know, like whether it's conversations, whether it's, you know, videos.

That's one of the reasons I started my show as well, just to be able to like share these things. From somebody other than the person close to you, because we have this tendency to not

really listen to people that we're close to. So, you know, that's, that's one of the big things is understanding our power to change internally ourselves. And then starting to make changes in our household, this micro environment. Now, you know, this man, you see my family, like my family is a big part of this project. And we've created a culture in our household that makes health easy. We've created a culture in our household that makes. Poor choices, or choices that would have poor health outcomes, hard to make.

MAX LUGAVERE: Wow.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Alright? And it's just like, we came into this with some intention, of course, but, you know And one of the big things that I want people to walk away with today, and it's one of the most profound things I've found in this research, really has to do with social science and how eating together with people that we care about affects our health outcomes.

MAX LUGAVERE: Oh, massive.

SHAWN STEVENSON: And so even last night, you know, we sat down and had family dinner together and that's on the endangered species list. Only about 30 percent of families in America eat together on a regular basis. That's according to researchers at Harvard and they had this huge data set tracking family behaviors and health outcomes. I was like, why isn't anybody talking about this? And another one of their studies looked at families that eat together on a regular basis have a far greater intake of essential nutrients that help to prevent chronic disease and reduce intake of ultra processed foods, chips and soda and things like that. And I was just like, wow, this is crazy, but let me look and see, is there other researchers studying this and I came across this fascinating study that was done on minority children, which would generally be in a context of a low income environment like I come from.

And what they found was that children who ate four meals a week with their family had, they ended up eating five servings of fruits and vegetables every day, most days of the week was about five days a week. And significantly less Ultra processed foods notably chips and soda and the researchers noted in particular when the TV is never or rarely on when having family

meals, Right? And so man when I read this I just stood there for a moment just I just stood there and stared at my computer like because I, my family didn't know that and looking at, because that's also one of the excuses that we had that's valid. It's just like, we don't have the resources. We're going to eat either way. If we would have known that simply eating together as a family created some kind of a protective field around the children, I think my family would have been more adamant about doing it because it's not that they wanted us to be sick or to not have a healthy culture. It's just like, we didn't know. And so, one other, I'll share one more study with you on this. This is.

MAX LUGAVERE: I love this though. I mean, this is like my, my mom growing up, it was very important to my mother, the matriarch of my household that we ate together as a family unit almost every single night growing up. It was, it was amazing. I mean, I don't, she obviously didn't have the data regarding health that you have, but for her it was really important that it solidified the family unit. It solidified the relationship that we have, me and my brothers have with one another, the relationship that we have with our parents. And yeah, I mean, correlation doesn't equal causation as, as we all know, but, but we grew up very close and, and all of my, you know, me as well as my two brothers obviously are very health conscious. And, you know, we, none of us really struggle with any kind of chronic disease or anything like that. Knock on wood. So yeah, I mean, I, I'm, in a way I'm sort of like, I feel like a walking testament to everything that you're saying.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Exactly. You are, man. You know, again, the results speak for themselves. Now, in addition to the data, which I'm going to come back and share that study is going to share. Let's just go, let's again, look at logic here. For hundreds of thousands of years, humans, the process of eating has revolved around tribe. We required community, in order to procure our food, hunting, gathering, the preparation of the food, eating together was something humans have done forever. The celebration also around that experience. And so, for example, if we look at like a hunter gatherer tribe, and there are a few still on the planet today, but there's a cultural tenet, unconscious, of course, that if we don't move together, if we don't.

If we're not physically active together, we will die. If we don't move, we don't eat. We have to move in order to procure our food, right? In our culture, here in the United States, and many other places, movement is optional. It's optional today in order for us to eat, right? And so, Also, the culture in a hunter gatherer tribe, for example, would block their awareness that Lucky Charms are even an option, right? It blocks their awareness that, you know, pulling up to McDonald's is just something that people do. It's not, again, it's not to say that there isn't. But you know, I think there was a movie called the guys must be crazy or something like that. There's like a Coca Cola bottle scene. It's one of my wife's favorite movies from when she was a kid.

But anyways, it's not that they wouldn't come across some of this information, but it's just not a part of their culture. Like they really don't get that I can just go to seven 11 and throw my spear through a hot dog. Right? Like it, that's, it's that easy here. And so with that being said. My question was, was there something protective about people eating together for all those thousands of years that we're missing out on today by not eating together? And when I looked at the data again, I shared a little bit of it, but so this process has been devolving to where today, as I mentioned, only about 30 percent of families are eating together regularly, whereas this was just what you did. And so such a dramatic shift so quickly. My question was again. Has this caused a problem for our health?

Are we now missing a protective agent? And part of this, let me just even share another logical point. Like why would it be protective for these kids like this study? And this was published in the journal pediatrics and another study in JAMA. And the researchers found that in particular for children. And this is my call for everybody. My, my call to action for everybody today. They found that eating together with their family, children eating together with their family, just three days a week, and it could be any meal. Three days a week led to significantly lower rates of obesity, lower rates of disordered eating and several other chronic diseases.

All right. Again, just studying family behavior and they found that, Oh, this was like this kind of bare minimum that three meals a week, suddenly the children were less obese. Suddenly they had less disordered eating. And they were just like, what is going on? Again, this is

published data, but nobody's talking about this. And so all these studies, by the way, are in the book.

MAX LUGAVERE: I love it. Why do you think nobody's talking about it?

SHAWN STEVENSON: I just think we haven't asked the question. There have been people like your mom, for example, who've just known. They knew in their, in their heart, like this is my family. This is what we do. We're, we're This is what we do to, to connect, to care for each other. And this table is a unifier, right? She knew that. She didn't have to have the data, right? And so now we have researchers who are questioning these things, right? And this is something you do as well. Like, we're constantly asking questions about stuff.

And the great thing is that there are more people than ever who are questioning things, and they're designing studies around them, they're sharing the data. But it's pointing us back to logic, which is we need each other. And another study that I shared in the book. This was a meta analysis of a hundred and forty eight studies and this was researchers at Brigham Young University. And, again 148 studies over 300, 000 test subjects and they found that our social ties having strong healthy social connections led to a 50 percent reduction in all cause mortality.

MAX LUGAVERE: Wow.

SHAWN STEVENSON: All right, it was more impactful on their health than exercise, than beating obesity. This was the number one thing in the data. It was the most powerful epigenetic influence on our health is our relationships. And now again, it is the number one thing. How much energy and intention are we putting into it? Because here's the thing having healthy relationships and having relationships with people who are about that health life. As soon as I walk in the door, you're telling me about some new health stuff.

MAX LUGAVERE: Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: You know It's just like it makes it so much more accessible. And I'm here to say that number one we can connect with more people like that than ever today we can use technology in an efficacious way.

