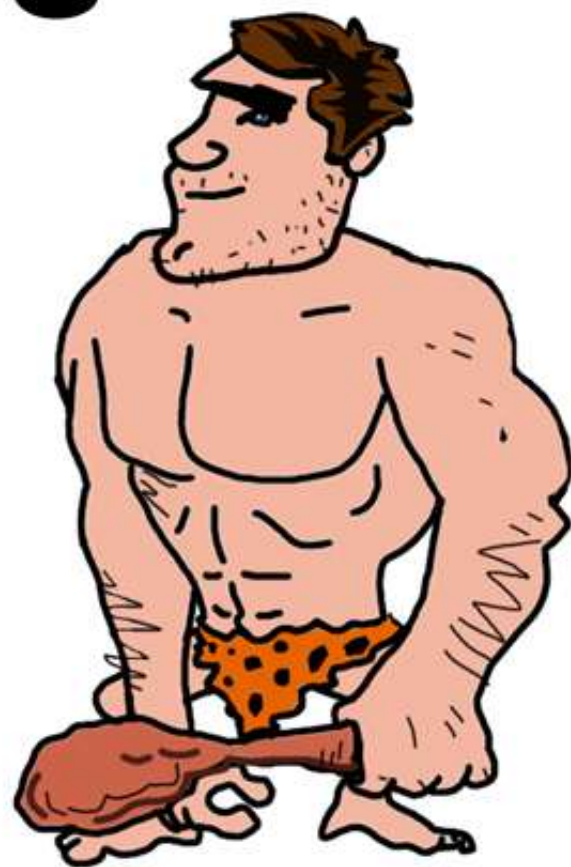


LeanBodyCommunity.com presents...

THE PRIMAL ROCKSTARS

Expert Interviews
with Mark Sisson,
Robb Wolf,
Dean Dwyer,
And Dave Asprey



By Bestselling Author **ABEL JAMES**

About the Author



Abel James is a bestselling author, consultant, musician, and health crusader.

As host of the wildly-popular [Fat-Burning Man Show](#) and author of the best-selling [Intro to the Paleo Diet](#) and [the LeanBody Lifestyle](#), Abel brings Paleo, ancestral, and real food principles to the mainstream. In addition, Abel unveils deceptive marketing practices, exposes misleading corporate propaganda, and highlights powerful special interests that have accelerated the worldwide obesity epidemic and health crisis.

Abel has conducted research studies, presentations, and guest lectures in North America, Europe, South America, Africa and Asia for Fortune 500 companies, the Federal Government, and Ivy League Institutions. Also a [professional musician and singer-songwriter](#), Abel James has toured North America and Europe as the bandleader of several groups including the Dartmouth Aires who were recently awarded Silver on NBC's "The Sing-Off."

A tireless researcher, Abel James completed high school and college in a total of just six years. Distinguished as Valedictorian at New Hampton School, he earned his Artium Baccalaureatus from Dartmouth College and graduated as a Senior Fellow with Honors concentrating in Psychological and Brain Sciences.

Abel recently published "[The Musical Brain](#)," a best-selling exploration into the biological and evolutionary basis of the faculty of music, language, and the brain.

Hailing from the frosty backwoods of Center Harbor, New Hampshire, Abel now calls Austin, Texas home.

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Interview with Mark Sisson

Author of the Primal Blueprint and Mark's Daily Apple



Hey, there! Welcome to the Fat Burning Man Show. I'm your host, Abel James, and thanks so much for stopping by. Today I'm stoked to be here with one of my favorite authors/bloggers/personalities—the Grok man himself, Mr. Mark Sisson.

Mark's a former running and triathlon phenom, best-selling author of the Primal Blueprint and other books, founder of Mark's Daily Apple, one of the most popular health websites in the world, and a **bone fide cool dude**. We had a blast hanging out and chatting last month at PaleoFX and I was totally psyched when he said he'd love to sit down with me and let me pick his brain.

But before we get to the show, I'm going to say (write) a few words...

America is in the midst of a health and obesity epidemic and it's getting worse. **The collective health of this country is falling off a cliff**. Average Joes, grandmas, children – no one is being spared, and I am extremely passionate about reversing this trend and helping as many people I can. We're all in this together, and while we may not be 100% correct about everything,

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I believe with iron-clad conviction that **we have an answer that has the potential of improving the lives of millions of people.**

Through his blog, best-selling books, and various other endeavors, Mark has stoked the fire. The movement is accelerating; I can't think of a better time to interview a seasoned veteran who has been living an evolutionarily-informed life for decades.

So in our interview, Mark and I cover the following:

- Why you shouldn't run a marathon to prove to your ex-girlfriend that you're worthy
- How to build lean muscle as a string-bean ectomorph
- Why you shouldn't throw yams at someone who wants to train while keto-adapting
- And Mark accidentally spills the beans about safe starches—sorry Mark!
- And, of course, we talk about how we're going to beat out Jillian Michaels and take over the world

Alright, let's go hang out with Mark!

Abel: Hey, Mark, thanks so much for joining us!

Mark: Hey, Abel, it's great to be here! Thanks for having me.

Abel: Awesome. I wanted to share with you Mark, on my Facebook fan page a guy named Bill Brennan said "I grew up in a small college town where Mark Sisson was in college writing phenom.

I was in high school and definitely remember his budding fame at the time. He, like yourself and others in the Paleo/Primal movement, have such interesting stories about how you got involved." So, Mark, your fame, even from your college days, precedes you! But for others out there who don't know it, how did you get into all of this Primal/Paleo madness?

Mark: "Well, like anything, I think it, for me, was an evolution—a microevolution. I was a runner in college, a distance athlete, and trying to increase my performance, improve my performance in any way that was legally possible, which included extra miles, running as many miles as I could, trying to manipulate my diet to get the most, extract the most number of miles out of—miles "per gallon" or per calorie; trying to improve my recovery time. So I've always been interested in that aspect of human performance at the elite level. But, as so often happens to

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people of my generation, we did too much. We did too much, too soon. We didn't know how bad—how devastating—running might be for the average person. And I was pretty much an average person. I don't have a lot of genetic legacy in terms of being an elite athlete. I was, you know, sort of middle-of-the-road, maybe toward the elite end but certainly not in the elite category if you look at my raw numbers, my DO2 max, for instance.

Abel: Right.

Mark: I just worked really, really hard. Ultimately, I think I worked too hard, and the wheels fell off, and went in my mid-20's, and I started to—as I was running faster and faster and gaining notoriety and starting to win some races and qualify for the US Olympic trials, the more fit (in a strict time sense) I became, the sicker I became. And I started to get upper-respiratory tract infections, I started to get injured. So my career ended very early because of all of these missteps. And I wound up taking a real hard look at where I was in my life and having come into this initially with the idea that I wanted to be healthy and fit and all the things that people want. I sort of lost sight of that in the pursuit of performance. So I kind of back-tracked and said, “Okay, what is it going to take to be lean, fit, strong, happy, healthy—all the things I want—without having to sacrifice so much, without having to tear my body apart and miss out on all the good times that people my age tend to experience.

Abel: Yeah...

Mark: I mean, when I was an endurance athlete, I don't think I stayed up past 11 more than a couple of times a year because I was just so fried from the training. So all these things conspired to make me re-examine where I was, and the first thing that I realized is that I did not have to train so hard to maintain a decent body composition. The next thing that I realized was that I'd been sacrificing my health in terms of how little fat I was consuming. And when I started eating more and more fat in my diet, it not only did not negatively impact me, it positively impacted me.

Abel: Funny how that works!

Mark: So increasing the fat in my diet...all through this time I was already into evolution and had been interested in it in college. In my first book that I wrote in '82 (came out in '83), *The World Track and Training Book*. So that's been out almost 30 years. I really call upon evolution as a sort of guiding force in terms of extracting performance as an athlete training. You have to look to evolution. So all of these things combined. Over the years I wound up pulling together my

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ideas on training, my ideas on diet, including increasing the amount of fat. And the last piece to fall in place was getting rid of grains. I really held on to my right to eat grains, dammit!

Abel: When did that change?

Mark: About 11 years ago now. And that was just me finally taking a stance, saying, “Look, I’ve done all this research that shows that grains are pretty bad for you. Maybe I’ll do my own 30-day experiment.” And I did. And it was transformative. All the things that we talk about today—the arthritis in my fingers—that I thought was just going to be with me for the rest of my life—disappeared in those 30 days. The irritable bowel syndrome I had my whole life: that disappeared. Some lingering sinus stuff I used to get at the end of hay fever season: that disappeared. It was so crystal-clear to me that grains were at the root of a lot of things that I had assumed were just natural effects of me getting older. You gotta dig that I was already 47, 48 years old when I finally adopted this final aspect of the primal/paleo way.

