



**EPISODE 916**

# **The Killer Food Culture That's Controlling Your Health**

**With Dr. Darshan Shah**

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**SHAWN STEVENSON:** If we were to simplify the ingredients to good health, the recipe would be relatively simple. Eat good food, move our bodies, get plenty of sleep, rest in recovery, and also spend some time outdoors, get adequate sunlight, spend some time with other human beings, maybe some furry friends. That's pretty much the recipe to a decent level of health. Now, of course, we can get into the Gordon Ramsey Michelin Star Chef versions of the recipe and add in all these dynamic factors. But the basic recipe is relatively simple. So my question is, if the recipe is so simple. Why is it so difficult for us in our modern society to maintain a high level of functional health and fitness?

Well, on this very special episode, we're gonna be talking about how our culture is actually unconsciously controlling our behaviors when it comes to all of those health inputs. I'm also going to open up and share with you the way that I grew up personally and how it influenced my family's health, my perspective of health, and led me into some dark places, and eventually some big revelations when it comes to health and fitness. Also, we're gonna be talking about some interesting things regarding longevity, including a surprising culture of centenarians, people living to a hundred and beyond who actually love to eat baloney. We're also gonna talk about why processed foods are misunderstood. It's gonna be interesting. We're gonna cover why the FDA banning red dye number three is a false flag.

We're gonna talk about how food scientists manipulate our senses and how to protect ourselves from this, this, and so much more. I'm so grateful to be able to share this conversation with you today. I was interviewed on one of the top new shows in the country the Extend podcast with Dr. Darshan Shaw. Now, Dr. Darshan Shaw was recently named the Longevity Doctor of the Year by the Renowned Longevity Doctor Association. So his level of influence and acclaim and prestige and insight is truly remarkable. And so being invited onto a show really does mean a lot. And he shared with me in many of our conversations and including him being here on the Model Health Show that. Him starting the Extend podcast, the catalyst for that.

The launching pad for that was spending time with me here at the Model Health Show Studio. And also little did I know years ago when Darshan, who is a traditionally trained

physician and many, many years of clinical practice, was looking to diversify the inputs and tools for his patients, he found the Model Health Show. And just to know that that level of impact is out there and making these connections and impacting the influencers of influencers. I mean, what's better than that? Like that really does my heart so much good. So very excited to share this conversation with you today. It's so rich, so many powerful insights. And before we get to that conversation again, being awarded The Longevity Doctor of the Year by the Longevity Doctors Association. His insights and what he's been sharing with me regarding understanding the difference between our chronological age, right? How old are we on the calendar versus our biological age can be markedly different.

Alright? There are people who are literally decades younger than their chronological age as far as what's going on with their biology. And the opposite is also true. There are people who are decades older biologically than they are chronologically. And so where do we find ourselves on this spectrum? And right now, if you're curious about this, this is something I recently done. There are many different modalities to kind of track down what's going on with our biology, but most of the data is found within our blood and leading scientists have uncovered that specific biomarkers can give us the most accurate assessment of our biological age possible. Now I was able to test and find out the data from over 100 biomarkers, including what's going on with my sex hormones, inflammatory biomarkers, immune system markers, thyroid function, nutrient markers, and so much more.

And it gave me a very accurate assessment of my biological age versus my chronological age. And I'm happy to say I'm getting close to being about a decade younger biologically than I am chronologically, which I could tell you I pretty much feel that way as well. But it's great to get that assessment and that affirmation, and also to find out the things that I can have improvement with, which I was surprised. There was one specific nutritive marker that could have some nice space for improvement for me, and it influenced so many other aspects of my health. So it influence what's going on with my immune system, what's going on with my hormone function. And so it's something that I've been more adamant about doing, and again, I just even feel even better from that.

And so if you want to get an assessment done just like this, it's never been easier. And for me, many companies have been reaching out to me over the years about doing these type of assessments and working with them, and I just honestly didn't yet feel comfortable or really truly trusting the ability of the data to paint an accurate picture. But now finally, thanks to the incredible team at Levels, I'm truly happy with the user friendly data, all of the incredible biomarkers, and putting it all together for us and really educating us on what it really means. How we can make improvements and so much more. I've actually been utilizing the data from continuous glucose monitors from levels for many years.

The team there is phenomenal spearheaded by Dr. Casey Means who I love so much, and who's been a guest here on the Model Health Show. And now when you purchase an annual levels membership, not only are you going to receive two additional months for free, you're also going to receive a 28 marker cardiometabolic blood tests every year included as part of your membership. But here's the thing, you can also upgrade your membership and purchase the expanded panel, which will give you an even deeper detailed view with 100 plus biomarkers for deeper insights into your hormones. Nutrients, stress, aging and more. Again, the Levels team is absolutely incredible, and right now when you purchase their annual membership, you'll get an additional two months for free when you go to [Levels.Link/Model](https://Levels.Link/Model), that's L-E-V-E-L-S.L-I-N-K/model.

Once again, with your Levels membership, you'll become an expert of your own health with lab testing and unlimited access to the Levels. App for AI powered food logging, habit tracking, and personalized insights that turn your results into daily actions. Just go to [Levels.Link/model](https://Levels.Link/model) to take advantage. Right now. And now let's get to the Apple Podcast review of the week.

**ITUNES REVIEW:** Another five star review titled Changed My Life by Tash. Shawn, I can't thank you enough for your insights in these podcasts. I have always been a nutrition and fitness fanatic since high school, and now as a 23-year-old registered nurse, devastated and stuck in the middle of the faulty healthcare system, seeing the huge lack of food and nutrition and the dependence of drugs, I am on the road to changing my career, to focus on my passion for the human body and the power of food. Thanks to your inspiration in your podcast and your

book, eat Smarter. I wouldn't have the courage to follow my dreams. Keep doing what you're doing.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yes, sir. I appreciate that so very much. Thank you so much for sharing your voice over on Apple Podcasts. Listen, if you're listening to the Model Health Show and you've yet to leave a review. Please pop over to Apple Podcasts, leave a review for the show. Share your voice, share your heart. Rate the show, gimme some stars. It really does mean a lot. And without further ado, let's get to this very special episode where I'm having the tables turned and I'm being interviewed by the number one longevity doctor in the world, Dr. Darshan Shah on his new hit show, the Extend podcast. Enjoy.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** This is as I was telling you earlier, this is a real honor for me because going on your podcast is a really, and talking to you about podcasting has really inspired me to do this. So I really want to thank you for that.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** I love that. And that's what I was sharing with you earlier as well. You're one of those people, speed of implementation. You know, you put the information into somebody like yours hands. And you make things happen and you impact a lot of people. And so I'm honored, truly honored.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Wow. This is, this is such a great moment for me. And, really like one of those moments that I'll be writing about this in my journal tomorrow morning.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Awesome.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Yeah, I really appreciate you being here and, you know, I know you're an expert in many different topics around health. But we had a really great dinner a few weeks ago where you and your wife came over and we made one of the dishes that you have. A recipe in your book about, and..

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Which I was totally surprised, you know, at the very end. And, you know, we had the pumpkin muffins in the book.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Pumpkin muffins. Right.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** And I, and I, you know, of course I, I took a bite and I was like, this tastes so familiar. And then you were like, Shawn, you know what that is, right? It's from your book. I was like, man, this is, you made such a magical moment, you know.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Thank you.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Right then, you know, it's so thoughtful. And also the, the people that you brought together. You know, friends and, you know, people actually really close with as well. That I had no idea they were coming.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Right!

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** You know, so Casey means was there, with her fiance. I don't know if she's gotten married at this point.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Right.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Which he was awesome, by the way.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** They're married. Yep.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** And, Kelly Starrett was there with Juliette and I love them so much. We've done a lot of stuff over the years. And, you know, just being able to, to, to spend time with you and your wife. And your wife is fantastic.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Yes.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** She's hearing you guys' story and how you got together and all this stuff. It was just really amazing. It was amazing. It was food for the soul. Really?

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Yeah.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** You know, so.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** And we need that, right? And you know, that dinner that we had together, you know, it was the first time we've ever broken bread together. Right. And it just kind of emphasizes the power of community and building community and friendships over meals. I think that's the key there is intentionality. Because I would submit to you that 50, 60 years ago, you didn't have to be intentional about it because it was just part of the culture, right? You came home, you had dinner with your family, you know, your tv, you had to turn the channels. Remote controls probably weren't even in, you know, made, right. You had to click the channel thing.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Antenna.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Right. The antenna. Right. Exactly. You, you remember that? I don't, kids growing up now, I have no idea what that is. They can put their phone right in front of them and watch a YouTube episode as they're eating. And, I think, you know, as I was growing up. There was no other option, but eating at home with your family, it was rare that we went out to fast food or out to a restaurant for dinner. And now you have to be more intentional because the options are vast and sometimes it's even cheaper and it's definitely less time consuming to not have that family interaction. Right, to go out and just have a quick meal.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** This is the problem. Yeah. This is the actual, if we are going to, we could solve all of our health issues right here, right now in this podcast. We've been focused, myself included, working as a practitioner and same as you.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Yes.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** We're telling people to make these behavior changes.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Right.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** But they're trying to make these changes in a culture that is largely unhealthy.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Yes.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** That is fighting against them.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Right.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** That's the problem. We're trying to encourage behavior change in a society that is set up to make you unhealthy.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Exactly.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** If we change the culture, we change the health. Right. And I think it would be valuable for us to understand like, what, what is culture? Culture, I think about, you know, my college economy class and this concept like the invisible hand.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Yeah.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Right. But culture is really the invisible hand. It's culture is defined as the shared attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors of a group of people that is passed down from one generation to the next. Alright? That's what culture is defined as. And so the culture is like a container that is determining your choices and your awareness of things, whether you know it or not, you don't even understand it. You're existing in this thing, you're born into it, right? And so in a culture, there's just certain things you do, you, you wear certain things, you speak a certain way, you eat certain things, right?