MAX LUGAVERE: Hmm.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Or we can be distracted and We also have the opportunity if we don't have that person we can be that person for other people. That was really how I got into this. And before I knew it, now I'm surrounded. I'm completely engulfed. My universe is health, my entire universe. And it was just me alone in Ferguson, Missouri, 30 pounds overweight, diagnosed with the so called incurable spinal condition. I broke my hip just running one day at track practice.

MAX LUGAVERE: Cheers.

SHAWN STEVENSON: And I'm sleeping, I'm, I'm, I have a mattress on the floor, you know, I have this, my wife just mentioned this the other day, which I forgot, honestly, because I hadn't thought about it so long. I met her in college, and this was after I, I really, I transformed my health.

MAX LUGAVERE: I love the relationship that you have with your wife.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Thank you, man.

MAX LUGAVERE: It's so beautiful.

SHAWN STEVENSON: She's my bestie, man. But when she, she came over, I met her at the gym, you know, I was, I was training at the time at the university that we both were going to, which was so cool. Again, like I went from being so unhealthy to now I'm working in fitness and get my certification. I'm studying, you know, biology now in college and all this stuff. And, but anyways, I was, you know, training some clients and she would come in from time to time, like with her friend.

And I was just like so focused on my thing, which fortunately we didn't meet earlier, you know, because I, you know, I just, I was just like, Oh, this girl's dedicated. Like that was all I thought about it. But she dropped her headphones one day at the gym. She was on the adductor machine with the legs open, you know, that most awkward machine, she dropped her headphones. So I picked them up and gave it to her. And, you know, I noticed she had a little bit of an accent. She's from Kenya. And that like impressed her, but I, I work with people from all over the world. So I just kind of picked that up a little bit and, but the rest is history. But anyway, so she came over one day and I was just like, you know, I cook, whatever. I'm embarrassed to say this. We are all phenomenal cooks.

All right. We're about that life. You know, even my youngest son can, he's 11, like he's been cooking for years. We were incredible cooks. We love, we love food. We're big food family. But at the time, because of my health dogma. Instead of making, you know, some pasta, whatever, I was like, I'll make spaghetti. It was this really terrible whole wheat pasta, which, you know, it's just like, it's just not the same and not even ground turkey, but ground turkey breasts, which is the dryer, you know? So I'm already starting behind, you know, enemy lines here trying to make a good dish. But anyway, so she ate it. I didn't know till years later that it wasn't good, you know? But since then, of course, like we've, wow, my goodness, so many incredible recipes. But she shared with me the other day and we were hanging out with some friends and she was talking about my love seat that I had there, which was like a love seat. It's just a tiny couch and I struggled to even, it wasn't a love, it was a hate seat. All right. To be honest, you know.

MAX LUGAVERE: It was like what university apartment?

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yes, this carpet that we have right here. The couch was made out of that. All right. Just layers of that. And because when I was overweight, my big ass broke through part one half of the couch. And so it's a bunch of pillows that were like under that cushion. It was so terrible and when she came over she was just when she saw it she was like, how does he get girls over here? And then she realized she was over there.

MAX LUGAVERE: It's a good way to weed out the wrong women though.

SHAWN STEVENSON: I mean, there was no, it was no wrong, you know, come on now, but you know, her having that like that insight that I'm here, like I'm thinking he can't get girls, but I'm literally standing here, you know? And so, but anyways, coming from those conditions and being able to stand up and to take responsibility for my health, despite the environment around me. And here's the thing. When you make a decision to take control of your health to to just find solutions to be more focused on solutions. Because at the time I was fully tuned into problems prior to that, all the blame in the world. And there's a, this brain phenomenon really it's called instinctive elaboration. I don't know if we talked about this before.

MAX LUGAVERE: No.

SHAWN STEVENSON: So it's like, it's like a mental reflex that the brain does because we're always questioning things constantly. You might be kind of like underneath our, Like top consciousness, but we're always asking questions and it's driving our behavior, right? This is why like even with, you know television shows like they know humans don't like having questions unanswered, open loop phenomenon. And so instinctive elaboration is a question that we like our dominant question we pose ourselves and we'll consciously and unconsciously be searching for the answers all the time

MAX LUGAVERE: Wow.

SHAWN STEVENSON: And so for me my dominant question for those two years of suffering that I was experiencing was why me? Why me? Why me? I would just ask, that was like an automatic all the time in my head. Why won't they help me? Why won't this physician help me? Why, why, why won't my family help me? Why, why this? Why won't my teachers care? Like, all of this, why me? And, you're going to be scanning your environment, internally and externally, to find information to affirm why you, right.

You, you suck. You're not very helpful. You're self centered, you know, whatever. Like you're going to start to really cultivate answers to that. Now it switched like instantaneously, man. And again, like you've got, of course, like with those, you know, they say that neurons that fire together, wire together, you're just laying down that more and more and more. It's not that it

instantly dissolves. But for me, I think that you could change. Your, your psychology with repetition and also with a really emotionally charged event. Like some of the most, some of the most memorable experiences we have are like either what we would frame as negative or positive events in our lives.

Like something very emotional, really like it's very visceral for us, right? And so because it was so visceral, it changed everything. And I ask. What can I do to feel better? What can I do to feel better? And I hadn't even thought about that for those two years. And that led me to starting to see life differently. And man, I had, the solutions were there the whole time, by the way. I had a friend who was in chiropractic college. And I just thought she was so weird. You know, like, you know, we, we hang out every now and then, you know, whatever, but I just, it's like, I want nothing to do with that life. You know, I was trying to kick it.

And, but now like within a week of me asking that question. We just go for, I'm riding with her somewhere and she stops at Wild Oats, which has since been bought up by Whole Foods. And I didn't even know it existed. I've drove past there hundreds of times and just on the highway.

MAX LUGAVERE: Was it like a health food store?

SHAWN STEVENSON: Wild Oats. Yeah. So Wild Oats is just, it's Whole Foods bought them up, but they were like more of a kind of like mom and pop type vibe. But in, by the way, where I come from in St. Louis, there was one Whole Foods, by the way, one. Here in L. A.? Come on, man.

MAX LUGAVERE: One on every block.

SHAWN STEVENSON: One on every block. You could yell, we could yell out the window and somebody could hear us at a Whole Foods, you know.

MAX LUGAVERE: I'm not mad at it, but.

SHAWN STEVENSON: I know, it's really cool, man, you know, but in St. Louis there was one, and it was damn sure not by me in Ferguson, Missouri. But now that I know that this exists

and they had some books there and, you know, I was, you know, being in college and doing research and this kind of stuff, I just went straight over and I started to like look at, because it had like all these nutrition prescriptions for different conditions. And I went and looked up mine, this degenerative disc disease. And I was just like, I'm looking at the references and I'm like, what? Omega threes, like. I, all I knew about for my bone density, cause my, you know, my, my bone disease was so, so low. It was like calcium. I'm like, I'm drinking all this milk every day, but now it's like all these other things.

MAX LUGAVERE: Can Omega 3s help? Cause I've got, I mean, everybody has some degree of degenerative disc disease, right?

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yes. Listen, so, oh man, if we even want to talk about this. So our disc, I'm like masterful with this now.