Abel: Yeah! And you were kind of a lone wolf at the time, right? Just experimenting on yourself for the most part?

Mark: Certainly! I mean, I was doing research for the last 20 years. Most of what I’d done over the course of a day was to read books, read studies and to figure out, “Where do I fit on this spectrum of people who are seeing in research or discovering through their own methods?” And I kinda had to carve out a path that worked for me. But there’s nothing new that I’ve put together—I’m the first one to admit.

Abel: Sure.

Mark: I mean, all the stuff that I talk about, people have talked about before I started talking about it. That’s for sure. I just sort of borrowed bits and pieces from people like [Loren] Cordain and Jack [Kruse] and Melvin Konner and Boyd Eaton and [Neil] Stephenson and going way back. And my mission was always to put this in a story that the average person could understand and go, “Wow! Now I get how my body works.”

So my mission has always been to educate people—and do so in a way that makes use of the science for sure—but also tries to describe it in ways that are understandable and easy to get and, at times, humorous I think.

Abel: Yeah! Definitely. And I think you’ve done all that exceptionally well. You know, the average person certainly isn’t going to be slogging through medical journals and that sort of thing. And they shouldn’t have to, ya know? Like, living this sort of thing, this sort of lifestyle

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doesn't necessitate that. So I think one of the things I love about your blog is that it is very readable and entertaining as well.

Mark: Well thank you! And you know, we make a big effort to continually put new spins on the kinds of things that we've been talking about. Because, you know, this blog has been in existence almost six years now. And when I started it, I said, "Well, I'll write something every day for a year, and then I'll run out of things to write, and that'll be the end of that." Well, all it did was open up tremendous new tangents and possibilities of things to discuss. This is sort of what's led to my new book, which is coming out in a few months, "The Primal Connection," which takes the whole Primal Blueprint concepts of the expectations of our hunter-gatherer genes, and goes far beyond diet and exercise and looks at social structure, work situations, family situations and tries to paint a picture that draws on anthropology and evolutionary biology and science, but then provide practical insights into how to get the most out of one's life.

Abel: Yeah, I'm really excited about that, and hopefully we can talk a little more about that later. But getting back to what you said about your genetics and body composition: so now obviously you're jacked if anyone's seen your pictures or met you in person, but I would imagine when you were running a hundred miles per week or doing triathlons, you couldn't really support that muscle mass.

Mark: It's funny, because people in the old days would say that I was pretty muscular for a runner.

Abel: Right.

Mark: So when I was a marathoner and I weighed between 142 and 145, everyone else around me weight 125 to 135, and I'm 5'10". You know, I weigh 20 lbs more than that today, and I have the same body fat. So I really chewed up all my lean tissue, especially my upper body tissue, despite the fact that I lifted weights a lot. I was really into lifting to the extent that it was possible at the end of a 20-mile run some days. But I was very aware that lifting weights was going to be somehow beneficial even to an endurance athlete's overall career and criteria. But, yeah, with the diet and the chronic cardio that I was doing, it was almost impossible to keep any lean muscle on besides what I required in my legs and, you know, lower body to propel myself.

Abel: Yeah, I remember when I was running marathons, I was 147, 148. And now I'm well above 160, and I have a lower body fat at this point. And it just looks and feels incredibly different. And it's just mostly the way that it feels. It just feels so much more balanced this way. But I was wondering, Mark, what's your natural body type? You know, all other things equal...

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Mark: Nah, I'm a skinny guy. I'm an ectomorph type. You know, my dad was 5' 11", 145 lbs for most of his life. He's still alive, he's gained a little bit of weight. But well into his 50's he was under 150 lbs. I have two brothers who are about my height, and one of them probably weighs about 135 to 145. So I come from lean stock, as they say. You know, just skinny, to the extent that you say, "What was the selection process to become a runner?" Well, it's because I couldn't do anything else! You know, I wasn't big enough to play football and survive that. Maine was a big hockey state and I just got beat up enough as a 10-year-old and 11-year-old playing hockey that I realized I didn't want to do that. So I kind of naturally gravitated towards running, since I lived two miles from school and I used to run to and from school just as a means of transportation.

Abel: Interesting. So being a hard gainer, what does your weight routine look like?

Mark: Well now It's kinda funny. I do as little as possible to maintain. Because I'm gonna be 59 in July, and you realize, at some point, you recognize that, despite the fact that I have access to all the top information and the best diet, there is a decline in performance as you age, and I did hit my peak at 35, and now I'm just trying to just preserve and maintain. The main focus in my training is to not get injured because I like to play. So I like to spend a lot of time playing Frisbee or hiking or paddling or snowboarding. And I like to do those without injury. So most of my training is contemplated to support the sorts of movement that would be required in these other pursuits that I just described. So I only lift twice a week. I lift pretty much full bodyweight stuff. Sometimes weighted with a weight vest, but typically its pull-ups, pushups, dips, squats, lunges, pull-downs; you know, just upright rows, maybe. I do some ballistics stuff, box jumps, stadium stairs, sprints and things like that.

Abel: Cool! Shifting gears a little bit, right now actually I'm writing a short book on fasting with one of my researchers, and we spoke a little bit about this before and I know you just wrote a bunch of posts about it, so I wanted to make sure we covered it, but others would be interested to hear: how do you do intermittent fasting? How is it incorporated into your life? I know that, philosophically, it's not really a strict schedule, from what we talked about before.

Mark: Yeah, it's not a strict schedule. On the other hand, I do, many days, have a compressed eating window. I will eat at 7 o'clock at night and then I won't eat again until 1:30 or 2 o'clock the next day. So I've got maybe a 6-hour window from 1 to 7 that I'll maybe eat two meals, and then I won't eat again. But I almost don't even call that intermittent fasting. And I don't know why, I mean, it fits that category. I just started to kind of look at that a while ago and, well, I tend to tell people that I only intermittently fast when I travel, when I know I'm gonna be on a plane that will

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have crappy food at best or won't be serving any food. I'll be rushing through airports and things like that. Then it's easy to just say "okay, I'm trained for this, I know how to burn fat." Yeah, I use this opportunity to not eat and stay focused. Listen, when you and I were hanging out in Austin, at Paleo FX. There was an example of where I went from 7 o'clock one night to 9 o'clock the next night because of travel.

Abel: Oh, wow!

Mark: So when we went to that barbecue place for dinner that night, that was a ways after I had previously eaten. But that was fine. I'm trained to do that. I just don't...because I like to eat, I don't force myself to fast on a schedule. But between the compressed eating window and the occasional travel—you know I just got back from Africa—

Abel: Yeah, that sounds awesome! How was that, by the way?

Mark: Oh, it was fantastic, yeah. But it there was a 34-hour door-to-door travel coming back. And it's a good example of choosing to intermittently fast when it's forced upon you just the way it was when our ancestors were forced to fast. They would never choose to fast, but when it was forced upon them, they did very well.

Abel: Shifting gears a little bit again, I want to talk about your site a bit. I know personally you have a lot of strong opinions. But you're pretty diplomatic on Mark's Daily Apple and in your books. And that's one of the things I really like about it [the site]. But as I mentioned in one of my last blog posts, you're one of the only blogs I comment on, despite the fact that I read most of the other ones because I think you foster a really positive community and environment. Are there any points when you feel like there isn't a good compromise? What's the good and the bad of walking the middle road there?

Mark: Well, that's a good point. Because it's come up recently that, at some point, as these fringe pursuits begin to emerge, some of which run counter to what I've espoused over the years, I may have to take a stance on it. A good example that's been talked about quite a bit in the popular Paleo press for the past few months is 'safe starches.' You know, I'm pretty clear that while there are some safe starches, it's not a route that I would recommend going. It's not one I would want to choose to do. My take on glucose in general is that the less glucose you can consume in a lifetime, the better off you are.

Abel: Yeah.

Mark: And that doesn't mean that you can't have a baked potato or a sweet potato every once in a while, or have a day of 350 grams of carbs if that's what you want to do—these are all just

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choices. But my choice is to reduce the amount of glucose I take in in the form of exogenous carbohydrate. And as such, I'm not a big fan of the concept of 'safe starches.' I get all the carbs I need from the vegetables and some fruit that I consume, and I consume, and I consume a good amount of vegetables, so it's not like I'm in a deprived state.

Abel: Right.

Mark: So I really don't see a need to supplement my glucose production or my carbohydrate intake with safe starches. That's just one example of an area where I felt, well, and see! Now I've done it! You've made me do it, Abel!