You communicate a certain way, and part of what brought me to this is I've had a unique experience of being intimately in different cultures. You know, being biracial myself, right. But also having the ability working at a university. When I was in school and then becoming a strength and conditioning coach at the university, I worked with people from all over the world. And I was often invited to stuff, you know?

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Yeah.



**SHAWN STEVENSON:** So I got to see these different intricacies and it was just kind of adding to this patchwork quilt that I was able to develop and how do I communicate and help different people? And universally we all want the same thing.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Sure.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** You know, we all wanna be healthy, we all want to feel significant and our family is taken care of, all these things, but we don't think about how the culture is determining our choices. And so with that being said, we have a culture now, again, we just look out here.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Mm-hmm.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** And you know, it's a little bit different here on Sunset, it's a little different. But you could pick, so many streets here in America and you just look down the street and it is just littered with fast food.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Absolutely. Right.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Ultra processed food at every turn. You know, and this is something that, again, I didn't grow up with all of this access to all this stuff, and I remember it was a treat to go to McDonald's.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Yes. Right, exactly.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** I had a birthday party at McDonald's, I think it was like my sixth birthday, and I remember it so clearly. You know, it was like all the characters Grimace, which is a terrible name. Think about it.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** I know, Grimace.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** He's kind of, you know, he is, he's obese, you know, and he's in pain. Grimace means pain purple.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Grimace had way too much McDonald's.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yes. Then they got another one. The hamburger.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Hamburger.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** He's literally a felon. Yeah. You know, and McDonald's, the, the, he's a clown. Clowns are scary. He is a clown. Have you seen it? You know?

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Yeah. Yeah.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** So I could go on and on, but you know, it's just, this was a, this was a, a rare occasion. It was a treat. Right. And it kind of devolved in a way that that became the norm.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Right.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** So that was an, this was when I live with my grandmother and then when I. Because, you know, my, my mother was struggling, you know, just to have a place to stay living in the inner city. You know, my grandmother, this was my white grandmother, and I lived with her from, uh, kindergarten through second grade.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Was this also in St. Louis?

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** St. Louis.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Yeah.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** St. Louis. Yeah. So this was like, it was in Maplewood. Yeah. So it was like a little bit nicer area. You know, and she made dinner every night pretty much. You know, she had a garden and my, my grandfather was a hunter and he would forage for things like right. It was a completely, but I wasn't, as time went on, I was getting more and more distant

'cause my friends. I want the Capri sons, I want the, I want the Lunchables. You know, eventually they came out.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Right.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** I want the Pop-Tarts. Yeah. I want the things that my friends are having. And so over time, I got, and my grandmother. And this is another tie in for everybody, if they've ever read the book, the Five Love Languages.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** I love that book.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** This is a, it's so powerful. It's so powerful.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** It's such a powerful book.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** But food ties into the five lovely languages so beautifully. Because oftentimes people, there are, certain people express their love through food. Right?

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Right.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** It's a, it's a, it's a love language. Yes. Right. It's a gift that they're giving. It's an act of service. Right. And also the physical touch aspect of food.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Yes.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Nothing touches you more intimately than food. Like you're taking something from outside of your body and putting it into your body. It's becoming a part of you.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Yes.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** How intimate is that? You know.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** I never thought of it that way, but you're right.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yeah. I can go on and on with the connections, but because she's showing her love through food and wanting me to be happy, she would. She would allow me or relent to let me have the fish sticks and the macaroni and cheese, you know, because she wanted the kid to eat something.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Yeah. And back then they didn't even realize the dangers of ultra processed food.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Exactly.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Now we know. Right?

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** So, but that's, I was exact, that's exactly what I was gonna say. Yeah. Because she wouldn't want to hurt me.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Yeah.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** She didn't, she just didn't know, you know, this was, these were new, like, uh, revelations. Yeah. And advances in nutrition. I just pop this in the microwave quick.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Remember the TV dinners?

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Of course.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Oh, love. Right. Exactly.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Oh my goodness.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** With the little. With the little muffin or the, or the brown brownie, brownie in there.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yeah, of course.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Yeah. Or the little apple pie in there. Mm-hmm. That got warmed up with it.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Oh my goodness. It was never quite, the microwaves were very different back then too. They were never, never warmed up evenly. Never. You know, but, you know, she was, again, she was just doing what was becoming more normal in the, in the culture and eventually moving with my mother. Because my grandfather, unfortunately, again, he was getting pulled into this and seduced he had high cholesterol at the time. This is in the eighties.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Yeah.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** His doctor recommended that he starts eating country crock.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Oh my gosh.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Right.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Wow.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** So stop eating butter. Stop eating eggs. Yeah. Margarine. Now eat margarine. Mm-hmm. Right. Watch your fat. He went from having high cholesterol to having a heart attack.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Yeah.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** And having open heart surgery. Right. All right. And, you know, the things that you shouldn't be eating, the, the deer meat and all that stuff, you need to be eating, you know, lean, whatever, you know. And so, and again, not to villainize any of these things, but he started eating more ultra processed foods versus the stuff that he was being

told. And also, again, today, we know that having quote high cholesterol is just the, the metric itself.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Yes.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Is, it, it is such a oversimplification, right.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Absolutely.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** And so, again, I wish I would've known then what I knew, but then I'd be like five, like, Hey, you know, pop, listen, but you know. I went back to live with my mother because my grandparents moved to quote the country. So this was in St. Louis? But he grew up down in the boot hills like Southern Missouri.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Sure.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** And so going down there was like gravel road. Right. You know, that's actually where I learned, I learned how to ride a bike downhill on a gravel road. Alright. That's how my grandfather was. He's like literally sink or swim, you know what I'm saying? So I fell off one time and I learned quickly, you know? But, you know, and, and that's that part of that culture. But going back to live with my mother in the inner city and you know, going from like a all white, not all white, but just no say 95% to now 95% black.

And also now we're on government assistance, so we're getting food stamps. Now, we have like a corner store. And like we're just surround, surrounded by ultra processed food. And fast food is everywhere now.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Right.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Versus at my grandmother's, there is a McDonald's. Down the street, couple blocks away. And then there was like Kmart, or it was Venture at the time.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Venture. Right.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** And that was about it. Laundromat, right. There was a liquor store and by the gas station. But now there's, you know, there's 7/11, there's Domino's Pizza. Sure. There's pizza Hut, there's white castles. There's, I can go on and on multiple McDonald's in a..

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Multiple.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** You know, all these stuff pretty much in a walking distance. Right. And these are the things that my friends are having. I'm on the free lunch program at school, which is prison food. You know, I got this little red ticket. And now, and this is a true story, and this is bringing a, a point, a really important point for everybody listening or watching. And this is the fact that my diet now evolved or devolved to being about 80% ultra processed foods.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** For sure. Yeah.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** And I was not abnormal. Because according to jama, the Journal of the American Medical Association, huge analysis was published in. 20 19, 20 19, 20 18, they looked at the ultra processed food consumption by US children.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Okay.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** All right. And they tracked it from 1999 to 2018? Yeah. All right. In 1999, the average child was already eating right around 64% ultra processed foods. In 1999.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** 1999.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yes.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Wow.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** By 2018, that number had reached 67.5%. Almost 70% of our children's diet is ultra processed food in the United States. And of course, you know, there's kids that are gonna be on both, both ends. Right. I was definitely on the higher end of ultra processed

food consumption. And so my body from that point, everybody that I knew. I cannot think of one person in my family who didn't have one chronic condition.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Sure.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** My little brother, chronic asthma, he's hospitalized.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Right.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** At least every two months. Myself, same thing. I'd spend these stents in the hospital. I had all these inhalers. I didn't have asthma previously. Yeah. But now I have asthma. My little sister, she had the worst eczema that you could ever see. She was suffering this little girl, my mother, diabetes, obesity. You know, my stepfather, you know, heart disease, hypertension, alcoholism, you know, the list goes on and on. Everybody had something

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Right.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** And this was abnormal, but it became normal.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Right.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Right. And that I'm saying all this to say that is the power of a culture.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Exactly. Exactly.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** This is what I was around. I didn't know that there was a difference between the fish sticks and

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Sure.



**SHAWN STEVENSON:** And some wild caught salmon. Absolutely. This is just what I was exposed to. I didn't know that. You know that they were such thing as meditation and yoga. And I didn't know what “real food” was. I thought real food was Doritos.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Right.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** You know, I thought real food was, you know, um, or, or just it was okay to drink these barrel juices. That was like, and 0% juice in the juice. Right. And it's, they're red. They're cherry red.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Yeah.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Which now the die has been banned.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Now we know. Yeah.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Recently.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Right.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** So, and that's the power of culture. So the point being, and we'll talk more about this today, is if we change the culture, we change the health outcomes automatically.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Yes.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** If I was inundated and surrounded by, and I've seen it because I've replicated it. If you see my children, you see what happens when they grow up within a healthy culture.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Exactly. Exactly. No, and that there's such a great point. You know, going back to these studies that have been done on culture and how they affect your health. You know, we hear about these blue zones all the time, right? And people are trying to dissect

what do these people eat? And is there one ingredient like olive oil that makes all the difference, you know, or blueberries. Really what it's all about is the people are in a culture where the food choices are not ultra processed food. These are foods that are real food, right? And so basically, and then the other part of that, on top of that too, is they're cooking their food, they're respecting their food, they're eating together, and it all makes sense when you look at it that way. There's not a one magic ingredient. It's really the overall environment that you're surrounding yourself by, right?