MAX LUGAVERE: Well, cause you've struggled with this for years.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah. Yeah. So, you know. At the time, when I was 20 years old, my physician said that I had the spine of an 80 year old person.

MAX LUGAVERE: Whoa.

SHAWN STEVENSON: And my discs were so degenerated, they were like black, like the light didn't really shine through them on the MRIs. And they were both, there was two herniated discs, L4, L5, S1. And You know, it led to the sciatic nerve pain that was just like, it was so painful, man, it just would keep me up at night. Like if I changed position, it just like, it kept waking me up out of my sleep. It was, it was torturous. So, some of the things that, and I never thought, I never stopped to ask, like, what are my discs made of? What are the raw materials that are used? Same thing with my blood. Same thing with my brain, right?

And so I found that and this was from just again asking these questions. What are what am I just made of? That the discs are non vascular, right? So what that means is it's not that they don't get nourishment, but they don't have like a direct Nutrient supplier, blood flow, right? And so they get hydrated and nutrition in many ways through a process called remote

diffusion, which again, this is getting into some freaky like Star Trek type stuff, but being able to like shuttle these nutrients across these, these channels that normally like other things just can't get into.

So the point being is this number one, the most important part with our disc and anybody can track this themselves. If you measure yourself when you wake up in the morning and when you go to bed at night, you're probably going to be shorter at night. Whoa, just because of, you know, that gravitational weight, right? And that, that height, that hydration of your disc is also getting reduced. All right. And so being that they're non vascular and getting hydration even because, because it's like a lower tier thing, unfortunately your spine, Oh, and by the way, so this go back to the study that I saw in that book. So the, the, the paper that I was reading, it said that when you're deficient in these particular nutrients, whatever they were at the time, and I already mentioned a couple, it was like silica, omega 3s, yada yada, and, and deficient in these key minerals, your body will take them from your hip and your spine first, right?

It's kind of like a reservoir there. And so I was just like, oh, that's when everything changed. That's when I had like that matrix moment. Because it's just like, I broke my hip and my spine is degenerated. This is where my body's like leeching calcium, for example, to clot my blood, right? That was more important. My, the, my body making blood was deemed to be more important. So it's just doing what it has to do. Right. And so there was an intelligence there, but I was making it harder for myself. That's what clicked in. And so just like, what if I give myself? And then I found there wasn't just one, one form of calcium.

There are all these other forms. I had a nutritional science class I paid a lot of money at a private university to get miseducated really about nutrition. You know, the teacher would tell us, you know Make sure that you know, you tell patients and including yourself get plenty of essential vitamins and minerals. What the? Basically he's just saying, you know, take a multivitamin. Yeah There's multiple forms of vitamin C. There's multiple forms of obviously B12, even for example. There's multiple forms of B12. It isn't just one thing. And the question is, is the thing in that supplement, that synthetic version of vitamin C, is that what my body even needs to do that process? I'm trying to do. Here's a not so fun fact. All right. These

vitamin C supplements, synthetic vitamin C supplements on the market. Over 90 percent of them are made from genetically modified cornstarch or corn syrup.

MAX LUGAVERE: Interesting.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah.

MAX LUGAVERE: Does that change their bioavailability or like how does it, how does it affect? Cause it's all, it's typically vitamin C. As far as I know, it's ascorbic acid. It's like the same stuff. I mean, I've never been concerned about like where it comes from. But but if you're saying that this is something that I need to be, be paying attention to.

SHAWN STEVENSON: I came across this was a wonderful study looking at in a whole food Concentrate version of vitamin C versus a synthetic form of vitamin C. And this was published in the Journal of cardiology All right, and it put up One of the most vitamin C dense foods ever discovered it might be the most which is called camu camu berry. C A M U C A M U.

MAX LUGAVERE: Heard of it.

SHAWN STEVENSON: And so They utilize a concentrate of camu camu berry vitamin C versus again a synthetic Form of that, and they had, they administered it to people that were proactively doing something to create a lot of oxidation. And these are people who were smokers, right? So they were habitual smokers. And so this was a one week study period, and they found that the Camu Camu whole food version of vitamin C significantly lowered oxidative stress and inflammatory biomarkers like C reactive protein in these participants.

MAX LUGAVERE: Wow.

SHAWN STEVENSON: While the synthetic version of vitamin C did nothing.

MAX LUGAVERE: Interesting.

SHAWN STEVENSON: All right. And now to take that just one step further, another one of the studies that I shared looked at, and this was crazy, folks who were taking synthetic vitamin C supplements over significant amounts of time, which again, if you're just taking a multivitamin with it in there, we're twice as likely to develop kidney stones.

MAX LUGAVERE: Hmm.

SHAWN STEVENSON: All right. So again, This isn't, everything has a cost and we've got to understand the difference between real food nutrition and the synthetic versions of things that, you know, again, we've got wonderful scientists today, wonderful innovations that we've made. You know, something like a, a gas chromatograph has been able to isolate it certain flavors, like the, the chemical formula that makes up the flavor of cherry, for example, or root beer, right? We can isolate that. Now we can put that root beer flavor into something else, right? Put strawberry flavor into something else. And now we start to muddy up those waters, though, of like that communication.

Like, what did we evolve? Having these certain tastes associated with certain nutrients. Now that's gone. But even with that being said, when we start to isolate things. Right. And take them away also from their, it's, it's not just the fact that it's vitamin C is in camu camu berry. There are all these other cofactors and biopotentiators that do things we don't even understand. We, we barely know what's in food right now.

MAX LUGAVERE: It's the whole food matrix I think is probably another potential mechanism where we saw. probably causally related to that difference in outcomes, right? Like you extract this singular nutrient from the whole food matrix. We didn't evolve with nutrients in isolation. We evolved with food. And so our bodies, it may as well, and I don't know this to be true, but I'm saying, I'm sort of hypothesizing out loud that it could be no different than a foreign object, like some kind of xenobiotic compound to our body when extracted from the whole food matrix.

SHAWN STEVENSON: I, I definitely agree with that. I just, again, it just seems very obvious. And with that being said, this could be used therapeutically. Absolutely. But we don't

necessarily want to get into a habit again, where we're taking a synthetic form of whatever it is on a consistent basis, because it's probably going to carry a high, Toxicity load, right? And what's going to take the brunt of all this is one, one organ, for example, is going to be our liver, right? Our liver is responsible for drug metabolism, for alcohol metabolism, obviously, and also dealing with supplements. And there's been quite an increase, and I talked about this in my last book, in liver dysfunction due to excessive intake of drugs. And even supplements as well.

MAX LUGAVERE: Wow.

SHAWN STEVENSON: You know, and I'm, I'm a fan of certain supplements and if we can get them in more of a whole food. version or form or concentrate That's even better for me. And by the way again being in this field for over 20 years. I've tried everything. I've tried so many different types of supplements, but I've always come back to and found the most benefit from those that are coming from like whole food sources. Right. So even with the vitamin C, if there's a vitamin C supplement that I'm taking, it would be camu camu berry concentrate along with maybe some amla berry, like high, high vitamin C foods concentrates. That have all the other cofactors as well.