Abel: [laughs] Sorry, Mark!

Mark: You've made me come out and take a position where I would normally be this diplomatic guy standing in a line. But at some point—and we've had this discussion over the years with my staff—which is the forum. We had a Mark's Daily Apple forum and it got way out of hand. It got very contentious early on, and I shut it down for two years.

Abel: Oh, did you really?

Mark: Yeah. And at some point, it seemed like a good idea to bring it back and to do a bit more in terms of moderation. So I brought the forum back, and now it's probably the most popular forum in the Paleosphere on the Internet. And I stay out of it. And I do so on purpose so I allow people to kind of air their stuff. And it's still moderated, I have staff—worker bees—who will moderate because there's a crapload of spam that filters in there and we have to kind of toe the line at some point. But I also allow more people to voice contentious opinions than other forums might. But that was the compromise that I made to open the forum back up rather than have all that stuff happening on the comments section of the main Mark's Daily Apple site.

Abel: Right, right—and that makes sense.

Mark: And the other thing is that, you know, some of these guys have their blogs and they're answering every comment and, you know, if I answered every comment, I wouldn't be able to write the content that I write. I don't have the time or the energy to answer every comment. I appreciate the comments. Believe me, I read them all, I check them all out. But it's very rare that I'll even answer or respond to a comment, particularly to old post. Sometimes comments come in from a post I wrote a year or two ago, and you know, that boat has already sailed.

Abel: Yeah, and I remember you talking about that when we were in Austin, about how a lot of your traffic does come to those posts you wrote two and a half years ago, so if someone is

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commenting on that, it would be tough to kind of piece-meal respond to those comments in perpetuity.

Mark: Yeah! Well what that does, and that's exactly right, because half of my new traffic comes from organic Google searches and they might happen across a post I wrote literally three years ago and that's their first experience with Mark's Daily Apple. So then they read it, they like it and they start to catch up and usually don't comment. Then, two weeks later with a big, "Whew! I just spent the last two weeks catching up on everything you've ever written on this site, Mark, and now I wanna comment."

Abel: [laughs]

Mark: And I do appreciate the comments. But one of the things that's happened is we also have a lot of regular commenters. You're one of them. Some of them kind of answer those questions for me. They're knowledgeable enough about what's going on or they have enough insight that any of the questions that might be directed at me can be answered by other commenters.

Abel: The veteran grokkers!

Mark: Yeah, we're gonna have to give 'em a badge or something.

Abel: Yeah, totally! Talking about the future of Paleo, I wish we had talked about this a little bit more on our panel, but I whole-heartedly believe that in order to affect as many people as possible, the discussion should really be focused on "What is optimal for the health of modern humans?" as opposed to getting too caught up in what some imaginary cave-person may or may not have consumed eons ago. And so, a lot of people are kind of bickering, as you said, on discussion boards about whether or not eating a bean will kill you. And doing that won't really change the world. And I know we talked about this earlier; it seems like you're a lot more interested in moving forward rather than kind of dwelling in the rabbit holes.

Mark: Well, yeah! First of all, my dream for the primal blueprint was to involve (I use to "invite") as many people as possible. And in order to do that you have to make the concept palatable. And so it's not exclusionary, it's inclusionary. I try to open enough pathways and doors for people to go "Oh, I could do that! I think this 80/20 rule sounds good, I think I can live with something like that. I don't have to give up red wine. I don't have to shut down everything I'm doing to count my calories and weigh things out."

Abel: Thank God.

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Mark: “And, I don’t have to give up dairy, I can have some cheese. The system says that I can have a little bit of cheese.” So I try to be as inclusionary and invite as many people to play along with us as possible. And the effect of that has been phenomenal. Because that’s what’s brought a lot of people and, I think, given a lot of people the kind of almost immediate results that they were seeking. And that’s borne out by the tens of thousands of testimonials that we have now.

Abel: Yeah, that’s amazing.

Mark: And from there, using the evolutionary template and the sort of proof in modern genetic science, we can look at ways that we can incorporate 21st century technology into all of this. So it doesn’t have to be recreating history. And, you know, with what you said, with the fact that our ancestors didn’t eat this means I can’t eat this. I look at it more in terms of, “Tell me what I CAN eat, not what I can’t eat.

Abel: Right.

Mark: And if there’s a supplement that might fit into what we’re doing here, that might make my life easier, it’s probably better off taking that than forgoing it entirely or turn into a fast food joint and just say “Well, I can’t make it until the next meal, I’m going to sacrifice the rest of the day by chowing down on a burger and some fries. So we try to incorporate as many ways of making this a doable thing and a lifestyle and a sustainable one for as many people as possible. In the 21-Day Total Body Transformation I start to talk about the spectrums of food and the fact that there are no right or wrong answers here.

Abel: Yeah, I like that.

Mark: And as long as you know the ramifications of your choice, then you’re fine. And when we talk about grain, we can talk about how, on the on end, wheat is pretty nasty for most people. So if you choose to eat wheat, at least know what you’re getting into. On the other end of that grains spectrum, you’ve got white rice, which is what Paul Jaminet calls a ‘safe starch’. And, you know, I don’t pick the rice off my sushi. I order sushi every once in a while, you know, I’m not a Paleo Nazi or a Primal Nazi. I mean, I have a bite of bread every once in a while.

Abel: [gasps in surprise, laughs]

Mark: But I know what my limits are. And one bite, dipped in some virgin olive oil gives me the taste sensation I was looking for. Now it’s time to move on. It’s really when you start to chow down on a whole bowls of cereal or a whole loaf of bread or French toast every day—that’s when you get into real problems.

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Abel: Yeah, and you'll feel that, too.

Mark: Yeah. So if people say, "Well, wait a minute, what about legumes? Because half the world lives on legumes." I'll say, "Well, I could tell you why I don't eat them. But if you want to eat them in moderation, it's definitely not gonna kill ya! And if it's something that makes you happy in the short term, then go for it."

Abel: And as far as the movement goes, Paleo is still in the fringe, it's still gaining steam. What are your predictions on where the movement's going? It's already subsumed a lot of other mini-movements. But do you think it'll ever be mainstream? Like, what if we become the conventional wisdom?

Mark: Yeah, well, watch out! You know, I'm just a cynic at heart...

Abel: Oh no!

Mark: ...and I don't see the masses embracing this lifestyle concept. And the reason is, people like their Cinnabons too much. They like their Coca-Cola. They like their Haagen Dazs, their McDonald's burgers. And the marketing forces are still too strong to keep that machine going. So I think Primal and Paleo become this grassroots movement. And there's no doubt it's growing, it's grown almost exponentially in the last few years. And it grows by people like you and me talking to a small group of people or a neighbor who's lost 50 lbs going up to another neighbor, and that neighbor goes, "Wow! What did you do?" And they start to think about it and...

Abel: They start eating better!

Mark: Exactly! One-to-one, one-on-one, real-life testimonial-type experiences. And that's where it gathers momentum; that's where it fosters loyalty. The single greatest testimonial I ever get is, "Yeah, it's great that I lost 75 lbs, but I know I can live this way for the rest of my life, and that's what's really empowering."

Abel: Yeah. Absolutely. Alright, so, Mark, I told my readers and listeners that you'd be coming on and asked if they had any questions for you, and so I'm going to read a few of them for you, and if you could oblige, I know they'd really appreciate it.

Mark: Sure!

Abel: Cool. And so, the first one is from Matt, and he says, "Can you ask Mark how to find a balance between his rules of play vs. avoid trauma/stupid mistakes? My play is pretty aggressive: rock climbing, downhill mountain biking, etc. And often I find that my enjoyment is

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limited by how comfortable I am with pushing the envelope. How can I determine if my fears are standing in my way and keeping me from the enjoyment of the progression or natural way of avoiding trauma and keeping me safe?

Mark: Well, that's a pretty heady question. And that's a very complex one because it has to weigh a number of different factors. The first thing I always ask someone who's engaged in any kind of quasi-risky behavior is why are you doing this? What is your motivation? I'm not going to judge it, but I'm going to ask you to justify it for yourself. This is typically the question I ask people who say they want to run a marathon. Because I'll say, "Why do you wanna do that?" And if it's just a lifetime achievement, that's great, but if it's to prove to their ex-girlfriend that they're worthy, it's probably not legitimate enough of a reason to undertake what's clearly going to be a compromise on your health in pursuit of a goal that may have some substantive personal satisfaction. For sure—it did for me. Rock climbing, downhill skiing, hang-gliding, base-jumping, I know a lot of people who do these things. These are always calculated risks. So when you get to Primal Blueprint Rule #9 – Avoid Stupid Mistakes, you just really have to start thinking before you act. This guy I know, Jeb Corliss, he's the wingsuit man. I don't know if you know who he is, but he's the guy that jumps out of...