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Absolutely. Yeah.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Yeah.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** And that's, that's another important point. You know, if you look at the data and be honest, I mean, the, it's very difficult because we have our biases, you know, so people collecting this data can have their slant towards, oh, it's because they're eating a lot of, you know, plants, right? They're, they're every, you know, they're vegetarian, whatever the case might be. The diets are very diverse.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Very diverse. Every single one of them.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** These spots of longevity. Right. And, you know, one of, I'm just gonna give an, give an example, but if you look at places in Italy that were analyzed. One of them is popular for creating bologna. Like, that's where it's the home of bologna.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Exactly.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** You know, and so they're eating pork and they're eating, you know, all these different pastas and cheeses and all these things, and wine and like, but you won't see that in the, in the research, you know, when it's packaged up.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** But they'll pick out Right.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** The diet. But here's the thing. Number one, all of these different places, they're eating mostly real food. Pretty much, almost a hundred percent.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Even the bologna, I mean, it's coming from wild fed pigs that are, you know, out there in nature. They, they're not fed like these mass produced grains and raised in like little stalls where they're not allowed to move. Right.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** So even a synthetic, newly invented chemical additives and, preservatives and, and food colorings and all these other things that help things to look a certain way here, or, you know, extend the shelf life. And, you know, so that's, that's the hallmark is they're eating real food minimally processed.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Exactly.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** If you think about, you know, humans have been processing food a long time, and I, I'm grateful I've got many of my colleagues who have been sharing this as well.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Sure.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** But this is something that I made a point to talk about years ago, because it's not about just like just eat an apple. Right. Or just, you know, whatever. It's, we can process foods in a healthful way. Right? Olive oil. You mentioned olive oil is remarkably healthy. Right? There's tons of data on this. I'll share, I'll share just something teed up in my mind. But some researchers at Auburn found that extra virgin ole cantal rich.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Sure.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Extra virgin olive oil is one of the few things ever discovered that has a direct impact on the blood-brain barrier. Essentially, research has found that it has a potential to repair damage to the blood-brain barrier and reduce neuroinflammation.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Oh, absolutely. Right.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Right. So it has this with our brain in our nervous system. Like for real. Yeah. You know, and so we've got data on this associated with Alzheimer's and list goes on and on. It's, it's a special thing. Yeah. But it's processed.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Right.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** You've take the oils, but. It's cold processed. Yeah. Extra virgin means it's cold processed.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Sure.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Stone pressed. You know, you crush the olives, but you're not adding deodorizers. Right. And synthetic dyes and all this other stuff, and hexane extraction.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Exactly.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** It's minimally processed, bottled in dark glass if it's done right. Right. Because it's photo sensitive. Right. There's some chlorophyll there as well. You know, but you take that versus the stuff that's, you know, ultra processed. You know, there's, there's this debate on with the, you know, the vegetable oil oils and the vegetable, you know, got friends and colleagues who are like vegetable oil. No, no, no, no, no. It's an ultra processed food.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** It's made in a factory.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** By the definition, like Right. It is an Are you advocating now? With your nutrition degree that people eat ultra processed foods or, you know, everything in moderation.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** No.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** You, you don't wanna do that. And also, again, understanding how it's made and also understanding, we got tons of studies on this. It's not, it's, it's a, it's alarming to me when somebody's like, you know, the data shows that, you know, there's no prob Do

you read? 'cause there's a, there's a bunch of studies that show otherwise. And I actually cited a couple in my book related to heart disease related to dementia. Related to damaging your DNA, just the smell. And this was published in a journal inhalation toxicology. And the researchers found that just inhaling the fumes of vegetable oil during cooking was enough to damage the, the worker's DNA, huh. All right. It's some gnarly stuff again, is massively ultra processed.

And it's got all of these different synthetic, it's already oxidized. Right. It's all of it's. The, I love the analogy of being oxidation in a bottle. You know, but of course, sure. There are, there are some studies showing that it can improve health, different, different parts of health, but we gotta look at all the data.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Sure.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** And so, I don't wanna villainize anything, I don't wanna villainize anything, but if we have a choice, we should probably lean towards the things that humans have been doing for thousands of years that are minimally processed. That we know to be safe over a period of time that we don't have studies just showing, like, as we've consumed more of this stuff, like we're getting more and more obese, we're getting more and more dementia, we're getting more and more heart disease. And we could point fingers, and this has happened over the years, it's the sugar. It's the vegetable oil, it's the this, it's the, that. It's all of it.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** It's all of it together. Right.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yeah.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Yeah. You know, the, the seed oil debate drives me crazy, just like it does you, because if you have a choice of a seed oil versus avocado oil or olive oil on the shelf. Why would you pick something that's massively processed? Maybe it's like 50 cents less or a dollar less, right? It, it's not, I find the price of it. I went to the supermarket to see like, is it a price thing? It's really not a pricing thing 'cause there's, there's a very expensive seed oils out there and there's lower cost avocado oils out there

So my contention is like, why are we arguing about something when we know it's already healthy? We know it's good for us. Does this pick the things that are good for us? Right.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** That's the cool thing today. You know, we have, we have choice.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Right.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** You know, but some people listening, I'm sure they've experienced the paradox of choice as well. There's so, so many options, so many experts saying different things. It could be confusing. So my principle that I would love if you would take on everybody listening, is to ask yourself a simple question. What if humans been doing the longest?

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Right.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** You know, what were, what did my grandparents eat? You know what? This is something I got to eventually, in my clinical practice, working with people every day, and there was a time, you know, 15 years ago where it's like if I was into something, you are gonna be into it.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Yeah.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** If I'm into raw foods, guess what? I'm creating programs around my beliefs at the time. Thankfully, over the span of several years, I had to get honest and say, yes, there are certain people just crushing it, getting great results, but there's always this percentage of people who are not right. And I had to get honest about that. And to do a better job. And everything changed when I started paying attention to the individual person in their life, looking at their sleep quality, asking them about their heritage. Like, what, what did your, where, where's your family come from? Right. So what, what did you eat traditionally? You know, I, a patient for example, that lived in, their grandparents came from Greece.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Right.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Right. And they were dealing with an autoimmune condition.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Mm-hmm.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** So I started to bring up Do, so do you eat the what about this? And they're like, no. You know, my, my grandma, you know, she, yeah. She used to make this stuff, but, you know, I was like, how about we swap this thing out? And we added more of that. She was like, I love that. I love that. Growing up I didn't know that I could have that, you know, just like little things. And also there's this connective tissue there as well for people. But instead of getting into this diet dogma and using some glorified framework.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Oh, for sure.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** I leaned into let's personalize this. And everything is available. Let's do what's best for you. Right.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Right.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Now where you are and giving you the awareness that it's probably gonna change over time too.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** For sure.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** You know, and to give you mental tools and cues to be able to switch things up when you need to.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Right. You know, going back to the culture aspect of this, a lot of people tell me, you know, a lot of my patients tell me like, oh, you know, we're around ultra processed food all the time. Like you mentioned, there's fast food restaurants everywhere. But I feel that your culture is something that you can create around you, right. And so you mentioned your kids. My kids as well, they rarely eat. Any fast food they're eating mostly, you know, whole Foods all the time 'cause that's the culture of our family. We don't have that stuff at home, so it doesn't really matter what they see as we drive down the road.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Right.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** They just know what is okay for our family and why. I think it's key to explain why. Our friends also have a similar mindset and so we kinda create this culture around us that ignores the external influences of marketing. That's why like red dye to me, like yes, it was a massive thing. It got outlawed or, you know, FDA took it off the, the made it a banned substance, but it didn't really matter to us 'cause nothing we ate had red dye in any way.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Exactly.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Right.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yeah. So I don't eat ring, ring pops anymore, anymore. And you know, these fake frostings or whatever, right? Marshmallows and things like that. The chocolate covered cherries. That was another one of my grandparents. My grandfather's favorite thing was this marriage, you know, cherries?

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Yes.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** A chocolate covered. But, you know, this is the point. And by the way, just a sidebar with that, with this ban.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Yeah.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** All right.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Let's talk about that.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** I've been talking about this for years.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Sure.



**SHAWN STEVENSON:** With the FDA and their policies because it's just so many holes in, in the business. So many, right. And there's supposed to be this watchdog, but it's not really like that.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** That's a perfect example of the food industry just having way too much influence on the FDA, right?

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yeah. Oh, but listen, listen to this. So this was back in 1997. Alright. So right around there, right around 1997, the FDA and I went and pulled it up. This is the thing about it, there's been so many times that I'll find something and I'll popularize it that's right on the FDA website and then it'll be gone. All right. But right as of right now they publish this, it's on their website that they intended to remove the, the red dye back in the nineties, but they, in, in their own words, didn't have the resources to do it. Subsequently, though, they banned it in cosmetics.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Yeah, I saw that. Right.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** But they not in food. And so they literally said they were gonna band it in the nineties, but did not do it because of lack of resources. Now they're incredibly wealthy. Most of the money comes from the pharmaceutical industry, about 75% of their scientific review budget is from the pharmaceutical industry. But this is, it was just a matter of importance. And also, again, most people being unaware and so my question was, alright, we're okay. So they're, they're making this big move now, banning red dye number three. I, I just invited people to think about. Did they just start with number three?

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Yeah.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Was there a red number two? Was there one? What was it? Is there a four?