MAX LUGAVERE: So if I were to walk, I've never been to your house but if I were to walk into the Stevenson household and look into your pantry go in your fridge. What would you say are some of the highest impact foods that you're stocking your house with?

SHAWN STEVENSON: Let me tell you and especially, you know, so this is your show too man It's just we got to talk about brain brain health.

MAX LUGAVERE: I'm down.

SHAWN STEVENSON: All right so one of the foods that it's always in my freezer that I love and it's also getting It can get twisted and turn into something a little bit unsavory though, but it's acai.

MAX LUGAVERE: Acai?

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah, I'm, I'm, I'm a big fan of acai.

MAX LUGAVERE: I love it. Have you ever been to Brazil? You gotta go. It's a Brazilian berry, I think.

SHAWN STEVENSON: That's right. Yeah, it is. We got to go get it from the source. Yeah, this is why also you're only gonna find it frozen here. And a lot of the berry is actually a seed and like the acai "berry part" itself that we have is a very small part of the berry. It takes quite a bit of processing. And so again, but again, this is a minimally processed food. But this was published in nutritional neuroscience and they found that acai is able to and this was a this was a meta analysis looking at even Metabolic health and the influence. But they found that over time acai was found to help to prevent or reduce memory loss.

MAX LUGAVERE: Wow.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Right? So that was number one and also specifically reduce inflammation and neural inflammation at that. All right, so it's it really has this affinity towards brain Brain health, brain function, brain support. So that's one of the things that you're, you're probably always going to find in my freezer is some of those frozen acai packets.

MAX LUGAVERE: Are you able to find sugar free versions of it?

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah, that's what we always get. That's another thing, you know, with, with the Eat Smarter Family cookbook, I have my favorite acai, which again, we've had friends over. This is one of those things I'll like whip up. For example, I'm, I've seen people literally using their finger to clean the bottom of the bowl. Like it's just like, it's that good, but I always get it because we want to be able to manage the, the, the sweetener that we're using, right? And so what I've done is also it's a, it's a, it's a protein bowl as well. Acai protein bowl. So we have some protein concentrates in there as well. Again, whole food versions of those. And here's the, the key. Is because acai isn't necessarily sweet berry at all, but I'm using honey and I'm being very bullish on honey these days, man.

MAX LUGAVERE: Honey's good.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Because I'm just thinking about again. What have we been using the longest as a species? Humans have been dabbling with honey for a long long time And one of the studies that I actually shared in the book as well, and I'll share that with you guys here. This was published in the journal nutrients. And it detailed how how raw honey keyword "raw honey". Raw honey intake was found to improve fasting blood glucose levels In study participants.

It was a human study. There's a meta analysis of multiple studies design looking at metabolic health and honey. All right . And in addition to that they found that not only did it help to improve fasting blood glucose. It was able to reduce the overall risk of heart disease by notably for these researchers, it improved lipid metabolism as well. They also noted vast improvements in anti oxidants in the body and anti inflammatory benefits of honey. That's just for starters. Alright, so we have a sweetener that can potentially improve insulin sensitivity, potentially improve your fasting blood glucose. Like, that's really special. That's special.

So to even put honey in the category of a sweetener is like It's a little disrespectful to the babies, right? So, you know, it's, it's, it's, it's something really special. And in addition, I shared a bunch of other studies on this, by the way, so we go through and I point out this process of like eating with a purpose. So if your goal is to improve your metabolic health, you know, to reduce your, you know, body fat, improve body composition. What if there are foods that you could start to stack conditions and eating more of those foods that can help with that? The same thing with improving memory and cognitive function and attention.

And so what I did in the book was I, and I know we have an emoji culture as well. And so any foods that, and I've shared over 40 specific foods, some of my favorite foods that have benefits for cognitive, cognitive function, you're going to see a little brain emoji next to it.

MAX LUGAVERE: Oh, I love that.

SHAWN STEVENSON: If it improved your sleep quality, there's like a little sleep emoji and metabolic health, there's a muscle emoji. And so people are going to see that. The studies will be right there and then I'm gonna show you how to cook with it in the book as well. So man, it's it's so good. So special. And so that's the sweetener that we use in the acai bowl. So that's one of the things you're always gonna see in my refrigerator gonna see acai, acai bowls.

I'm sorry, acai packets. You're gonna see honey all the time in my cabinets It's just again. I'm very bullish on honey right now, especially with all of the controversy around different sweeteners. It's not to say that we can't use other stuff but I want to use, that's more of a real whole food based sweetener versus, you know, some of the kind of concentrated artificial and or even natural sweeteners that, you know, they might end up, you know, even with stevia, I'm, I'm, I don't want to get into a debate here, but stevia is, I'm cool with stevia, you know, we could put a couple of drops of stevia in, in a few things.

But when you got a bag of stevia that looks like a bag of sugar, like your, your red flag should go up, like, man, huh? I wonder, because if you've ever seen, I have stevia leaves, by the way, at the house. It looks like a bag of.

MAX LUGAVERE: Do you?

SHAWN STEVENSON: It looks like it's pineapple express.

MAX LUGAVERE: Oh, wow. Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: And it tastes, it's sweet. It's a sweet little leaf. They're, they're dried. It's a sweet little leaf, but it kind of has like a medicine y, like, Background to it aftertaste.

MAX LUGAVERE: Yeah. Lot. A lot of people don't like the Stevia aftertaste. But you still got people out here in 2023 afraid of carbs and you're telling them to eat more honey. Have you ever been part of a, like one of these so-called diet tribes? I mean, I feel like you are, I feel like you in many ways are like diet Switzerland. Like you don't get into the battles online. You, you're not, you don't talk necessarily about the value of eating animal source foods or plant.

You're just, you're sort of like in the middle, in a way, which I try to be as well, but I don't see you getting into, like, the, the battles that I find myself in.

SHAWN STEVENSON: I love this, man. Dietary Switzerland. Yeah. You know, I think that we I'm taking notes.

MAX LUGAVERE: How do you do it, man?

SHAWN STEVENSON: I think that we automatically are going to go through a phase of being dogmatic. Especially when you've done something to improve your health. Or you've seen it happen for somebody that you love or you grew up with it and it appears to be working? You're gonna be very bullish on that form of that dietary framework. So whether it's a carnivore diet, whether it's a vegan diet, whether it's a raw food diet And so I definitely have my phase again.

I've been in this now. It's almost my 21st year coming up here in next month and That being the case so 15, 20 years ago, when I first started to figure out a few things, I definitely became dogmatic. It's just I've, I've, I've outgrown it.