Abel: Yeah!

Mark: And he's got the wings, too, yeah! He's crazy. And he says, before every jump, what he says is, "I expect to die."

Abel: Wow.

Mark: And then he does whatever he can to not make that happen.

Abel: Yeah!

Mark: But, I mean, that's some pretty heavy stuff.

Abel: It is!

Mark: And that's a warrior attitude, by the way. If you look at the warrior mentality, it's going into every fight expecting to die, but being prepared to do everything possible not to.

Well, if you start to apply that to extreme sports, to risky sports, you have to weigh 'do you have a family that's going to be affected by your risky behavior?' If it's just the adrenaline that you like, are there ways that you can mitigate the possibilities of severe trauma? There's a kid who's setting records all over the world for free-climbing without a rope.

Abel: I saw that, yeah!

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Mark: And it's a 3,000-foot climb. That's a thing where 'one false move, and your life is over.' That's pretty much on the edge. And, again, I'm not going to judge the choices. If that's what thrills you, if that's what gets you up outta bed every morning, then you've got some pretty cool stuff going on, if that's what your life is about and your pursuit and you're passionate about it. I mean, a lot of people aren't passionate about anything.

Abel: Well, that's true.

Mark: And I feel pretty badly for them. You know, they lead very safe lives, but they're not passionate about anything. So, the long-winded answer, I don't know that I have an answer. At some point, you sit down and you weigh out the pros and cons, and you make sure that every time you engage in risky behavior that you are not, you know, drunk and stoned. So you can make the kind of decisions you need to make on the fly. And then extract the most out of life.

Abel: That makes me think—just going along with that—for some people who have never really done this before: a lot of people have never incorporated sprinting into their workout routine. A lot of the chronic cardio crowd. So I get this question a lot, "What do you tell people who are just getting started with that sort of exercise?"

Mark: Go into it easy. This is...you've got a long life ahead of you and you've got a lot of potential progress as long as you don't get injured. Do DON'T get injured. When you start sprinting, if you're actually starting running, you might even start with a couple of sessions of just jumping rope to get some spring action in your Achilles and your plantar fascia. If it's running we're talking about, after a couple of series of that you might wanna just do two sprints at 60%, the first day just to kinda feel the legs out, see what happens. You don't wanna go out there and be a high school hero at the age of 35.

Abel: Yeah, disaster.

Mark: You know, when the last time you ever laced up the spikes was at the senior track meet. And now it's years later, and you remember what it feels like to go fast, but your body can't do it. So with these sprints, you do have to start to take them easy and methodically. But, as long as you do that, progress happens fairly linearly. And within a very short period of time, you'll be at a point where you're exerting maximum output for anywhere from 10 to 40 seconds anywhere from 5 to 8 times. Then you're done, and you don't have to do it again for another week. It's a very effective exercise. And for people who want to get to the next level in terms of body composition, it's absolutely essential to incorporate sprinting as a part of that.

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Abel: Yeah, I did a video about this when I was transitioning away from doing marathons and running for long periods of time at the same pace started just working sprints into those runs—it was incredible how quickly my body changed in a very positive way. And I felt a lot better, too. And it's just like, all the muscles that were gone and all that fat that was there totally shifted away.

Mark: No, it's almost a universal thing. And it doesn't have to be running. It can be...you can do it on a stationary bike. If you have bad knees or if you're a person who is older or more overweight than you'd like to be, outside your body composition, then cycling is the way to do it, or the elliptical machine. Some people even do it in the pool.

Abel: Yeah, the pool would be an interesting one.

Mark: Yeah. And I'm talking about running in the pool or swimming in the pool.

Abel: Yeah, in Austin in the summer that can definitely be an appealing way to do that, tell you what! Alright, here's another question from a guy named Mike. He says, "Lately, everyone (including myself) is having a bit of a recurring romance with ketosis. I'm currently 6 feet tall at a semi-chubby 205. Right now I'm training for a Spartan Beast in Vermont. I clearly need to shed some extra baggage. So how would someone in my position train for an endurance-based event while being keto-adapted?—noting that many in the Paleo community would just toss yams at the question.

Mark: It's entirely possible to be a keto-adapted endurance athlete. I touched upon this briefly in my Paleo FX talk. One of the things about being keto-adapted is that it's really a commitment. And once you're keto-adapted and once you've made the necessary dietary changes, and some of the training changes to increase mitochondrial biogenesis and increase what we call the metabolic machinery that's involved in using ketones and ramping up fat metabolism, you can go long periods of time at a very high output and not have to depend on glycogen stores or an exogenous feeding of glucose. It takes a little bit longer to do this, it takes months of training. But there are a number of athletes that are doing this now, including two of the guys who basically wrote the book on ketosis: that's Stephen Phinney and Jeff Volek. Both of them are athletes in their own rights. One is an Olympic lifter and the other one cycles, century rides. And they do this completely ketogenic. The problem comes when you think you're going to be a ketogenic athlete and then you start to slide into, "Well, maybe I'll have 100 grams of carbs, maybe 120 grams of carbs. Because what that does is... the cutoff is about 60 to 70 grams of carbs a day for an athlete. And once you get past that, then you shut off the ketosis. And the danger zone is when you've turned off ketosis but you haven't supplied enough glucose to take

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over that new fuel partitioning. So the idea is that you're either going to be a sugar-burning athlete taking in 300 to 400 grams of carbs a day and training for the Spartan races, or you're going to be 100% keto and keep the carbs at less than 70 a day. And in that middle ground lies epic failure for a lot of people. For most people, I would say. So you kind of have to pick and choose where you want to be. And if you're willing to be on the side of that keto-adapted athlete, there is the possibility that you could drop the weight and the possibility that you'll probably perform even better than if you were just depending on carbohydrate and glucose.

Abel: So how much time would he have to give himself before a race to get adapted?

Mark: I mean, I think it's a three to four month adaptation period. And during that time you have to ramp up your long-slow distance and if you're doing trail running if you're doing a little metabolic conditioning stuff you have to be very careful about how you do it and not go into the anaerobic zone too much. Now you can go anaerobic once in a while and come back down. I'm pretty much a keto-adapted athlete and I'll play two hours of ultimate Frisbee on the weekend, and I'll do a lot of sprints, but because I have a lot of time to rest in-between, the way you do in soccer, I don't feel like I'm depleting glycogen I just feel like I'm burning fat and I'm able to completely do anaerobic, ATP-type sprints and recover very, very quickly and easily. I'm usually the kind of guy that, at the end of a two-hour game, I'm out –performing everybody because, you know, they're all toasted. They're all out of juice.

Abel: Now, what about carb cycling? That's something that you used to do a lot of, I imagine, but you probably don't anymore?

Mark: Well, I don't do any carb cycling at all. I used to be...I didn't even call it carb cycling, I was just at I carb a loaded every day of my life. I had 1,000 grams of carbs just about every day of my life for 15 or 20 years. And that's because I was training as hard as I was. In my running days, that meant 100 to 110 miles a week, in my Triathlon days it was 50 miles of running and 250 miles of cycling and 25,000 meters of swimming. Plus anything else you had to do in the weight room and other things, too.

So, in those days, I just slammed down the carbs willy-nilly, a-la-Michael Phelps at 12,000 calories a day (which I think is a bit of an over-estimate). In terms of carb-cycling now, if you were a sugar-burning athlete, and I don't mean to use the term disparagingly, but if you're an athlete who has chosen to continue to rely on glycogen stores, then it seems that the best way to manage weight an fuel-partitioning is to do an appropriate amount of carbs, not an excessive amount of carbs. So if you're a guy who's doing one hard work-out a day, it's probably appropriate that you take in 250 to 350, maybe 400 grams, but not much more than 400 grams

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of carbs per day. NOT 700 or 1,000 or 1,200. And in that regard, you can maintain that appropriate amount of carbohydrate intake and continue to train the way you do and, hopefully, in the process, ramp up your fat-burning machinery a little bit. You won't be doing much with ketones, but you'll be ramping up your fat-burning ability.

Then there's another group of athletes who are trying to do what we call 'train low, race high'. So they train on low glycogen stores, and they try to ramp up their fat metabolism. Again, they're still not really taking full advantage of their keto-adaptation. But they're training at low glycogen, and then, days before either a really hard work-out—maybe one that's going to have massive amounts of intervals in it—or the day of a race, they'll carb-up. They'll fill their glycogen stores up. And, again, these are all choices, and I don't purport to have the answer. Because if I did, I'd be coaching a world-class team of athletes. These are choices, and we're still trying to work out the variables that give you the best possible outcome for that choice.