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Exactly.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** All of these have been banned back in like the sixties. You know, uh, red ye number one was like causing liver cancer. And you know, the list goes on. Gastrointestinal lesions by a certain yellow dye, huge outbreak in digestive distress, like re hospitalizations by kids.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Mind blowing.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** After a Halloween and these kids consuming a, a orange dye, for example. And then it gets banned, right. So it's been this pattern and the pattern, what I want to wake people up to is that it's usually replaced with something that is similarly toxic.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Absolutely.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** The food industry is like, okay, that didn't work. Let's create something other synthetic and then wait around for years, often decades for us to get caught. Instead of what is real, what is natural, what have humans been doing the longest? Yes, we can color things right. Other countries have done this successfully, but the stuff looks different. Right. The cereal, which again, that's argu, arguable. Should we be eating that in the first place?

But it looks different. Yeah. In Japan versus the United States or you know, in, in Great Britain, whatever the case might be, every country has its issues. But we are the king of these problems. We are the king of allowing all manner of this devastation. And so, you know, to just lean back into this and mentioning what you, what you shared, and we actually, we went on a hike together with our, with our two sons. And you know, just being able to understand that we get to create the culture.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Absolutely.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Right. And so we have a larger culturescape that we're all existing in. We have a macro culture. But we can create a microculture in our own household.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Right.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** I promise you, my son, and he will tell you this, my youngest son. He's not missing McDonald's.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Not at all.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** He isn't. It's not a big deal to him. Now, I'm also going to share this from the perspective of I understand we live in the world. All right. And he, he goes to school, he goes to birthday parties. We are not the, and I of course, like I've been through these levels, right. So, and we still have friends who do this. They might bring their own kids, slice a cake to the party. You know, we're not those parents, you know what I mean? So he's ex he's been exposed to things. But here's the cool thing, because of the culture, he knows what it feels like.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Sure.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** He knows what it feels like when he eats this stuff and he doesn't feel that great. Right. And so he is just like, this just happened. He just had a basketball game. He's 13 and he just had a basketball game with his school. Moms got together, bought a bunch of pizzas, and I was like, I don't want it. I'm like, B, it's cool. Just, you know, like, you're not, he's like, nah, I'm good. He doesn't want it.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Your son and my son are the, you know.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** But he doesn't want it. No. No.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** And, and you know, like our sons are very similar. Um, my son will pass by McDonald's on the way home. He's starving. I'm like, you wanna just stop by McDonald's and get something? He's like, no, I don't wanna go to McDonald's. I don't wanna get home and eat it home. Or let's go to, you know, a restaurant where we can get something that is real food. And I'm not saying that to brag to the audience or anything like that. It is just like you said, it's a microculture that you create within your family and the priorities that you put as top of the list for your family. Right. And so if food is not one of the top things in the priority list for your family. I don't know what else would be there. right?

I mean, obviously it's like food is part of your, you know, Maslow's hierarchy, right? It's like shelter, food safety. We need to make this a priority for our family and make this something that we put some intentionality behind, I think. Right.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** We just don't know that it matters.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Right.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** When it really boils down to it. I know that I didn't, and I did really well in school, but this, I was oblivious to this. Yeah.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** I think we all were, right? Yeah.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Biology class in college. Alright. My son's school now, they have a class, his, his science class is called The Science of You. Alright. So they're relating it back to him.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Oh, that's fantastic.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** I'm, this is what we're paying for. Yeah. All right. One little, one little up, you know, but things change over time, and it's often difficult of course to have our kids in these environments, you know? But that's a whole, that's with the education system that will, that's a conversation for another day. But when I was in my university biology class, it didn't relate to me. Right. So we're studying the cell.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** You learn more about the frog than you do you. Right?

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yeah. Why am I dissecting this worm? What is this? You know? And I get it. There's some people that are fascinated by that, but it didn't relate to me. I was not made aware, nor was my teacher even aware.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Sure.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** That when we're looking at this cell membrane. That, that membrane is made by your menu.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Right, right. Absolutely.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** That the mitochondria is made by the meals that you eat. That the nucleus is made by the nutrients that you eat.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** That's so true.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Right. There's a disconnect. The cells that we're studying is, I'm looking at food. It's food. We get to choose what we're making these things out of and are certain things that will damage these cells.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Sure.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** And there are certain things that will help 'em to thrive. And so creating more connective tissue, helping people to realize how powerful food, like you're choosing what you're making your cells out of. You get to choose.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Right.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Do you want cells or do you want really healthy, resilient, vibrant cells. All the way to the mitochondria as well. Are you giving yourself the new nutrients needed for your mit to stimulate?

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Sure.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Mitochondrial genesis. Like to create more mitochondria. Are you getting enough magnesium in your diet, for example? Are you getting in all these different things from real food predominantly to help your body do all the cool stuff that it can do to keep you healthy, to feel good? And again, most of us, it's a very superficial thing. When I was in college and you know, I had a college level nutritional science class. Big auditorium class.

Just thinking back on what I thought food was and I left there with the same thought, which is food is about basically weight loss.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Yeah.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Or weight gain. You know, very rudimentary, like Right. Make sure you tell people to get all their vitamins and minerals. What the hell does that even mean?

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Right.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** And this was the time of the food pyramid, by the way.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Yeah, exactly.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** You know? But even, and this is an important point too, when we were taught about getting all your vitamins in, in, in minerals. Like for example, you know, make sure people are getting vitamin C.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Yeah.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** There's different forms of vitamin C.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Sure.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Different forms of vitamin D, B12, magnesium, the list goes on and on. There's so many different forms now. People know there's different forms of magnesium, but we were not taught any of this. No. Right. It's just like, because of that framing, it's just, take a pill. Take a multivitamin and you're good. Take your syndrome.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Right, right.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** That synthetic, whatever, you know, and just Right. But it's a, looking at our health through this very microscopic lens when in reality food is what makes us who we are. When you look in the mirror, you're seeing the food that you've eaten.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Yeah. Every cell in our body is made out of food at some point and is constantly in renewal. And the substrates for those cells come from the, the foods that we put into our mouths every single day and from the environment that we expose ourselves to. And it's such an important point 'cause, you know, we're not so separated from the foods biologically we are made out of them.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yeah. And if you think about that very point, how distant are we now from where our food comes from?

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Absolutely. Very distant.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** You know.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** I, I would, I mean, what percentage of Americans have grown any of their own food in their homes? Right.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** It's ex exceedingly rare. Exceedingly rare. And even farmers today. It's monocropping. It just like, it's the whole game has changed.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Yes.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** You know, this reminds me of, of the red dye. There, I, I remember growing up again, like having these little juices. Yeah. I always mm-hmm. A fan of different sodas and things like that, but I really love the drink. Yeah. Like grape drink, apple drink.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Yes.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Right. And I would get this, this grape drink or fruit punch was my favorite. Right. From Prairie Farms. Prairie Farms. It's right there. It said, farmer owned this

little banner on it. It says 0% juice on there. It's like propylene glycol, high fructose Corsair water, red dye number, whatever, you know, blue dye. And in reality, again, it created this perception of wholesomeness. It's from Prairie Farms, right? No, I, and it's farmer owned, like this is, this is wholesome. It's, they're delivering this, it's on store shelves.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Sure.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** But I don't know many farmers, like in the, not even traditional sense, but just in the sense of being a farmer, who's like whipping up propylene glycol. Yeah. And red dye 40 and making all corn course syrup in a vat like it's breaking bad, you know, like he, they're not cooking up.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** That's not a farmer.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** That's not, that's not a farmer. No. You know, so even farming, in the true sense of what that is, is exceedingly rare. Right. You know, but it doesn't have to be that way. And there are, this is the same thing in our, in our country, the grassroots movements to change things that red dye getting banned, that was through a grassroots movement.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Absolutely. Right.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Of science backed entities who can just compiling all this data over time and forcing the FDA's hand. Whereas in Europe in particular, companies have to prove, and this is not true across the board, but largely that the newly invented synthetic ingredient is safe.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Yeah.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Before adding it right here, it can be added and then it's on the public, oftentimes in grassroots movements to say, this is harming us. Let's do something about it. Because of the grass. Right? Generally recognized as safe. Right. This loophole, Matt, it's not even a loophole. It's a gaping, it's a gorge. I just saw a billboard for a movie Gorge. Yeah. It's a gorge in our system.



**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** It's, it's a gorge in our system. Right. I mean, look, and there's enough stuff out there that a, a great change right now. Like we don't need any more new chemicals in our food. Right. We don't need another..

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Red thousand is good. You know, that's, that's enough.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** I mean, it's a good time in the current state of where our society is, just put a stop to all of this and say, prove it safe before you put in our food, right? And, and you brought up another great point is the deceptive marketing practices of these food companies as well, which is, so it's just irritating and annoying now to even walk into a supermarket and see the stuff in green boxes and marked as healthy and good for you. And it's just trickery. And the falsification involved just in plain sight. It's just mind blowing right.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Now, the, the cool thing is, but it's also, it's a paradox because it, this shouldn't be like this anyways, but now we have real data on this and we're able to see where the bodies are buried essentially with these food companies and see their practices. There's, and actually I cited one of the studies, in the East Smarter Family Cookbook on marketers for serial companies.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Right.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** And using very specific tactics to manipulate children, right. And so one of the studies that they did was, um, bringing in a bunch of kids and having them to have some cereal. This is a new cereal that we're creating and rating their enjoyment on a, a five face smiley face scale, right? How many smiley faces do you give us? Now they give the kids a serial, same serial, but has a mascot on the box, has a cartoon mascot. The kids across the board rated the serial higher.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Sure.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** That had the mascot higher on the smiley point scale. Because they related to the cartoon character. Right. And companies, they've been known this, they use

this, they created, so the eyes are looking a certain way when you, when you go down the aisle, obviously the colors and these cereals, listen, be honest.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Toucan Sam with the big eyes.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Man, toucan Sam, bro. But these.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Toucan, Sams probably killed a lot of kids. The people, you know, over dime, you know, I mean, it's like that two, that is, is garbage, right?