MAX LUGAVERE: It's like Dun and Kruger. We all go through it. Yeah. I had this brilliant dude, Ted Naiman on my show recently, he was a medical doctor. And he brought up a really interesting point. He's a great guy to get on the show. Love his, love his work. But he was saying that when you don't really fully understand something, you have no choice but to believe in it almost like religiously. And when you don't understand a topic, but you've seen great benefit from it, you want to evangelize it literally like a religious zealot, like a, like a missionary of sorts.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Exactly. And that's what we're seeing there's, and especially now we have. You know, social media and the ability to be a missionary in a whole new way and to build your identity around that as well and to build a platform around that. It can be very difficult for you to question your own religiosity or your own dogma or your own principles. But part of the reason we go to that is that we're always looking for things that can help us

to, let me, this even goes back to culture as well, which is we like the idea of freedom. But we don't really handle it very well.

And so what I mean by that is having some rules in place and structure enables us to actually create more freedom for ourselves when we just have infinite options and possibilities. Like there's a great book from Barry Schwartz many, many years ago, *The Paradox of Choice*. Like when we have so many options, it debilitates us. And so knowing like this is what I do. This is my framework. These are things I don't do. It just helps to create some certainty. It helps to create a sense of, of, of peace within our psyche, within our psyche. And so that's the benefit of having any of these diet frameworks. That's one of the benefits. But also, and here's the thing again, these are my, my friends, you know, the champions of carnivore diet, champions of vegan diets and everything in between.

I know like the, the person in all of them. And I'll tell you what, part of the problem too, why we might see people hating on each other like that is they don't see the love and the humanity that that person who's the champion of that thing has because they're doing it oftentimes from the space of they've seen it help people. They've seen it help the patients that they're working with. And sometimes, again, a lot, well not sometimes, many times, these are people who've struggled, they've tried everything, what they believe to be everything. They've tried so many things and they weren't able to get off their, you know, metformin and insulin and they weren't, they weren't able to, you know, address their hypertension and drop the lisinopril and the statins and they were just slowly decaying, right?

Because that's another misnomer that we have is that we're living longer today. We're dying longer. We just extended the suffering right. And so these these folks oftentimes are coming from a really heart based place where they've helped people who were deemed to be unhelpful like me. That's what happened with me. So that's why if I had that experience where I'm I'm told by four physicians that I'll never be able to walk normally again. That I'm going to be in pain for the rest of my life, and then I don't have that issue anymore. It's quote remission, like there's a whole different level of authority that I'm going to be speaking from.

Now, the microphone that I'm using or the channel that I'm speaking through with that authority can be influential in a positive or not so positive way, if I become dogmatic. And I definitely did because I was converting a lot of people to what I believe to be the best diet 15 years ago.

MAX LUGAVERE: Were you ever like shirtless screaming at food, recording selfies at the local market?

SHAWN STEVENSON: I don't recall. I mean, you know, I might, I might've been nutrient deprived. So you might have some footage out there, but no man, I mean, you know, but even still, you know, so again, they're coming from that place. But like I said, when you build your identity around that, Ooh, it's going to be hard for you to question. And like, but here's also what I know from being inside of this for all this time is that a lot of these folks do not prescribe 100 percent to their diet framework. They don't, and that's okay. All right. But when other people see them, they think that they are, they try to be like them. And sometimes a diet framework might leave out a food that is exactly what your cells need to turn on whatever gene expression that you need right now to feel the way that you want to feel.

And it could be just off limits for you. And the same thing holds true. You could be eating something that is like tip of the spear food in your diet framework, that's fucking you up every day and you're just continuing to eat that food because it's just like this frame, this guy, this girl, they told me that this is what I'm supposed to eat. So I'm just like gobbling down, you know, coconut oil and coconut, the coconut oil is bad, but they're just doing that thing because it's the diet framework. And here's the last part of this is that a lot of times when something works for us, we become very bullish on it as well, like, especially if it works for a time period. What I saw many times was somebody would get these results for a few months, maybe even a few years, but then they would, stuff would start to happen.

It was, it would not work like it used to. And then they tell themselves, I'm just not doing it right. I need to do it harder. I'm not being as, you know, whatever I need to get back. And I want to, I want you to start to catch yourself when you say get back because we can't time travel. This is not Michael J Fox fives. Okay. Let's move forward with greater intelligence. All

right. Because you picked up an experience. You picked up some, some insights, some assessments. You need to bring those to now because chances are you can take that knowledge and build on it. But going back to something that might not have served you the way that you think.

And also bringing something from the past to your updated life might not work the way that you want it to work. And this is why we tend to get into this. We create learned helplessness, beating ourselves up because we're just not doing the diet framework right. And so last part of with this and you know, why I would appear to be dietary Switzerland is every one of these frameworks has value and I'm very much aware of that, you know, it's just really about what works for the person right now. And that's where I know the future of it's already here really is personalized nutrition, but I've been doing this for over a decade. So before I shifted over to being primarily a researcher, writing books, and I was working with people on a day to day basis, I'm so grateful that I had the revelation, which is I need to do as best for this person in front of me.

And it might not be anything that I would prescribe to anybody else. I've got to find out what their heritage is. You know, what were their parents and their grandparents eating? I need to find out, you know, what, what is their work life like? What's going on with their stress? What's going on in their relationship? Right? What, what, you know, running their blood work and seeing like, what are the individual biomarkers that are screwed up with this person that we could do something with nutritionally? It needs to be based on you. And not this kind of glorified idea of what a perfect diet is supposed to be. There is no perfect diet. There isn't no, there isn't a perfect diet for any one person. There's a perfect diet for you as you are right now. And that's just going to change probably next week. And so let's equip people with the skills so they can continue to adapt and evolve as life evolves.

MAX LUGAVERE: Hmm. Amen. I'm eating a diet that's I think dramatically different than the diet that I was eating five years ago and even and ten years ago. I mean my I'm constantly evolving and I aspire to bring my audience along with me for the journey. But but yeah, I mean I'm eating now. I Mean I'm eating grains on a, on a consistent basis. I'm eating like

oatmeal in the, in the morning because I, for one, I enjoy it, but also cause I, I'm now working out in the morning and I've like really focused on dialing up the intensity of my workouts.

So I'm eating some pre workout carbohydrates and I've never seen the, like the strength benefits. And the, and the, and the hypertrophy benefits that I'm now seeing, thanks to that additional fuel in the tank that I have because of that, because of those oats that are, that are apparently, if you look on social media, that are so bad for you, right? I'm, I've reduced somewhat my intake of even extra virgin olive oil, which like, that's the primary oil that I use in my kitchen, but whereas before I used to liberally, drench my food in it. Now I'm being a little bit more measured. And I've seen that I've lost some body fat pretty effortlessly as a result of that.

As a result of limiting the amount of refined fats in my diet. I'm eating more dairy than I've ever consumed before. And I'm not saying, by the way, that anybody needs to be following what I'm doing. Because I fully agree with you. But I'm just saying how, I'm sharing how I've evolved. And I'm very comfortable with this evolution. And sharing it, you know. Because I've never, I like to think that I've never planted my flag in any one camp. I mean, I borrowed from different sides. But I've, you know, I've shared the value of dietary fiber in the past and how important it is to eat lots of vegetables And then I've also talked about the value of animal consumption and I think low carb is great.