Abel: Yeah! Cool, another question, this one's actually from me. I was talking to Dave Asprey a couple of podcasts back, about supplementation vs. whole foods, especially in this modern world. And we were getting on the subject of pros and cons of eating moldy, rancid brazil nuts as opposed to supplementing with a synthetic. Could you talk about that a little bit—what supplementation looks like today?

Mark: Well, again, it's on a spectrum of what's appropriate vs. what's eccentric. An example I might use is someone who's living in the northern parts of the US for the winter. And you don't get out and you don't get any sun. Why would you not supplement with 4,000 to 8,000 units of vitamin D a day? You know, if you can't get sunlight and you're not getting probably the single-most important vitamin—and again, not to assign value to a vitamin, but vitamin D is hugely important—then I think you'd be remiss in your pursuit of health to not take a simple vitamin D supplement. So that's an example I would use. Another example I would say is that we tell people we need to re-balance our Omega-6 to Omega-3 ratio. And the first thing you do is cut down the Omega-6. That's job #1 is to find ways to eliminate the Omega-6 in your diet. Having done that, if you can't find ways to increase the amount of Omega-3, then taking an Omega-3 fish oil capsule, highly refined, high DHA, high EPA fish oil capsule, is a very legitimate appropriate choice, taking advantage of 21st-century technology to achieve a balance that your genes expect you to be consuming in a whole-food diet. But because you don't always have access to line-caught salmon at \$30/lb, this is a good alternative. Another one that I have started to rely on much more heavily myself is probiotics. Our guts are a major part of our

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digestive tract, of our immune system. And when we are out of balance, we call it dysbiosis, and it can happen as a result of stress, it can happen as a result of having been sick, of a course of antibiotics, a number of different ways it can disrupt the healthy flora in our gut, it REALLY negatively impacts us. And how our ancestors dealt with that is that they ate dirt every day. They weren't trying to eat dirt. But, you know, you pick up something off the ground, you eat it, you don't think about washing it. And that's how they were able to populate their gut with healthy bacteria. So I take a probiotic every day. And I just started, after having known about this and having researched this for the last 20 years, and actually having been a little skeptical of it for most of those 20 years, I've started to come around. And I realize by my taking a probiotic probably does more for my immune system than taking massive amounts of vitamin C or vitamin D or cutting back on sugar. Because the gut is the first line of defense with the immune system—the skin and the gut—are the first lines of defense. And if the bacteria or virus that's trying to invade can breach those, then you're set up for trouble. Then you've gotta rely on the immune system in terms of white blood cells and so on.

Abel: Yeah, I really try to focus a lot on probiotics. It's funny, Alysson—oh, by the way, she says, "Hi, Mark!"—around the new year, she got a little sick with something and she had to take medicine. And once she did, basically she started getting sick for the next few weeks because all of her probiotic gut bacteria were pretty much wiped out when she took the antibiotic. Neither of us ever really get sick and I think that most of that is because we have a lot of kombucha, fermented foods, sauerkraut, we make our own yogurt, things like that. And it's amazing how much it's helped.

Mark: Yeah, and I think it's a classic case where people take an antibiotic and maybe they need to take an antibiotic, I'm not suggesting that antibiotics are necessarily a bad thing, I mean they've probably saved more lives than any single medicinal protocol in the last 50 years.

Abel: But they're not tic-tacs.

Mark: Right. They're over-prescribed, and even when they do save a life they cause some residual damage. And the best way to address that residual damage is with a good, broad-spectrum probiotic. So, again, that's just another example of something where you say, "If our ancestors didn't take supplements, why should we?" Well, because we're not eating the way our ancestors ate. We're trying to emulate it, and we're trying to give our genes what our genes expect of us, but in some cases it's just not possible. You know, I take a potent antioxidant

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supplement, because I know that the foods that were prevalent 10,000, 20,000 years ago were much higher in anthocyanins and zeaxanthins and kerotines and polyphenols and all of the other potent antioxidants that assist us in avoiding oxidated damage. Those aren't present in those amounts in presently-grown foods today. And we seem to subject ourselves to a pantload more stress than our ancestors did. You know, our ancestors' stress was holy crap I'm gonna die or, eh, it's another day, whatever.

Abel: Or, hey, there's a tiger!

Mark: But our stress is, you know, hours and hours of agonizing over getting the report in on time, or whether or not the mortgage payment is going to make it this month or the noisy neighbor next door. Whatever it is, we have the 45-minute commute to work that's 90 minutes today. We have an inordinate amount of stress and stress, cortisol, is a huge complement in the oxidative stress that happens to people. So I'm just looking for ways that we can address some of these challenges that we face, understanding that we possess a forty-thousand-year-old set of blueprints that was drafted in the two-and-a-half million years of time that humans evolved as hunter-gatherers. And here we are in our pin-striped suits, doing things a little bit differently. And how can I honor the expectations of my hunter-gatherer genes in a way that's comfortable, convenient, pleasurable, doesn't involve a lot of sacrifice or a lot of time or effort? I'm really kinda preaching a quasi-hedonistic lifestyle here. I mean, man! We get to eat beef and lamb and pork and turkey and chicken and fish...

Abel: Heh, yeah, that's awesome!

Mark: ...and vegetables and butter and cocoa and lots of chocolate and wine! I mean, who out there thinks that we're sacrificing a lot?

Abel: Not me!

Mark: Well, who isn't already in the Paleo/Primal sphere?

Abel: Yeah, that's true. So, we're coming up on time, Mark, but I know you're working on a new book, that, as usual, examines the incongruence between how we evolved and how we live today. So why don't you talk a little bit about that?

Mark: Yeah! It's called "The Primal Connection", and it came about because of my recognition that once people get the diet in, and once people get the exercise, they come to me and said,

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“This is great, I’ve got my health taken care of, but it still feels like there’s something missing. I wake up every day feeling like—maybe homesickness, but I’m home. It feels like there’s something missing or that I’m not getting the kind of fulfillment that I deserve.” And so we wanted to look at—again, what are the expectations? What is the hard-wiring of our brain that would cause us to have, really, a default setting of being happy and content and fulfilled, and yet how we screw that up, how we’ve mis-managed that with the way we’ve set our lives up and set our careers up. And so now it goes back, and there’s a lot of anthropology involved, there’s a lot of looking at the science and the experience of hunter-gatherers in modern tribes so it looks at family situations, group situations, social situations, you know, how do I orchestrate my set of loved ones and friends and create this circle around me that’s supportive, rather than having 5,000 Facebook friends, most of whom I’ve never met, you know? We talk a lot about the necessity of getting out in nature, not just because it sounds like a good idea, but because the brain is hard-wired to want to smell the smells. There are certain chemicals that we get that our brains expect of us that are available to us on walks in nature that we can’t get in the city. There are sounds that certain receptors need to hear, to kind of get us back to resonate with our environment and these expectations. So it’s really kinda cool. And the ultimate iteration of this is that there are 12 steps that you can take to kind of regain that sense of contentment and fulfillment and happiness and joy that you may have felt was missing. And you thought it was because you made a bad choice in your marriage or you made a bad career choice, but it may be, in fact, available to you just by taking some of these steps.

Abel: That’s so cool, I can’t wait to read that! When is that coming out, was that in September?

Mark: Coming out in September, September 17th is the release date.

Abel: Awesome, awesome! Well, before we go, I know I just sent you that awesome news that right now I’m ranked #2 in health podcasts...

Mark: Yeah, that’s crazy. That’s fabulous!

Abel: ...right behind Jillian Michaels. So I wanted to ask you, Mark, how are we going to take down Jillian and Conventional Wisdom?

Mark: Hey, listen, I think Jillian’s coming around, I think there’s more and more stuff that she seems to be getting and incorporating in to what she does, and so, no haters here. However people can change their lives in a positive way, I’m all for that. I just think that we have a way

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that's a lot more user-friendly than being screamed at, and eating 12,000 calories a day and then trying to burn off 6,000.

Abel: Yeah. But I think it is important that we all acknowledge—and this is kinda how my podcast started off—was just acknowledging how wonderful it is when anyone loses any amount of weight. You know, when they reach that goal, regardless of how they get there. But, I totally agree, Mark, your way and the Paleo way and all of this, in my opinion, is the most sustainable and probably the most enjoyable way to do it, especially if you can give up cakes—at least give up gluten cakes!

Mark: Yeah, I agree.