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Tony the Tiger, right? You know, these pop guys, you know, they're all just like, there's a.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** There's a Public Enemy number one.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** There's a movie on Netflix. It was done by, I think Jerry Seinfeld created it. And it was a story about Poptart's origin and this battle.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Oh, I didn't know about this.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Between like post and, you know, whatever the other company was. And so they had these different characters, right? So like the, the, the serial characters. And so here's the thing, we have to, again, we are, we're born into conditions where we don't realize it's happening, right? I didn't know. I just wanted the fruity Pebbles because they tasted good. And I had a great food experience with it.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Sure. And the crunch. .And they have scientists that like actually are food scientists that put Yeah.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** They're genius.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Maces, they're geniuses. And for anyone out there that thinks that this is not an extremely intentional lot of money put behind every marketing drawing, the colors,

the, like you said, the, you know, the, the kids in a room, the focus groups. The scientists that study the texture of food, the addictability of food. Like it is a massive billions of dollars being spent on this to get you addicted to it and get you to buy it.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** One of the greatest inventions, and also demise of us, is a gas chromatograph. So scientists were able to isolate flavors, right. So what makes that cherry flavor? What's the chemistry that makes that flavor? And now they could add that cherry flavor to things that aren't cherry. All right. And so this really muddied up the waters of our food intelligence. Because there's something really special about us as humans out, there's a lot of really special things, of course. But I'm just thinking about my wife. But there are a lot of things special about us, but we have a very diverse and intelligent flavor palette.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Yes.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Alright. The nose that we have, we can't sniff out. Like, you know, we think like comparatively like that dog can smell. Like who's got the cocaine at the airport? Yeah. We can't do that, but we can taste the most subtle things, you know, and this is, if you've never thought about, like, do you think about people with the wine tasting, for example? I taste a hint of, you know, um.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Oh, absolutely. Right.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Cherry dirt and a rusty nickel. Like, you know what I mean? Like you could find these really unique flavors, but understanding that and understanding how these food manufacturers manipulate our senses. And this is a very powerful evolutionary adaptation that we developed our, our sense of taste and our sense of smell, because the taste of things were indicative of the nutrition in it.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Sure.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** So there's something called post ingested feedback. All right. And so for example, if we were to eat a real cherry, our body would take notes essentially in a way, a memory of what nutrients came along with that flavor.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Right. So doing this all subconsciously, like, we have no idea in our brain, but.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** For thousands upon thousands, upon thousands of years, this is just how it is. And so, if you think about what a craving is, right, why do we have it? Yeah. Did our, we are just messed up. Our design is just messed up. Why do we crave things? This is an evolutionary adaptation. It's an advantage to know when we need something. We have to have a craving for it. Alright, so we'll use that cherry example. Okay. We got some vitamin C, we got a food source of melatonin. That's interesting. Yeah. In this cherry we got some anthocyanins. We've got whatever.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Sure.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** So you get all these different nutrients and when you start to get deficient on a certain thing, your body's like, you know those cherries had that vitamin C that you need, you should go find some cherries. Right. Great plan. Right. Great way of living. Today, it's no longer the case because our flavor palette has been hijacked, right. And so we develop cravings and intentionally for all these abnormal things that post ingested feedback has been massively disrupted. And so if we are deficient on something we don't even know what to do. What it usually brings about, by the way, is hunger. We're deficient, whether it's magnesium, vitamin C, omega threes, whatever.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Sure, sure.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Your body is screaming at you like, I'm deficient.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Yeah.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Bring some food in here so I can get this stuff. Right. I'm gonna go grab some Doritos at a sandwich. Right. Because it we keep feeding this infinite hole. And not getting the things that our body's actually calling out for. So this is one of the big hallmarks with taking back control of our metabolic health and, and beating obesity is addressing this epidemic of hunger. You know, we've gotta address our micronutrient needs. Micronutrient

and macronutrient deficiencies leads to chronic overeating. Right, right. We need the things that our body's actually asking for. So we can just get to baseline, right? Got a quick break coming up. We'll be right back.

Summer is here and it's time for some summer fun. Sun's out, guns out, or buns out. However you wanna slice and dice it. It's time to get out there and enjoy life and enjoy fitness. Now, as you know, especially when it's hotter outside and you're sweating, you need to make sure that you are staying optimally hydrated and making sure that you're getting in adequate amounts of electrolytes. Electrolytes are key minerals that carry an electric charge, that enable your body to do all the stuff that your body does. Whether this is your heart beating, your brain functioning, your muscles moving, everything that's going on in your body, electrolytes are required to do those jobs. Three of the most critical electrolytes that you need to target, sodium, potassium, and magnesium.

There's a sodium potassium pump that's behind pretty much all of our cellular processes. And the energy that our cells are making via the mitochondria is deeply dependent on not just the sodium potassium pump, but magnesium to be present in order to actually make new mitochondria. The bottom line is for optimal physical performance and cognitive performance, we've gotta make sure that we're being proactive in getting ourselves hydrated and utilizing the very best electrolytes possible.

Number one, get plenty of electrolytes through eating real foods. It's super important, but also this is a great place to supplement. But when you do that, you wanna make sure that you're getting the number one clean electrolyte supplement in the world. It has no sugar, no artificial dyes and results that you really notice. And right now, just in time for summer, the number one electrolyte supplement in the world from LMNT has a brand new lemonade salt that you're absolutely going to love. Now, this is for a limited time, so take action on this right now. And of course, with every purchase, you're also going to get a free sample pack where.

You're gonna get to try out two packets of each of their four most popular drink mixed flavors. It's amazing and as always, LMNT has a no questions money back guarantee, so you have nothing to lose and only better hydration and performance to gain. Go to

drinkLMNT.com/model right now to take advantage of this. That's drinkLMNT.com/model and hook yourself up for this summertime special again. Try out their limited time you get to try out their brand new lemonade salt plus that incredible free sample pack. Head over to drinkLMNT.com/model and now back to the show.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** I think you said something really key there, which is micronutrient and macronutrient deficiency leads to hunger. So like you were saying, you know, another great example is pika, right? That's when people eat dirt because their body knows it needs iron and they just, they're eating dirt Chalk.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yeah. Chalk.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Right, exactly 'cause they're trying to find iron. That's this, that's this built into our neural pathways as almost a a, like a subconscious reaction about what we need. To your point about the cherries, right? And so I think when you're hungry, it might not be that you're low on energy. It might be some, a lot of times that you're hungry for nutrition, like real nutrition. So nutrient-dense food. And that's why when you're eating the ultra processed food, which is minimally nutritious, very low nutrient density. You stay hungry. And then you keep eating more and more of it, which leads to obesity.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yeah.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Right.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Sounds like a great business model.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Right, exactly. If you're trying to sell more food. But I mean, for people that are having trouble with, and this is one of the first things I do for people that are having trouble with weight loss, is we look at their micronutrient levels and we find massive amounts of micronutrient deficiencies in a lot of people. They're like, how am I deficient? I'm eating all the time. Well, you're eating food that's not nutrient dense. That's the issue. Yeah, it's, it's such a, it's such a key unlock. I think, you know, a lot of people talk about calories in,

calories out is what leads to weight loss or weight gain, but it's just such a simplistic view of what's really happening.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yeah. I love the analogy, of course, I've said this many times over the years that, you know, it's looking at the human body as a calculator.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Right.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** And it's just, we are so much more dynamic and, you know, and even, you know, one of the things I did in my last book in, in E Smarter, was I took people through, and this is the first book to do, to do this, and I'm honored to say, where the hell Calorie came from.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Yeah.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Right. Yeah. So going back to the origins, which started in physics, this had nothing to do with nutrition. And, you know, looking at how calories were measured, but how they're actually put on packages today is radically different. It's, they're not using a bomb calorimeter and like incinerating the food and seeing how much it eats the water and all that. No. They're just using, it's called the at water system. It's just a general, it's kinda like grass. Yeah. You know, it's just like, it's sort of this. You know, whatever. But even in that, in its intention, your body's not a bomb colorimeter. When you don't incinerated a food.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** No.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** All right. Your body, there's certain, there's a lot of things in a food that aren't even digested.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Right.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Or they're net, you know, it's just like we are so much more complex and looking through that lens is. It is really making people, it is, this created so much confusion and so much unnecessary struggle. And, and I appreciate because I've been, that,

I've been in this field for 22 years now. Where we're looking at calories. Right. I've been through that phase.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Same, same.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** And I appreciate the people who found great success with that, but you're probably going to find that most people are not successful following this calorie management idea. Because it's not looking at how the food impacts your overall metabolic health. Because your body, how you, how your body associates with the calories from the exact same food can be dramatically different from week to week.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Right.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** All right. And there's certain foods that. There's cer, there's certain conditions, right? So if people have issues with their thyroid, for example, this can slow their metabolic rate dramatically.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Sure. Absolutely. Right.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** And yet they're on it, they're eating a thousand calories a day because they're told like, I just gotta cut my calories. And they're not, not only not losing weight, they could be even gaining weight. How's that possible? How is that possible? The, the body is smarter than your calculator. Alright. It, it matters. It is a thing. It is something that we try to use to make sense of something we can't make sense of. It is far too complex where we are today. Just one of the things is the impact of our microbiome on how our body absorbs and metabolizes calories. Alright. We've got some really cool studies on this and labels of like fat bacteria for sure. And being able to absorb more from the food that you're eating. Right. But this is, we're gonna bring us back to a very important point here. The quality of the food itself.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Right.