But also if you're exercising on a regular basis, particularly with vigorous intensity, carbohydrates are an incredibly useful performance enhancing tool that should be tapped. And so, yeah, I'm, I'm, my diet is constantly evolving and I've, I honestly feel like I've never been in better shape and my biomarkers are all great. So yeah, you have to be willing to iterate. You really do.

SHAWN STEVENSON: That's what it's all about. You just shared the, the absolute roadmap, which is it's individual for you. You know, that's the thing is being able to traverse your own life experience. Thank you for sharing that man, because like even me hearing that it's just like that's another affirmation. You've developed the ability to listen to your body as well. And this is what we really want to get people back to. And part of that might be, again, people not

fitting into what you believe they should be fitting into. And I want people to be able to listen to that inner guidance, but it's hard when you are not well, that's the thing, because that intuitive hit for you to go to Krispy Kremes is like, that might not be your inner guidance system.

That might be food chemistry, you know, and an addiction, you know what I'm saying? But also if, and this is another thing too, even with the Eat Smarter Family Cookbook, it's very inclusive as well, because if we all are, we need to look at what we all agree on more, obviously, you know, that would be much helpful, more helpful to have healthy conversations, but regardless of the framework, most of these frameworks are still focused on eating more real whole foods.

Yeah. Right. And so but then people getting into the infighting about minutiae instead of like the majority of what a child is eating in the United States is Ultra processed foods. Let's get together on this. Let's address this cultural influence that's really the thing that's mainly hurting us, but not even to villainize Hostess cupcakes, right? Not to villainize, you know, Tony the Tiger and Frosted Flakes. We're not, we're not in the business of that. That's a thing, and you can even have that thing. But let's make sure that the majority of your nutrition is coming from things that your genes expect you to eat. Let's eat things that humans have evolved eating or close proximity because this non human shit that we're eating is what's really hurting us.

And so, but here's the thing, even with that, because, and I shared some, some of this as well, like it's true story. I didn't need a salad until I was 25. That's the first time I ate a salad. I eat fast food at least 300 days a year for many years. All right. Now to see, I know this person sitting in front of you. You're just like, no, that was my life. And to reiterate, that's not abnormal. There are many people in the U S and other places as well who have a similar lifestyle because ultra processed food was cheap. It was very close proximities all that I knew. And there are certain situations even with zoning You can't have certain businesses in certain places. There were in living in Ferguson, Missouri. Any, you could just name any fast food It was all right there within mile and a half to mile proximity of my apartment.

MAX LUGAVERE: Wow.

SHAWN STEVENSON: You can name it from Dairy Queen to Burger King to McDonald's, obviously, to Jack in the Box, Krispy Kreme, every pizza place you can name, just all of them. They're just all right there. And I can get two for 99 cent tacos at Jack in the Box. Or I can buy an avocado for 3. I mean, what do you, what do you think I'm going to do? You'll save the cash. And also an avocado, that's not, that's not normal to me because of the culture that I grew up in. Eating those types of foods was abnormal, right?

And so we've got to, of course, the conditions are a problem, the larger culture scape, but we, and we can change that. But here's, this is where we are. We are now, man, which is by you changing your own microculture, yourself, your family in your household. Now you become so much more influential when you go out your door, because truly when people see my family. When people see us, they know what's possible. They can see there's something different about us. We just got back from a family vacation in Maui, which again, I didn't even get, I didn't get on a flight until I was 25, even that was the first time I got in a plane. So even to be able to say this, it's not lost on me.

That's a miracle for me. And man, I cannot tell you how many times people coming up to us, my family, just asking us questions. Just like, it's, it's like. I'd never caught it until now, like now that this project and like my family is a part of it. It's just like, I'm finally paying attention to it because this happens all the time. You know, people just literally, we're sitting even on the plane, people just walk by, maybe they, oh, they saw us like out at the, you know, before you board and they just walk by and it's like, your family is so beautiful. And I'm just like, and I just look at everybody, I'm just like, yeah, my goodness. But truly man.

And then people start to ask us where we're from. They ask us what we do. They ask us, you know, what do we do for fitness? Because, you know, we all have this outward appearance of that. And so that's contagious. That's what I'm trying to say is it's not just the fact of, and I just shared this piece as well. And the part of the Framingham study, this idea, the researchers came upon, which was that obesity was contagious within the community. And

essentially that if you had a close friend or family member that ventures into obesity, that would influence the weight of the group, right? And so this is, this is true.

We know this to be true that behaviors are infectious. You know, there's this whole thing with the five closest people in your life, but truly if you average out the income, it's probably going to be in that proximity. Relationship status, health, all those things. Like we're deeply influenced by the people around us, absolutely.

And so what I'm saying is that we can absolutely be a model. We can be a beacon. We can be an example just walking around. The greatest thing that you do for everybody, Max, is you being the person you are, period. You influence people just by you showing up, being this guy. But we don't give that much credit to that because we don't have a peer reviewed study to back that up. And I know a lot about this. I know a lot about data and research. I know the most powerful thing to be true is that our example speaks volumes more than anything else. And so, yeah.

MAX LUGAVERE: I know, I love that because I get asked all the time from my followers how they can inspire or lead their loved ones to healthier behaviors, healthier habits. And my answer, just from personal experience dealing with my mom and my own, within the constructs of my own, constraints of my own family. that people live the way that they want to live. It's, you're fighting a losing battle if you're trying to change somebody. The best thing that you can do, and I found like on the job, is to lead by example is to just, you gotta put your own, as cliché as it sounds, you gotta put your own oxygen mask on first.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah, it's harder than ever to do that today though, Max, because, you know, there's so much distraction really. You know, before you know it, you find yourself down the line. And so, you know, a part of this is also speaking to that too, because I've experienced it as well, you know, family members, there's this saying that you can't be a prophet in your own land is one of the. But in reality, it's just because, you know, it's that proximity, the proximity does create like a comfort to where it's just like, ah, that's just, that's just maxis, you know, I changed his diapers.

What does he know kind of thing, you know, but it is, it's a sub subconscious occurrence, but what, what needed to be done was. And so what, I'll just share one of the things that I found to be helpful, which is to give resources that is not from me, right? So my oldest son works in fitness now. I never told him to be, to work in fitness and he's incredible trainer. Like I get all these messages from people sometimes like, I had a mom messaged me recently who her son bought one of my son's fitness programs and she was just like, she was just like, she was crying because of how much it's helped her son.

MAX LUGAVERE: Wow.

SHAWN STEVENSON: And I'm just like, wow. Like I didn't, I didn't tell him to do any of that. It's because he's in the culture. Right. And so, but what I did rather than me just modeling and showing him, telling him what to do because he's my kid, I understand. And I had to, I had to really work on this, that he's not just mine as well. Like he's his own. His own soul, his own, his own entity, his own experience. And knowing one of the best things that I could do is yes, model the behavior, but also expose him to other individuals who are living a life that he would want to live, right? And so that's been the superpower that I've gained, which is my relationships. And the influential people that my kids have in their lives, it's not me telling them.