Abel: Well, Mark, thank you so much. This has been a real pleasure, and I look forward to talking to you again, soon.

Mark: Yeah! Always a pleasure talking to you, Abel!

Abel: Alright, thanks a lot!

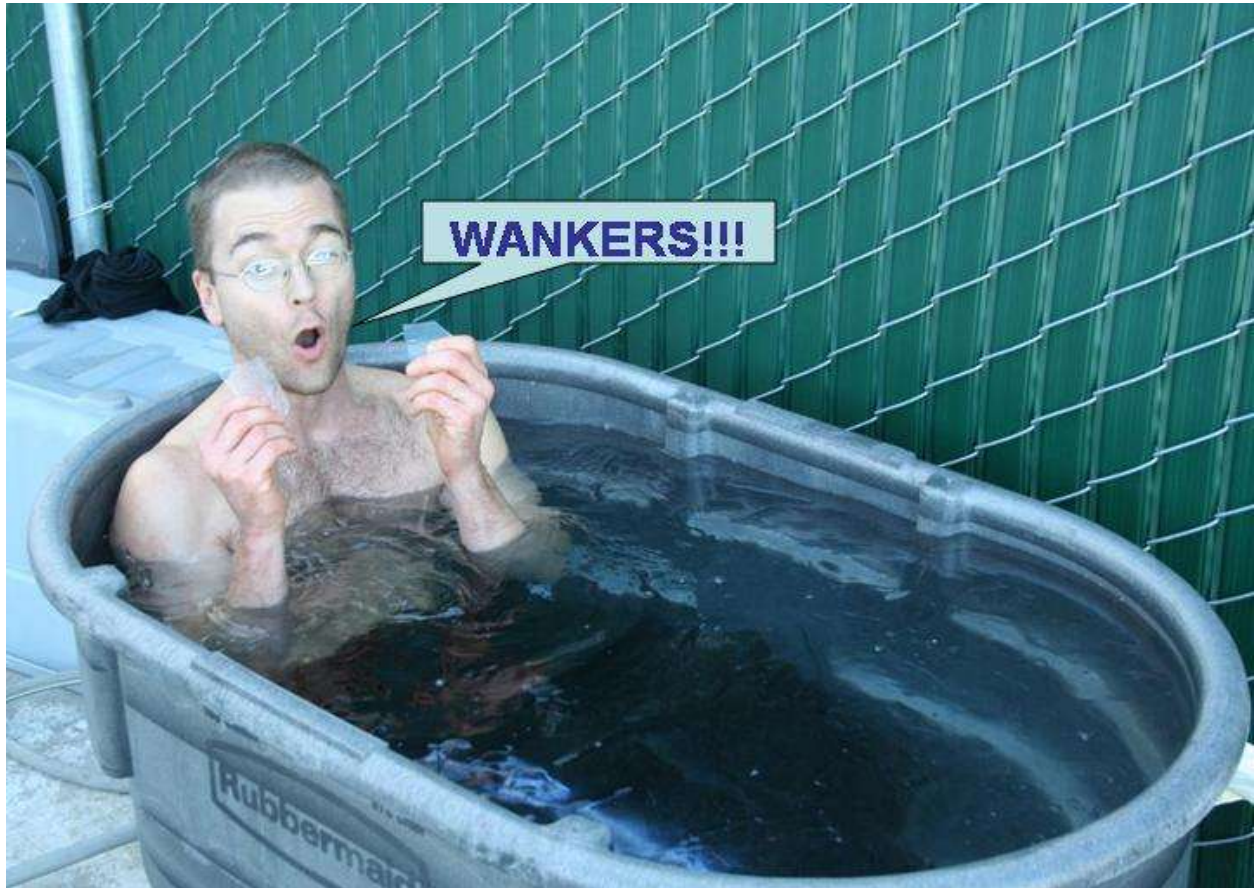
Mark: Take care.

Abel: The man knows his stuff, doesn't he? Cool! Well, if you wanna hear more from Mark, be sure to check out his website—one of my favorite blogs on earth—MarksDailyApple.com.

So until next week, eat real food and be happy. Cheers!

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Interview with Robb Wolf, Author of The Paleo Solution



Abel: Hi, there! This is Abel James, and welcome to the Fat-Burning Man Show. Ladies and gentlemen, today we'll be hanging out with one of my favorite authors, podcasters, and Jiu-Jitsu masters, Mr. Robb Wolf. Robb is the author of *The Paleo Solution*, a former **research biochemist**, a sought-after **strength and conditioning coach**, and a leading expert in **Paleolithic nutrition**. Through his best-selling book, top-ranked iTunes podcast and wildly popular seminar series, Robb has transformed the lives of **tens of thousands of people** around the world.

But Robb hasn't always been a knuckle-dragger. And we'll talk today a little bit about his interesting back story that has a lot of parallels with mine. So, as you may know, Robb hosts the *Paleo Solution* podcast, which is one of my favorites. And we've both been muscling for the top

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spot and nipping at the heels of Jillian Michaels for the past few weeks. And – awesome news – **the Fat-Burning Man show just hit #2 in the US and UK and even nudged out Jillian Michaels!**

And, last time I checked, it was ranked at least in the top ten in most English-speaking countries on iTunes charts. And this is crazy! This is unprecedented stuff. **No corporation, no sponsors, no PR or massive marketing campaigns – Robb and I are just a couple dudes with microphones who are passionate about helping as many people as we can.**

And with our powers combined (and all of the other ancestral health podcasts out there), we're giving conventional wisdom a walloping. I know I speak for Robb and all of the other Paleo podcasters out there when I say that we are very humbled and truly appreciate your support.

And, if you haven't already, it really helps us skyrocket in the rankings and get after the conventional wisdom folks when you leave a review on iTunes. So if you have a minute and you haven't already, please hop on over to iTunes and leave us a review. We really appreciate it.

I also wanted to give you an update that the format of The Fat-Burning Man Show is evolving. **I plan to have many of my guests back** to answer your questions, explore heady and cutting-edge principles and theories, and chat about generally changing the world. This will certainly not be the last time you'll see Robb on the show. We had a blast.

On today's show we talk about:

- How Art De Vany kicked Robb's arse in an impromptu road race
- Why extreme caloric restriction for longevity is not worth the misery
- Robb's view on intermittent fasting as a stressor
- Whether or not there's such a thing as "safe starches."
- Robb's opinions about the "hot" topic: cold thermogenesis, Jack Kruse-style

Cool! Let's go hang out with Robb.

Abel: We're here with Robb Wolf, Paleo rock star and Jiu Jitsu extraordinaire. How's it going, Robb?

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Robb: [laughs] Good! Abel knows that I just got the dog piss beat out of me for about 3 hours at ‘Jits, so he’s pulling all of your legs. I just had my neck cranked and pulled and everything.

Abel: Aw, man!

Robb: I’m good, man, how are you doing? You did a little fasting today, huh?

Abel: I did. You know I find that I get a heck of a lot of work done when I fast, for the most part. And then sometimes I just run out of juice. And that’s kind of what happened today! I just cranked it all day, and then it was time to eat and, man, I was ready.

Robb: It’s kind of a good way to do things, though. I find that interval working, interval training, I mean, it’s like you can get in and get a pretty good focus going for about 3 to 4 hours, and then things start getting a little dodgy at the end of that, and then, really, having an expectation of 8 hours of productivity—if it’s writing and cerebral work—it’s tough.

Abel: Yeah.

Robb: It might be a different thing if you’re building a house and you’re tinkering with something you’re building. But I find any type of cerebral work, writing, it’s about 3, maybe 5 hours, then I’m tapped, I’m gone.

Abel: Yeah, glucose-heavy stuff for sure.

Robb: Yeah! Yeah.

Abel: So things are pretty crazy on that side of the microphone! You’ve got a ‘wolf cub’ on the way soon, I hear!

Robb: That’s what I’ve been informed of!

Abel: [laughs]

Robb: It was a big surprise, like, a week ago.

Abel: Wow!

Robb: No, no we’re close. Today’s, what, April 17, and we’re due April 26. And, honestly, Nikki could go any time. But both of us have a little gut sense that it’s probably going to go a little long, just because she’s feeling fully ready to go now. And she’s, I wouldn’t say miserable, but she’s getting uncomfortable. She’s getting a little uncomfortable. So, yeah, man, we’ll see!

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That's going to be a game-changer. To whatever degree I'm perky it's probably going to disappear.

Abel: Right? Well, you must be stoked and shaking in your bones at the same time, right?