**SHAWN STEVENSON:** All right. There's a study that was done in food and nutrition research and they had test subjects to eat sandwiches. One was considered to be a whole food sandwich. Which was whole grain bread and cheddar cheese. Alright. Versus a ultra processed sandwich, which was white bread and cheese product. Right, which is like craft singles. Right. After compiling all the data, and by the way, the sandwiches are the exact same amount of calories.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Mm-hmm.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Fats, proteins, carbohydrates. Same. Should impact them the same. When people ate the ultra processed food sandwich, they had about a 50% reduction in their calorie burn after eating that sandwich.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** There you go.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Their body just held on to more of the calories. They just consumed for some strange reason.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Wow.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** The food itself is a factor. It's not just the calories, it's how your body associates with those calories.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Yeah.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** And I can go on and on with that, but you know, it's just. We are oversimplifying the wrong stuff.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Yes. You know, so I agree. You know, the same goes for exercise not to get off food, but the same goes for exercise. I think. You know, I grew up in a time where if you want to lose weight, you just stay on that treadmill and keep burning calories on a little calorie meter, a little digital. Read out how many calories you burn. So if you eat a donut, then you'd go on the treadmill for an hour and try to burn 300 calories to make up for that

donut. And what happens, the body's so much more complex than that. Sure you burn 300 calories, but now you're hungry.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Mm.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** You're inflamed. You are, you know, you've, you're dehydrated. There's so much more going on.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Your insulin levels are bonkers.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Exactly. Exactly. And so these are all the things that people need to think about. Sure. Like you said, if, if you had a bomb calorimeter, it would all work out. But we are not bomb calorimeters. We are a complex system of not just our biology, but the biology of the microbiome that's inside of us as well, right. And the microbiome controls our hunger probably even more than our brain does because of the signals from our gut, through our brain, through our microbiome.

And this is all we need to consider all of this. But in reality, it's a lot simpler than having to worry about any of this stuff because in reality, going back to the beginning of this conversation is just swearing off ultra processed food. Right. 95% of the time don't eat anything ultra processed. Sure. Once in a while you go to a birthday party, you need to, fine. But for the most part you shouldn't. And create a culture around that for your family and the people you hang with.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yeah. Just let's make it the exception and not the rule. Right. And so I'm a big, like we live in the world. We live here in the United States. That's where this is getting recorded. There is a lot of like food party Yeah. Stuff. All right.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Absolutely.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** There's a lot of mouth pleasure out there. Yeah. No diddy, no Diddy. I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** That's true though.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** There's a lot of, of of different things. We gotta edit that and we gotta take that. I was two sisters.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** I like my blood.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** It's because you came in man. I was like, I dropped it in there. Alright. So anyways, yeah. There are a lot of incredible things for us to enjoy. Right. To experiment with. But if we're coming into this with a foundation of real food, you know, number one, chances are this other stuff isn't gonna be that attractive. And you're gonna notice when you have it, like it's just not gonna taste the same. I remember after I'm from St. Louis. Alright, so one of the iconic places in St. Louis is Emo's Pizza. Thin crust. St. Louis style pizza. All right. I grew up, I was probably like, at least like 2.5% Emos pizza. All right.

And I remember, you know, it was probably 10 years of working in health and eating real food. And I, my, my oldest son, he wanted Emos Pizza for a birthday party with, with his friends. It was like paintball and Emos was like the things that he wanted. And so I remember taking a piece of the pizza and I was like, this doesn't taste real. You know, this tastes like pasty, you know, it's just like, it's not like I remembered. Right. You know, and I just wasn't impressed. It didn't want, it didn't encourage me to have more, you know,

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** What happened to my pizza.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Right. Right. Now we do have those moments as well, but the best thing that we can do, and this is gonna circle us back, you know, just to complete this, is let's make it so that it's easy to eat good things. With this being said, coming from where I come from, I love flavor. Right? I, I, I'm not one of these people that's like, eat to live. You gotta eat to live, don't live to eat. That's actually abandoning. And again, just right. As a scientist, that's abandoning reason because what drives us to eat things is that they taste good. Right. It's built into us.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** We're not wired to eat, to live.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Right.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Exactly.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** We're kind of wired up to gorge on things. Exactly. You know, that tastes good. Exactly. And, but also, again, living in a natural environment so that we can survive. You know, but we've evolved this very unique flavor palette and we're driven to eat things that taste good, and that's okay. Let's support that. Let's not go so far that we are hyperstimulating and damaging ourselves with all this fake stuff. Let's find the joy in real food. Right. And so part of doing this is, again, creating that microculture in our own household. It's easier to make healthier food decisions based on the data if we're eating with our friends and family on a consistent basis.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Sure.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** So another study, and this was for me about access because growing up after I left, living from living with my grandmother, living with my mom, my stepbrother, stepsister, stepfather, this is my little brother and sister and my mom. I can count on my hands how many times we ate together.

And I'm not exaggerating. I can count on my hands. It's probably a holiday here or there. But it's usually me and my brother and sister just getting food and eating somewhere. Yeah. Right. Sometimes my mom would eat with us sometimes. But most of the time it's just like grab and go. We scatter. And had my mom known the data, I'm sure she could have made an adjustment and just been more intentional about us eating together. But she didn't know, just like most parents do not know. I know that I didn't know until I got this data. Right. And so this study analyzed the eating behaviors of my minority children who were generally in the context of a low-income environment like I come from. And the researchers, because that was my thing like my mom wasn't around that much. You know, my stepfather wasn't around that much.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Like they were working.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** This sounds like this data is for people who have access. No, but what they found was that when these children ate four meals with a caregiver, you know, an adult. Somebody who, you know, they're a parent. Four meals a week could have been any meal, breakfast, lunch, dinner, didn't matter. Four meals a week. These kids ate dramatically less ultra processed foods, namely chips and soda.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Mm-hmm.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** They ate five, serving five or more servings of fruits and vegetables five days a week.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Wow.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** All right. And obviously they had far better health outcomes.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Yeah.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** But the researchers noted this was the rub when the television was never or rarely on during meal times.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Makes sense.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** All right. There's something about that TV being on, you know? Yeah. And so this was a super encouraging for me because no matter where we are, no matter where we come from, we can be intentional about eating together because it's gonna support the health outcomes of everybody, especially our children. Let me share something for adults. Tech workers. So a study was done looking at workers at IBM and they found this is gonna get to why this works. They found that the, the participants who were able to consistently get home, "get home in time for dinner". Their work morale stayed high work, stress stayed manageable, productivity stayed high, but as soon as things started cut into their ability to eat dinner with their families. Work morale starts to plummet, stress elevates,

and the productivity goes down. Yeah. This is captain obvious stuff, but we don't think about it when we're in it. All right. Eating with their families helped them to metabolize stress.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Yeah.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** It helped them to process the stress that they were carrying from the work that they're doing. We need that outlet. We need to "unplug", but what we usually do is we go from one plug to the next.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Sure.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Right? We go from that plug in, our stressful job or whatever the case might be, traffic. Right. Now you, the people only knew what you had to do to get here today.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** I know, right?

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Because of the fires. But that, and then going and just getting right on technology, we're not getting a chance. There's a difference between relaxation and restoration. There's a difference. Right?

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Absolutely.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** And we're not getting a chance to actually switch over to that parasympathetic. What's the nickname? Rest and digest. Right? Rest and digest nervous system. We're chronically in fight or flight. And we might have the feelings of being relaxed, right. We're laying, watching tv, eating snacks, whatever. And there's a place for that. But if you want to be restored. Sit down and eat with your family. Eat with people that you care about.

Yeah. Be around real people because our chemistry change, changes. And this is getting to the point that IBM study was highlighting something, which is a big part of this is being around people you care about. Our chemistry changes our, of course thoughts create chemistry in our bodies. But a lot of stuff is happening unconsciously.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Sure.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** We start producing more things like oxytocin. And this is one of the hormones that it, of course there's been a lot of revelations recently. People call it the cuddle hormone or love hormone, but this is one that is really risen to the top because it has a nullifying effect on cortisol.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Amazing.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Right. And I talked about this years ago. My first book, sleep Smarter. I talked about oxytocin. And so now we know that that's one of the things kind of counteracting helping you to metabolize stress. Such a good point to calm down oxytocin. There are a ton of different neurotransmitters and, and hormones that are changing when we are around people that we care about. Because what it's activating really is a overall feeling of safety.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Safety, man.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Right. Feeling seen, feeling like we matter, feeling a part of something. These are all deep psychological human needs, right. So this is more of the kind of meta perspective of what's happening, physically. A change is happening with that switch over from the parasympathetic, from the sympathetic to the parasympathetic. But I wanna give a very practical, psychological thing. When we sit down and we eat with our children, and I, I wanna give some tips too.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Sure.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** If that's okay, please.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** I would love them. Yeah.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Okay. When we sit down and eat with our children, which is again, it's becoming an, it is an endangered activity in, in our society today. Our children today, more than ever, even when their, when they're with their friends. They're not with their friends.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Right. That is true.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** They're together, but they're separate. They're together, but they're on their devices. I've seen it. I've seen these kids hanging out and they're all on their phones.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Yes.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** They might share a meme, little laugh, like, look at this meme, but they're disconnected. All right. This is their chance. And they're missing. And, and of course you see the obviously massive epidemics of mental health.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Sure.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Metabolic health, the list goes on and on. There's a reason, part of sitting down and eating with your children. You get to see them. They get to feel seen. When the phone, when the technology is not in the way someone is seeing them and letting them know that they matter. You get a chance to listen to them, to listen to the sound of their voice, to hear what's going on in their life. And we need this. We need to feel like we matter. We need to feel like our voice is important. Right. And so we're helping to feed and putting in these psychological nutrients that help our kids to thrive.