It's very, very powerful. And so even having resources, like a cookbook like this, to be able to give to somebody. You don't even have to say anything. Just give them the book. I'm telling you, it's a game changer. As soon as they open the book, because having something that's attractive. Also what's different about this project, too, is that everybody eats and, you know, food is one of the joys of our lives. And people versus, you know, my previous books are idea books, big idea books. And they've been amazing. I'm grateful for that. But this is bringing in a whole different demographic, as well, with a cookbook because not only this this is a unique cookbook It does it has over 250 scientific references in a cookbook, which is crazy.

MAX LUGAVERE: Love that.

SHAWN STEVENSON: But it's it's all tied into a way that's entertaining, beautiful. And obviously again, you get to eat the things that we're talking about and have wonderful food experiences. And so being able to give sources like that people know that it would podcasts right? People forwarding this episode or you know They hear something and they share it with somebody they care about. Sometimes that can get through in a way that you can't, right? And so that's what we're doing this for. That's why I said yes to this mission that was not necessarily in my comfort zone many years ago when I was seeing people every day, you know, and I was repeating the same thing. Somebody's coming in with, you know, type two diabetes and you know, and I'm walking them through how the condition is created, how to reverse engineer it, seeing that light turn on in their eyes.

I had no idea that that was happening in my body. And at some point I was just like, I need to make sure this is accessible for more people. That's why I started the show. And it was not easy at all. You know this, man. You know, people don't know. Like, you gotta show, you gotta show up. It doesn't matter what's going on in your life. You gotta show up and get this done. And so, you know, that's, that's where that came from. And then, of course, it turned into the books. And, you know, ultimately, man, you know, I know some people might think this. I, I know that, you know, a lot of friends and colleagues, they feel like something that they create, like, this is the thing I was born to do.

No, this right now, this is my greatest gift. My greatest, which I don't know anything else that it would be, but my greatest gift in my life is my family. You know, my family is my gift is my superpower. And families right now, in our society are fractured, deeply fractured, and it's creating so much frustration, divisiveness, poor health, poor mental health. We got to take care of our babies. We've got to take care of these kids, man, you know, because this is going into the next generation and we've got to take control right now. And so I feel like this is what I was born for. You know, I've done all this work in the past. You know on all these different facets of health and I'm grateful for that. That just really was equipping me It was qualifying me for this moment, which is about healing families healing our community. And you know, I'm very very grateful for this, you know, there's a statement that Life doesn't call the qualified life qualifies the called.

MAX LUGAVERE: Ooh.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Right. And so it's just like it's been qualifying me for this moment and You know, and I think one other Really cool superpower is, you know, being somebody that loves food so much and it's not us, not weird about it, which is like, I, I even had to check on that because I've got some friends who are like the guy on eat to live, don't live to eat, eat to live food is just fuel. Good luck with that. All right. And that's cool. If. That 1 percent of people can actually buy into that.

MAX LUGAVERE: That was very Chris Rock, by the way.

SHAWN STEVENSON: So what, what it really is, is like, why do we have these flavor receptors that we have? Okay. So I just start to like, go back, like, why, you know, I start to really deconstruct this.

MAX LUGAVERE: Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Humans, we evolved seeking out tasty things. Food tastes good to make us eat it. Different species are attracted to different foods because of the way that they taste. Why would we ignore something so deeply human? Because of some idea, again, another dogmatic diet framework. And so I'm all in on food celebration and enjoying the process of getting well, like deprivation doesn't sound like it equals health.

MAX LUGAVERE: No.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Like, but joy, fulfillment. Family that sound like those things even you saying those things they feel good.

MAX LUGAVERE: Well, that's why that I mean There's so many people in our space that lead with fear like they're they fear monger different whether it's animal source products or even plant You know vegetables and things like that. Seemingly innocuous healthful foods. Whole foods Unprocessed foods. You'll find somebody on social media now fear mongering it There was this that great viral video where some guy is like about to eat something for breakfast

and there's like a clip, they put a clip in the corner of like one of these like social media Quacks basically. No, you can't eat that. It's the worst thing ever and then he goes to eat something else And there's another video of like you can't eat that.

It's giving you cancer you can't eat that and and I feel like that's the world that we live in and it's created all this distrust and fear and and unhealthy relationships with food and it's a huge problem. That's why I so value something like this where you can literally give it to a You can, you can buy it for yourself. You can gift it to a loved one. You cook something together and then that, I mean you, and then lead with appreciation, be like, grandma, you know, I really loved cooking with you last night. That was so fun. Mom, I, you know, that was, we haven't done that in forever. What a gift that was. And I feel like that is a very positive way to inspire behavior change.

You know, like a lot of people. I was reading this book by James Sexton, who it's not about food. He's a divorce lawyer, but he brought up this really interesting point that you reminded me of that even constructive criticism is still criticism and nobody wants to have another critic in their life, right? Cause not only do they gain a critic when you criticize them, but they lose a cheerleader. And the way to, the way to inspire a loved one, I think, to behave differently, I mean, he uses it in the context of, I think, sex and just general in terms of like relational success, lead with appreciation, right? Not criticism. Like take a loved one on a walk with you. And instead of. Instead of saying, you know, you really should walk more, you're too sad and you know, you're just spent all day sitting in front of the TV, you go on the walk and then you share how much you enjoyed going on a walk with that person. And you do the same with food, with your book.

SHAWN STEVENSON: That's just changing the frequency, you know, changing that and it's, you know, a more efficacious way to get to the outcome that we want. But to do that max, it sometimes requires more energy from ourselves. It's not that we can't do those things and speak through the lens of compassion and love and patience when we're not well, but it is harder. And so that's another part of this mission is like, let's do all this stuff together because once you start feeling better, you're going to be more able to consistently do things like you just mentioned which is like okay I'm feeling like I want to tell my wife, you know, she's been

sitting all day. She needs to get up and go for a walk or whatever the case might be or tell my husband, you know, he's he's gonna feel terrible if he doesn't get up. Let's just, let me reframe this and come in a loving way and figure out a way to because here's the thing too We know the people in our lives. We know what motivates them. Yeah, we also know what D excites them and pisses them off. We tend to go to piss off more frequently because we get lackadaisical and just like we get to that place where we just want people to do what we want them to do.

MAX LUGAVERE: Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: That's understandable because we're all human.

MAX LUGAVERE: Totally.

SHAWN STEVENSON: But another thing that I was targeting was like, here are some strategies to improve your kitchen culture. Here are some strategies to improve and to create a feeling of celebration and connection at the dinner table. Here are some science back ways to do that and laying all that out. By the way. I would be remiss if I didn't, you had asked me that question about opening the fridge, you know, what's in there. So I mentioned just the acai. We mentioned honey, but one other thing, and it's one of my favorite recipes and we're, we love brunch. We're a big brunch family, but one of the things that you'll see on my counter all the time is sweet potatoes.