Robb: Yeah! I keep saying alternating bouts of fear and excitement. Which, everybody who's actually a parent, they say, "Yeah, that's good! That shows that you're pretty sane with the whole thing." So, yeah!

Abel: I'm sure you'll be great.

Robb: I hope so, man, I hope so! I've kept the cat alive for 10 years, so I hope that somehow scales to kids.

Abel: Yeah! The Paleo Kitty, right?

Robb: Yeah, yeah.

Abel: Heh, that's awesome. So I just revisited your book a few weeks ago, and I'd forgotten that you were once a self-righteous vegetarian for some time, too. And I was, in the past, as well. Can you tell folks a bit about your back story? Going from essentially being sick to leading the Paleo movement?

Robb: You know, I think it's kind of an interesting story in self-experimentation. You know, a little bit out of the Tim Ferriss camp. I was a former State Champion power lifter. I was into kick-boxing. I've always been interested in nutrition and health. My parents were very, very sick growing up, and I just had a niggling suspicion that diabetes and heart disease and mental illness was not a guarantee for me. And I just was always interested in tinkering with my food. And around 1992—I graduated high school in '90—and in '92 the food pyramid was kind of unleashed. And it was very high-carb, low-fat. The media was definitely beating this kind of vegetarian-esque drum. I think that that drum beat has gotten heavier and heavier as time has gone on, interestingly. But having a little bit of a counter-culture streak, having an interest in improving my performance, health and longevity, I tried eating a high-carb, low-fat vegetarian diet, which then kind of grew into a vegan diet. What was interesting was that I was still trying to maintain a power-lifting schedule, I was trying to do kick-boxing and capoeira. So the only change to the system, really, was the fueling that I was using. And it didn't make sense to me that I would use brown rice protein powder or these protein concentrates that I would see a lot of these Vegan athletes use today. What made sense to me was that I should eat whole, unprocessed foods. So I started eating lots of grains and lots of legumes. I had a pressure-

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cooker. I had sprouters. I went to the George Ohsawa Macrobiotic Institute—studied there—I followed all of the stuff from John McDougall and Dean Ornish, and I got sick. I lost muscle mass. I went from about 185 lbs, sub-10% body fat, almost a 600 lb back squat, 565 squat, 356 dead lift, 345 bench; I could stand flat-footed under a basketball hoop and dunk a basketball with no run-up (actually, I'm uncoordinated enough that a run-up wouldn't have helped me); but, you know, I was a reasonably strong, powerful individual. And I was good at kick-boxing. And over the course of about two and a half years, I lost over 40 lbs of muscle mass. It got to the point where I couldn't even bench-press my body weight, which was then about 140 lbs. I had ulcerative colitis so bad that the doctors wanted to a bowel resection on me. And this is at the ripe old age of 26, 27. The doctors that I was going to—I was in Seattle at this time, with very alternative medicine, very pro-vegetarian—it was their opinion that this diet that I was eating was keeping me alive: this high-carb, low-fat vegetarian/vegan diet. Given the fact that my parents were both Type II diabetic and had heart disease and everything, it was their opinion that I was a confluence of their very shallow end of the gene pool—genetics. I was basically seriously chinga'd at that point. I had nothing, really, to do, except to ride this thing out and have a bowel resection. It was my opinion at that time that I probably wasn't going to live all that long. Then my mother, we discovered, had an intolerance—had Celiac's disease, you know, gluten intolerance. She also had an intolerance, and autoimmune response to various legumes and also to dairy. We discovered this when she had an autoimmune flare. And when I was talking to my mother—and she almost died from all this whole process—and when I was talking to my mom and she was describing what her rheumatologist was recommending that she needed to eat, which was no grains, no legumes, no dairy, basically. I was like, "God, no grains, no legumes, no dairy? What the heck would you eat if you don't eat that?" It was weird, this kind of stream-of-consciousness thing. I was thinking, "grains and legumes, agriculture, what did you eat before agriculture?" And after a minute it just popped into my head: Paleo Diet. I had heard this term, this was back around 1998, and I had heard this term before, and it was this idea that if you ate more akin to your Paleolithic ancestors, that there might be some health benefits to that. So I used this new search engine called Google...

Abel: [laughs]

Robb: And, low and behold, there was some information from these guys: Art DeVany and Loren Cordain. Not a ton of information like there is now, but there was some information. And it talked a ton about grains causing gastrointestinal damage, metabolic derangement due to changes in carbohydrate load in decreases in protein and basically just an evolutionary mis-

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match between our genetics and our environment. And I literally was like, “What the heck have I got to lose?” I went and bought a bunch of grass-fed beef ribs at Whole Foods, cooked ‘em up, had a salad, and literally had the best night’s sleep I’d had in a couple of years. The following day I had scrambled eggs and fruit. And that’s almost 15 years ago.

Abel: Yeah.

This whole thing grew out of that. I was very fortunate at the time that the place I was working I was doing some lipid metabolism research related to autoimmunity and cancer, and so I was kind of able to steer the boat of my research kind of in this Paleo diet direction. I ended up doing a research fellowship with Loren Cordain for about 9 months out in Ft. Collins, and then started the gym in Chico, and the blog, and the podcast, and did the book and all the rest of that. But that’s all been an outgrowth of having been really sick, getting healthy, becoming a coach, talking to people about this stuff, kind of keeping my finger in the research circles and all that. That’s kind of the Cliff Notes 30,000-foot treatment of how I went from that spot to this spot.

Abel: Awesome! And it’s definitely blown up in the past few years, for sure.

Robb: It’s insane.

Abel: Yeah! And I wanted to talk to you a little bit about that. Paleo has evolved, so to speak, over the past few years, and it seems that it’s far more nuanced in terms of what qualifies as Paleo, especially in recent years. But you worked with Cordain way back, like you said, so what do you think about how Paleo has kind of re-calibrated over the past few years?

Robb: You know, it’s interesting, it’s good. You know, in the early days, Loren was of the opinion that saturated fat posed a significant cardiovascular risk parameter. And I always—coming as a lipid biochemist background—it never made sense to me unless we had other really overt systemic inflammatory issues. And so, this is one of the things that, over the course of time, that stuff has rattled out. We understand one of the big awakenings for me...I was always of the opinion that everybody would benefit from a low-carb, Paleo approach. I was quite dogmatic about it because I saw so damn many people benefit from it. But you know there’s a selection bias. You hear more from the people that succeed than fail. I’m usually not that big of a dick, so I think that when something doesn’t work for most people, they don’t come back and say “Neener-neener, this didn’t work.”

Abel: [laughs]

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Robb: And so you create a selection bias with that. And then, over the course of time, I think that most people who are metabolically broken have systemic inflammation. But throwing the dart close to that low-carb spot, it's just a common place to start. Is it the orthodoxy? Do you always? No, you don't always have to start there, but it's a safe, easy spot that you can start people, and then we can start tinkering from there. Do you need more carbs? Do you need a kind of GAPS protocol to really heal the gut, and you don't do starch at all? Or do you in fact do way better with starch. And then we've got kind of a logic tree or a flow chart that we can then start customizing things. The thing that's interesting to me is that people just get nasty as hell about the nuances when, really, it's just a process of discovery. It's nothing to get your panties bunched up about. Some stuff's going to work better for some people than for others. This basic evolutionary template is still more or less the place to start. And if it just flat doesn't work for somebody then we will discover that over time. I typically don't see that. But there's nothing really to get that worked up about that. We've just learned some nuanced pieces to all this over time. And I think that this new risk assessment program that just popped up in the city of Reno is a good illustration of just having a base kind of curriculum or kind of philosophy. This is where we start the lion's share of people. If you've got metabolic derangement, we start you on a low-carb Paleo [diet], we get your vitamin D levels up, we battle to get your sleep levels improved, try to have some smart exercise. And then we start tinkering and shifting and shuffling from there. It's based on the feedback we get from the person. We usually get some really good performance out of folks. We have a gal that Amy Kubal's been nutritionally coaching, and I've been helping her also. Her name's Ursula Grobler; I believe she just made the U.S. Olympic team. Literally, they just had a race an hour ago or something, and she was seated first place. But she set the indoor world record on the 2,000-meter rowing event a couple of years ago. And she took almost a minute off the previous best after she started eating Paleo.

Abel: That's awesome.

Robb: Which is totally cool! And we've got a lot of top-level MMA fighters like Forest Griffon and Frank Meer.

Abel: Monsters.

Robb: And so it's just a good, safe spot to start most folks. And then we can kind of tinker and modify from there and see where we go.