Right, and the same thing for us too. You know, but we're gonna miss out on that if we're not being intentional about it. And so one of the tips is, and this is one of the most science backed things you could do right now, when you have that family dinner or dinner with a significant other friend, leave the phone out of it. Don't even have it sitting on the table. It should not be the table be all possible. Right. Because one of the studies that I shared in the book, even having it in, in the line of sight.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Yes.



**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Led to disruptions. People literally, they're strapped to these brain monitors, all this stuff. Their brains were distracted just when their phone was near them. Because that phone, our brains like. It's always looking to automate. Your brain knows there's a lifetime of goodies in that phone. Right? And so you might be trying to listen to your friend, but there's part of your brain. It's like, yo, there's some stuff on Instagram right now. Like, I could. So getting the phone out of your line of sight, putting it away. I don't.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Not even in your pocket, I would say.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yeah.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Because then you're anticipating a buzz. Right. You're anticipating a buzz. You're anticipating it for to ring.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** They said it's too easy. Right. Is it on your person? No. Was it in a book bag? Whatever the case might be. Right. A lot of times, and I'm just being a thousand, I'm, I'm the guy who doesn't bring their phone into the restaurant. If we are, you know, even if we sit down to watch a movie together, I leave my phone in the kitchen, you know, on the kitchen counter our table, our di, make your dinner table a, a phone free zone.

Yeah. Make it a phone free zone. And some families have because of the extent of the addiction. You know, some families have like a little lockbox, everybody puts their phone in before dinner or whatever. It doesn't have to go that far, but make it a phone free zone. But here's the rub, because we're addicted, we have to replace it with something of equal or greater value. You can't just be like, get off your phone John, you know, Sarah, get off your phone. Come eat dinner. We're gonna have a nice family dinner. Yeah. Well, listening to this really handsome guy on Darshan's show, and he said, I'm sorry, I'm just kidding. I'm just kidding. But to replace it with something of greater or equal value.

So what does that look like? Being intentional about creating something that is memorable and enjoyable for our kids. Now, this is where it gets, this is where the work comes in. All right. We have a culture that's like something for nothing. Right. All right. Easy. We want it easy. But in reality, every you get to choose your heart

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Yeah.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Because if you're not doing this, you're gonna see the fallout in your family and in your health.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Mm-hmm.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** If you do this, it might be challenging initially, but you're gonna see everybody thriving. And so part of this, I'm just gonna give, give an example of a family that I worked with, and they have multiple kids. All right? So, two kids and the two kids have drastically different personalities. All right?

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** They always do.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Of course, of course. All right. And so one of the kids is very like, detail oriented, you know, likes to know what time everything's happening. You can cater to that, but you have to pay attention to your child. You know, let them know what's going on. Maybe, you know, this is, this is another tip actually I'm embedded in here. According to the data, the minimum effective dose was three days a week.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Hmm.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Pick which days those are. Yeah.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Make it always those three days.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Monday, Wednesday, brunch on Sunday. Whatever the kid, whatever looks like for you and your family. But schedule it. This is another science backed tip because it creates a tangibility.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Sure.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** We got all this other stuff on the calendars. I just saw one of your employees out here. Her calendar look bonkers.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** I, I saw that too.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** It made, it made me a little uncomfortable. All right. It's a lot of stuff on the calendar, but where's her time for her? Where's her time for her family? Yeah. Like she's gotta make sure that that's on the calendar too. Schedule it, make it real. It creates some tangibility to it. Also, three meals a week is the minimum effective dose. And so, circling back to invite that child in, who knows, you know, they like to be on their technology. They're a big fan of desserts. Right. So just knowing, like, okay. So, you know, tonight we're gonna have the, um, the..

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** The pumpkin.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** The pumpkin muffins. Right. The pumpkin muffins from the East Smarter Family Cookbook. It's gonna be the dessert, or you can ask them, like get them involved, was another thing that was very helpful with them, is to get them involved by giving them choices. And this is pretty true for all of us. But like, Hey, do you want the frozen yogurt cherry pops or do you want the pumpkin muffins tonight?

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Sure.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Right. Oh, oh, pumpkin muffins. Right. And so just getting them involved and what is to come. Another thing was, and this for the other kid, loved games, right? Loved like activities. Right. And so you can embed that in to, you know, show some attention to the other kid, right. And so knowing that after dinner they're gonna get to play a game or, I had no idea, but there's some families that actually have games during dinner.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Right.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** So they're like maybe playing a board game or, you know, some kind of a, you know, charades or whatever the case might be. Heads up, you know. there's so many

different things, but like bringing in things that are memorable. So now I'm gonna use myself an example. For whatever, and this was not, I'm not gonna say it's not intentional, but it just ev it just kind of happened, you know? We were having family dinners, but for somehow, some way we ended up like, it would like evolve into like dance battle or rap battle.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Nice.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Alright. And so it evolved to the place where my youngest son had an iPad and somebody would like, make a beat on the iPad. Right? Little like whatever, little rickety beat. And then it got to a place where I, I went on Amazon and bought a microphone and just like, we literally passed around a microphone.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Love that.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** It just became part of family dinners. Yeah.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Yeah.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** And what you, what you focus on expands. What you focus on expands. The week that this cookbook came out, I went on Good Morning America and it was cool. It was fun. But one of the most memorable experiences of my life, I went on a show called Sway in the Morning. And Sway was really iconic for being a MTV DJ back in the day. But he's a big part of hip hop culture. And, you know, just within that month, you know, like I know LL Cool J was there, Missy Elliot, all these iconic people in music.

And I went there to, of course, you know, which is amazing. Maybe they might be listening right now. But, Tracy, you know, one of his co-host and his sway, of course, listened to my show, you know what I'm saying? Like, listen, follow me. And you never know who's listening.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Sure.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** And so I came there to talk about empowerment and to just, you know.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Right.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** And it was amazing. Like, it was, it was electric in the room.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Wow.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** You know, you know, just sharing some information about health and taking some questions and things like that. And I thought the interview was over. So when artists come on this show, they freestyle. They do a freestyle rap. I'm not the artist. I'm an author.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Right.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** All right. I'm a scientist. But little did I know when I was walking in, when my, when Sway introduced himself to my, to my two sons, my youngest son is now, he's 13, and my oldest son is, is 24. But at the time they were like two years younger or a year younger, whatever.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** This in New York? Pardon?

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** This was in New York.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** New York, yes. He brought your kids with you and everything. That's great.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** And so when my oldest son ded up, sway, like met him, shook his hand. Yeah. Hugged. He whispered in Sway's ear, my dad can freestyle.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Oh, no way.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** I had no idea.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Your son said that to Sway.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Alright. So I'm sitting there thinking the interview is over. Like that was awesome. Like, I'm ready to go. Go get some food. And then his producer DJ puts on this song, starts putting music on, and like sways just start getting hyped. I'm like, okay, wow, this is interesting. I wonder what's going on here. I'm just, I'm oblivious. And then he was like, I heard there was a, you know, healthy, you know, hyena in the house, whatever. And I'm just like, what is happening? You could see my face on a YouTube video. I'm like, like, wait, what? What is going on? I was like, okay, let's go all. So, you know, I just started freestyling cool. Off of what was in the room, you know?

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** So cool.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** And it was amazing. I, I've never seen them flip out so much with any of the artists that come on there, because it's not expected of me.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Yes. You, you're an author, right?

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** What we focus on expands. A part of my family culture reached its way out, right? To impact the lives of thousands of people that were listening live, maybe, you know, tens of thousands, whatever the case might be. And it was like an extension and the, and the message in that is. Wherever you go, you take your culture with you.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Sure.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** All right. That microculture you create is influential to the larger culture.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Sure.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Potentially if you, if you choose to, to demonstrate it, right. And so I did this freestyle. I was like, I even put my sons into this song, you know, into the bars.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** That's great. That's so cool.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** You know, I brought the cookbook into the bars and you know, it was amazing, man.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** That's awesome.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** And that experience is something that I'll never forget. Yeah. And it was like, again, something that feeds into itself. And so what you will find my message is, what you will find is that when you invest in creating that microculture, you're gonna see it flower and present itself in the most amazing ways you don't expect. Right. I'm not saying you're gonna have to freestyle at a parent teacher conference or anything like that. I'm not saying that you'll, but something magical is going to happen. Some things magical will happen when you choose to create that healthy microculture, no matter what's going out on out there in the world.

You get to decide the culture you create in your own household. Right? Make it easy to be healthy, make it easy for your kids to make good choices. It's gonna take some work. You're going to have to pay attention to your kids. And I'm saying this with love and I, I'm saying this because I've made mistakes too. I'm not, I'm nowhere near perfect. With that being said, our kids need us.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Yeah.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Pay attention to them, see them. A lot of times we don't wanna make that choice. I, I'm just being a thousand. Sometimes it's just like, just need to get, get your ass in here and eat. You know what I'm saying?

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Exactly.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** This isn't a, a democracy. Right. Versus having the energy because I'm taking care of myself.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Sure.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** To be more judicious, to be more patient and kind. Absolutely. And perceptive and pay attention. This is all starts to feed back into itself. It's gonna take some work because. I dunno if anybody's ever seen the show Yellowstone, but.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** I'm sure everyone's that love that show. There could be a beth in the family.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** There could be a beth in the family who doesn't. She's always causing problems at dinner. You might have a family member like that. But love on them. You know them better than anybody. Sure. You know, your significant better, significant other better than anybody. But a lot of times, because we're tired, we're just like, I don't wanna deal with this. I don't want to have to play the game with you. Right. But this, they have their personality. We know what they like, we know what motivates them, what demotivates them. The same with our kids.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Right.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** So do the work, invest in yourself, number one, which is, I I know. It's crazy. It's hard, it's hard to do. And this is, I'm, I'm involved in this too. Invest in yourself, but invest in your family. Pay attention to them. Invite them in. Make them a part of it.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Right.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** All right. The more inputs that you can get, give them choices, you know, but. Follow these tips. Number one, three meals a week. Put on the calendar. That's a minimum effective dose. Do this for yourself and your family. Number two, make it a phone free zone. Alright. Your family deserves this. You deserve it. Number three, it has to be replaced with something of greater or equal value. It's gonna take you to listen to your kids, figure out what that is, and implement those things. Whether it is some kind of artsy thing that happens at dinner, after dinner, you know, singing or.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** We do high low, what the hecks, what's the best part of your day?