MAX LUGAVERE: I love it.

SHAWN STEVENSON: All right.

MAX LUGAVERE: Are you about to tell us about the sweet potato protein pancakes?

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah.

MAX LUGAVERE: Oh man. I was going to ask you what your favorite recipe in the book was.

SHAWN STEVENSON: That's, picking my favorite recipe would be like picking my favorite kid. Like that's hard to do. But this was published in the Journal Archives of Pharmacal Research and it found that the anthocyanins in sweet potatoes were found to exhibit memory enhancing effects. The researchers believe that it was due to that kind of concentration of antioxidants in that food. What if we can turn that into a delicious pancake?

MAX LUGAVERE: Hell yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: You know what I mean? Just again, just upgrading some of the things that we love. Using more whole food ingredients and also having these benefits like that. Like you're not going to get this from the hot cakes and sausage that I would get from McDonald's breakfast. You know, it's just, again, it's a, it's really a celebration of food. It's a celebration of family.

MAX LUGAVERE: I love it, bro. I love sweet potatoes too. Damn. So freaking good. Do you have any methods for like home cooking if somebody, because I mean, you can't ignore the statistics today that show that. What is it? 42 percent of the population is obese, not just overweight, but obese by the year 2030. It's going to be literally one and two cooking methods for fat loss. Anything there with regard to, with regard to that, I mean. Cause obviously when you are avoiding the ultra processed foods, you're increasing the satiety value of your food.

That's going to be implicitly that's going to lend itself to a, to shifting your body composition in a positive direction, obviously, because you're, you're, you are. Achieving greater satiety and fewer calories because we know that minimally processed foods aren't as calorie dense as ultra processed foods, but any other strategies for cooking for fat loss?

SHAWN STEVENSON: Absolutely. I mean, one of the like low hanging fruits here is protein ratio, especially for the first meal. And one of the studies that I shared in the book looked at an egg breakfast versus a carbohydrate based breakfast. And again, even as we're saying this, this is still going to be based on you, but for the average person that's going for, and by the way in the study was a bagel, bagel breakfast, or eggs, and this was a multi month study, and

they found at the end of the study the people who were having the, and by the way, Same amount of calories. That's why I put the study in there. Same calories.

MAX LUGAVERE: Wow.

SHAWN STEVENSON: But dramatically different health outcomes. And so, the people in the egg breakfast lost significantly more weight, more body fat, not just weight, but body fat as well. And higher production of various satiety hormones, all that stuff. So it's just like what are some of the things that we can do to make metabolic health easy or fat loss easy is making sure that you're getting an adequate amounts of protein for that first meal, especially if you're not about to like train or something like that.

You know, really going towards protein, but in our culture it's high carb, it's carbs is the predominant thing just to start the day. Right. You going, going to the office or, you know, you're going to a meeting. It's bagels, it's, you know, it's the continental breakfast, right? The continental breakfast, the danishes and the cereals and all this stuff. We just checked into a hotel recently. I was traveling back home to St. Louis and, you know, we're checking, checking in and then, you know, the person at the desk was just like, and we also have free continental breakfast right over here in the lobby and my, I saw my youngest son's eyes light up. Like, cause he, we love breakfast, we love brunch, but we're talking more like, again, eggs and, you know, omelets, frittatas, protein pancakes, those kind of things.

But he didn't know that the continental breakfast meant we went, you know, the next day, it's cold cereals, bagels, you know, danishes, stuff you can heat up in the microwave, that kind of thing.

MAX LUGAVERE: It's like old bakery crap.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Orange juice, apple juice, you know. And so that's one, if we're talking about fat loss, really focus on that protein intake. It's the most thermic of all the macronutrients. Your body burns more calories to process protein than it does any of the other macronutrients.

And, you know, even as we're talking about kind of dissecting food into parts like this, I always have this like window open in my mind, like, I don't want people to miss the point because I, we get caught up into that too, like just looking at macros or calories, you know this. But the reality is this, all this time people have been infighting about fats and carbs for years now, protein has just been like sitting in the, in the back of the bus, just like, bro, you know what I mean?

Because when we're talking about things like hormones and hormone health, your hormones are made from proteins. You need these protein building blocks to make you. When people see themselves in the mirror, when I see you, when you see me, we're seeing mainly the proteins you've eaten and minerals, like those are like the two bulkiest things that you're going to see when you see somebody. Protein is that important. This is the building blocks to make you. DNA to RNA to protein. It's, in the gene here, the outcome is proteins. Okay, but you have to have the materials to make it. So it's not even just on this kind of like, Thermic effect, that kind of thing. This is on like, protein is super important.

Are we actually, has our culture devolved to a place where now, which you know, there's some messages are protein is bad, right? So if we're looking at what have humans been doing the longest, what enabled us to create this highly evolved brain that we have and have the health that we had previously to our recent generations. We had a more of a protein centric diet, you know, and this doesn't mean that you have to have a high protein diet. I'm not saying that. But we need to make sure that you're getting in the right amount of protein for you, and for a lot of people, you're not getting enough.

MAX LUGAVERE: It's also, yeah, it's the most satiating macronutrient. You eat more protein. They see this in studies. When you incrementally jack up a person's protein intake, they eat less of the carbs and fat. And nobody, ain't nobody walking around today deficient in carbs and fat. And we're, we're replete in all of it, pretty much. But the protein is a really powerful Anti obesity tool and yeah, we should, we should appreciate it as such. I think the anti protein crowd, I mean, they're, they're very fringe and I don't know if any, but I think people are starting to really not take those sort of low protein advocates seriously, which I think is a good thing. I think most of the more intelligent people, more well informed people in the

space. We all tend to be, I think, these days on the same page. That protein is really, really valuable. Particularly in the context of, of like today's health problems. Well, dude, this was super fun. Thanks for coming out.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Of course, anytime, man.

MAX LUGAVERE: Any chance I get to talk to you, man. I relish and Yeah, man, I'm excited for your book. I think it's gonna make huge waves. It's a beautiful book. I got to flip through it and the recipes are amazing and you've got your beautiful family there on the cover. It's like a book that you just want to have in your house. You know, like sitting on your coffee table, it's, uh, it's gorgeous. So congrats. Cause I know, you know, writing a book is hard work, especially a cookbook.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah, you know.

MAX LUGAVERE: Yeah, I know.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Thank you. That means a lot. Thank you so much for tuning into this very special episode today. I hope that you got a lot of value out of this. And if you did, please share it out with the people that you care about. You can, of course, send this directly from the podcast app that you're listening on. Share it on social media. Of course, tag me, tag Max. Share the love. It really does mean a lot. We've got some amazing, amazing masterclasses coming your way very soon. Also some world class game changing guests that you're not going to want to miss. So again, make sure to stay tuned, take care, have an amazing day, and I'll talk with you soon.

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