The lowest part of your day. And something funny or crazy that happened to you is we call it high low. What the heck. I love that we do it at every single dinner. Brings out some stories about school. Yeah. They get to hear what we did during the day. I hear what they did during the day and they had no idea like what my highs or lows were during the day before this.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Right.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** And so it's been a game changer for us. And then we played like the humming game. Guess what song I'm humming. So exactly like what you're saying. Like, you know, have some structure and intentionality around that dinner moment 'cause this usually for most families, it's the only moment you'll have that day with the family. Right.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** These times are limited, man. You know, like your kids will grow up before you know it. Truly like Right. These are the times, this is when we can really get that time together as well, you know? So take advantage.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Yeah. So you said that was three, I'm sorry I interrupted you. Four. What's four?

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Four. Four would be. How did you know this man? You beat me to it. Which is like in intentionally integrating something that is a unifier.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Oh, okay. Got it. Got it.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yeah. So a gratitude practice. Yes. For example. That's one of the things that we do, we've been doing for years. We'll, we'll share three things that we're grateful for from that day. And I like yours as well. Right. We did, back in the day, we did something along the lines of, you know, how, what did I fail at today?

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Mm. Yeah.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** You know, we did that one for a while, you know, and what these things do, it, it humanizes us as parents. Right. Which is, again, I had this stoic and I, I, you know, I,

my boys still kind of feel that way about me, but it's, they're, they're more, they feel closer to me, right. And they also, the thing that I've noticed, and I've never shared this before, but when I'm not at my best, they're right there to lift me up.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Mm-hmm. Absolutely.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** They pick it up. Yeah. Like because of me and I, it's because I'm not acting like dad has got it all together. Which I might look that way. My wife has said that to me many times. Yeah. But like something I'm like, she's like, but you look so good. I'm like, I'm not good. I'm not good, you know, but just not you men. And it can be difficult, especially for men, but just vocalizing and sharing and that practice has humanized me. And so my kids can relate to me. They can have a idea of like what might be to come and lessons, but also they get to express themselves.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Sure.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** What happens is it's a opener. It's something to. Them talking to get outta there. Like especially my son is 13, you know, his little teenager bag, you know? And just to get him talking and, to again, to feel, to feel heard, to, to be seen. And it opens up things. It's a unifier. The dinner table itself is a unifier.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** It is a unifier. Right.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** So those are, those are four tips.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** That's so powerful, man. I mean, you know, to bring that intentionality and that much structure. Around dinnertime specifically for families is huge. And I think it's, it's a game changer that most people have forgotten. They've maybe not forgotten, but they've deemphasized it in their life. And so if that's the one message you take away from today's podcast is. Focus on that dinner again. And, you know, I read your book all the, you know, what I love about this book is that it's not just a cookbook. Like you learn about nutrition, about the science of family, about structure around dinner, all these things.

You learn so much and you, I could tell you, put your heart and soul into this book for sure. You really have. And it's a beautiful book. And so glad you brought it to me when I was on your podcast. You gave it to me, you know, I read it and you made the recipe.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Who knew that it would turn into a magical moment like that.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Yeah.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Like that was like, it really blew me away. Right. You know, I was not expecting that to happen you know, with you making that the dessert from the book, like, it just, it made, it just, it's not that my heart was like small, like the grinch, but it just made me my heart get bigger.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Sure, sure. Absolutely. Like one of the things, you know, we did at that dinner that we had shared together, and also I do with all my friends and I've done this for years, is even if you're out with some friends, bring some intentionality to it. And just, you know, we did it around the table where we ask one question. Everyone gets to speak and you listen to that one person.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yeah.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** It's called a Jeffersonian dinner. Because, you know, Thomas Jefferson, he couldn't hear outta one year, so he would make everyone speak one at a time. And having, he asked everyone a question and you go around the table, you answer that one question, it really brings what used to be just a random friend dinner into an intentional moment of connection.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yeah.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** By just doing something simple like that. And if you, if you're listening to this podcast, you haven't tried this with your friends or your family, give it a shot. I mean, it really is a powerful thing that bringing the community and connection back to our lives is insanely powerful and beneficial.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yeah, absolutely. Yeah. Absolutely. And I appreciate that, man. It just, that experience with, I'll never forget. I'll never forget that.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Thank you.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** And you know, like you said, um, this was, you know, a lot of. People say this, you know, being a labor of love. But this was, this was my family, you know.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** For sure.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Like, I really opened myself up and, and experimented with these things for many years and working with families, working with individuals over the years. And, you know, for me, this is the best resource that you can have. And I see it now, of course with social media, you see it in people's kitchens all over the world, and which is really am, it's amazing. Like that's, I, I, I couldn't have dreamed of anything better, but I'm a big foodie. So obviously we, we leaned into the, the culture that we, you know, grew up here in the United States with, I love breakfast food. McDonald's breakfast was my thing. So I created like an upgraded breakfast sandwich with all real food ingredients, the sweet potato protein pancakes. Right. And, you know, the, the salmon burgers, everybody's invited by the way, it's inclusive.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Yeah.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Whatever diet framework you prescribe to, whether it's, you know, from vegan to carnivore. But we're just using, because you know, like the veggie burgers out there. They're terrible. Okay. Ultra process.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Super ultra process.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** So it's, there's a veggie. You know, and then there's the classic grass fed beef burger, or if pescatarian, the salmon burger might be my favorite.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Delicious.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Now let me take that back. It depends on the day. Yeah. You know, but right now I'm loving the salmon burger. But also, as you mentioned, there are over 250 peer reviewed studies embedded in the content.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Exactly.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Of the book told in like, in this great story form, like one chapter I put a bunch of like superhero Easter eggs.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Oh yeah. I love that.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** You know, which was really fun because, you know, it's like a big part of my family culture as well. Yeah. So, you know, you could just go through it. It's, it's fun. It's fun to read, but it's also given you all the tools that you need to revolutionize your kitchen culture because that's a part of it too. The, you know, you have to create a vibe for yourself, right. If you're gonna be in the kitchen, you know, giving yourself permission for that. But also..

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Yeah, we didn't get the chance to talk about that a lot, about actually cooking the food.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yeah. Yeah.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** And how much connection that brings back into your life, to the food that you're putting in your body. And then once you start doing that, you don't put chemicals in your body anymore. You understand how much the choices affect your biology when you're making the food. Right. So, sorry to interrupt you, but No. I thought that was an important point that you made in the book too.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yeah. Thank you. Yeah. And you know, again, leaning into the fact that we do have this culture today, we are, we're emo, we're an emoji culture. And so I leaned into that. And so as I'm talking about these, it's just about 40 specific foods they've got a ton of data on. Their efficacy for human health, creating different benefits, whether it's cognitive benefits, gut health or, you know, heart health, whatever the case might be. Supportive of

metabolic health. Cold, fat burning. And there aren't really fat burning foods per se. Yeah. But like, oh wow. This study had, it showed that, you know, this particular food does this with your metabolism. So I use emojis to denote those. You right. So you don't even have to read the studies. Just know, like, okay, this one has the brain emoji, the muscle emoji, heart emoji. And then you'll see those emojis in the recipe section as well. So you can eat for purpose if you're focused on improving your sleep. Right. You can eat some of these recipes that are giving your body these I, I call them good sleep nutrients.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Sure.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** That have the most data affirming how these are involved, and this is one of those things, again, you could have the most fancy pants mattress. Do all the room hacking, biohacking, if you're deficient in the nutrients that create your sleep related hormones and neurotransmitters. You're still gonna struggle. They're still gonna, so these are like basic things that can be addressed in one cookbook. So yeah, it was, it was, it was a lot to put together. And, and like you said, it, I'm so grateful it came out so beautiful and my family's involved in it.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** Yeah, there's some pictures of your family in the book all, all throughout, and it's, it's fantastic. Yeah. Well, man, thank you so much for joining me today, Shawn. I mean, this has been such a great conversation and I love how deep we get, man. I love it.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yeah, me too, me too. This is fun.

**DR. DARSHAN SHAH:** This is so much fun.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Thank you so much for tuning into the show today. I hope that you've got a lot of value out of this. Again, this was truly a powerful conversation. We covered a lot of ground, but it's so great to be able to talk to brilliant minds and just great people like Dr. Darshan Shah. And if you want more from the Extend podcast, definitely pop over and check out his new show. And also listen, listen Linda, we've got some of the most incredible shows

in store for you. Some amazing masterclasses I've been working on and also some of the most mind blowing phenomenal guests.

Alright, so much in store. So make sure to be ready, make sure to stay tuned. Much, much more to come. So take care, have an amazing day and I'll talk with you soon. And for more after the show, make sure to head over to the [model health show.com](http://modelhealthshow.com). That's where you can find all of the show notes. You can find transcription videos for each episode. And if you've got a comment, you can leave me a comment there as well. And please make sure to head over to iTunes and leave us a rating to let everybody know that the show is awesome and I appreciate that so much and take care, I promise, to keep giving you more powerful, empowering, great content to help you transform your life. Thanks for tuning in.