Abel: Yeah! And maybe you could talk a little bit more about this. You brought it up at Paleo FX. And I was pleased when you talked about how, in your book, it starts out recommending lean

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meats, but can we talk about the fat issue? Because what you said earlier, that seems a little bit over-reductive, it's not really the whole story. It's not just lean meats; it's all fat.

Robb: Yeah. And you know, the way that I do, or the reason I wrote the book the way that I did, and I had a couple of folks, I forget her name, she was really cute, her name will come to me... But she was like, "I wish you would change that in your book! I always have to answer this question." But, you know, I wrote "lean meats" and also, if you notice, if you look at the blood work, I have blood work recommendations that are straight out of American...AMA recommendations: low cholesterol and all the rest of that stuff. But then I have qualifiers immediately after that. So I recommend lean meats and low cholesterol levels unless you have "this, this and this" happen. I recommend the lean meats up front, but then if you look at the actual meal plan recommendations, it's not lean meats, it's not low-fat.

Abel: Yeah.

Robb: A little bit of what this is is just some necessary smoke-and-mirrors to just get the buy-in so that I'm not tripping these kind of flags that are going to send people into a fizz. So even though I say, "lean meats," we have bacon in the meal plan.

Abel: [laughs]

Robb: And even though I recommend low cholesterol levels overall, then as soon as we get in, we start looking at, "Well, what if your HDL is this, your LDL is this, but your triglycerides are super-low, and your C-reactive protein is really low, then it really doesn't matter all that much. In doing that, the interesting thing to me—unlike with Loren Cordain, where he didn't end up having these qualifiers in the book, he got very severely taken to task about his cholesterol recommendations, about the fat and stuff like that—whereas for me, I guess I was a little bit two-faced about it. But I watched what had gone down with him. I had watched what had happened to Mike Eades, who had always recommended a higher-fat approach, or don't worry about the fat, even from conventional meat, and stuff like that, and I saw both of these people get taken to task from people not understanding what the bigger picture was that they were trying to talk about. And then, also, because it was just flipping a kind of emotional switch.

Abel: Yeah...

Robb: And so, instead of tackling that head-on, I just kind of told people what they wanted to hear up-front, had the qualifiers on the back end to keep the more nuanced people happy, and I haven't been been kicked in the balls too much, ya know?

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Abel: [laughs]

Robb: Overall, the thing just works. And so, this is some of the stuff that's born of coaching people and also having the benefits of--Loren's book was released in 2001, mine was released in 2010. So I had 10 years of travel to see how this message how this message had gone out to the masses. How was it received? And where were people kind of falling down on it?

Abel: Right.

Robb: So, people will kind of freak out about, "Well, Robb recommends lean meats." But if you skip past that and actually get to the meal plans, and do what I recommend, I tell people to shut up and do it for 30 days, and then go from there, track mile markers before, track mile markers afterwards. Then, at the final analysis, everything comes out fine.

Abel: Yeah. And, you know, I think that's a good approach. Because I remember when I went from being vegetarian to eating meat again, and it's a similar story as you, I just started eating meat. I remember; I was lifting weight as a vegetarian. I was carrying extra weight and extra fat, but I was losing muscle. I'm just like, "What is going on?" And I had a really heavy session. And at the end of it, I'm just like, "I want meat. I need meat right now." And I hadn't had it in years. And so I just went and got a steak. But when I did, you know, there's something inherently scary about fat when you first eat it, especially off an animal. Animal fat is just very intimidating, especially in this society. And who knows exactly why that is, but it definitely takes a while for people who've even adopted this lifestyle to get used to the idea of eating fatty, fatty cuts of meat. But, once you do, they're delicious.

Robb: Yeah, and I think we could flip that around and kind of put the carbohydrate intake in the same deal. I was so sick, and then benefited so much from a ketogenic diet that I had a legit, hard-wired carb phobia for a long time. And some of that was because, until I really reversed some of the metabolic derangement, if I had something like an orange or an apple or a hunk of sweet potato or something like that, I just didn't feel good. It took me a long time to get healthy enough where I could then tolerate that stuff again.

Abel: So, shifting gears a little bit, I heard you talk on your podcast—which I love, by the way; I listen to it all the time.

Robb: Oh, thanks, man!

Abel: Yes! It's great stuff. You kind of attacked the recent study on the evils of red meat. I loved that. Can you tell us why that's crap science?

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Robb: Well, Mat Lalonde and I were talking about this. And my main issue with it was that it was, again, this food-frequency questionnaire, very observational, and you know they did the best job they could to try to normalize differences within different groups: this group had more smokers, this group exercised less and stuff like that. And my main point with this thing, unlike some other folks that kind of went after the study, I don't like the observational piece, I don't like the food frequency piece. And the example that I used in that write-up was a very, very similar piece that seemed to implicate starch intake as being a risk factor in the recurrence of breast cancer in people who had already suffered from breast cancer.

Abel: Right.

Robb: And I would love to jump up and down on that study and throw it out to the blog-o-sphere and be like, "See? See? Carbs are bad! Insulin spiking is bad!" And I can think of some mechanisms of causation there, thinking about insulin-like growth factor and down-regulation of retinoic acid production out of the liver, and that being a factor in apoptosis. And I can make an argument for a mechanism there. But I can't hang my hat on that study, because, again, it's a food frequency questionnaire and it's very observational.

Abel: Yeah.

Robb: It's a place to start asking mechanistic-based questions where we do intervention studies and whatnot. My main point was just that, whether it looks like it's for our position or against our position, we can't promulgate science around that thing. And my point was really that we've done this epidemiological—I equate it to the pan-handlers on the street, that there's a dice under the hat and they're moving it around on the table—we've done that. We have done that game ad nauseum. And what we need to start doing is shifting our money into intervention studies metabolic or clinic trials, where we are looking at specific biomarker end-points, putting diseased populations, putting healthy populations under different dietary protocols, and then see what the results are.

Abel: Right.

Robb: And that's kind of my point with that. Stephan Guyenet, through some e-mail exchanges, said, you know, maybe there are some deleterious health elements to that red meat piece that people aren't looking at. Like, maybe we've got a hemochromatosis thing, where people are accreting too much iron over time, and that's an oxidative stress and we've know that that may be an issue and Eades talked about that back in 2000, 2001 in Protein Power Lifeplan recommended that males and post-menopausal women donate blood to reduce their iron load

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and stuff like that. So that's all legit stuff. But my main...I wasn't as comfortable with some of the delving into the different quintiles and folks thought that the data was being massaged and whatnot. I think it almost obscures the point, which is, we need to move beyond that level of investigation. We've got a couple of different competing ideas out there, you know, AMA and vegan and evolutionary biology, Paleo/ancestral health, whatever you want to call it. Let's start doing some intervention studies based around those concepts and see what the outputs are.

Abel: I like that. Now, to take a step back, I've been thinking about this recently, Robb.

Theoretically we've been told to look back to our ancestors ten thousand years ago to look for cues about optimum human health and lifestyle. But you can look back just a couple of generations and they were far closer to optimum than the average American today. And, you know, agriculture clearly had an effect on health. But in terms of obesity, modern disease, and pretty much anything else you can measure, things didn't really seem to fall off a cliff until 50, 30, 20 years ago. And it's getting worse fast. So I'd be interested in your opinion on why that might be the case. Like, why are things getting so bad so quickly—seemingly?

Robb: You know, I'm working on a blog post, let me pull up the guy's name. It's Slatten, I think. But there was a doctor in Australia, who, in the 1960's, put the pieces together of leaky gut and autoimmune disease. It was just this amazing investigative work. He arrived at a lot of what we're seeing come out of Fasano's research, and all this leaky gut/autoimmune disease research.

Abel: Right.

Robb: And he was treating people effectively, and it then it disappeared. The dude retired and then he died. It was so contrary to the mainstream message it just kind of got gobbled up and disappeared. But reading through his literature, in the early 1800's, 1700's, a lot of people died from deficiency diseases. So there was a huge selection pressure. There were lots and lots and lots of kids who died from gastrointestinal ailments, which, I think, looking back now, we kind of recognize as being Celiac-related issues, you know, grain intolerance-type issues. So early on, we still had enough sporadic elements to our food system. And we had problems like Beriberi and, gosh, I'm blanking on the other term, but basically B-vitamin deficiencies, we had D-vitamin deficiencies. We had a lot of diseases of deficiency...scurvy. So, it was only recently that we're able to get a population matched up with a food supply where we were fortifying the food so that we weren't seeing overt nutrition deficiencies in general. So we weren't seeing that happening. So we didn't have kids dying from deficiency diseases. We didn't have older adults dying from

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deficiency diseases. Now we've got a robust enough food supply, and also tinkering with that food to kind of make it hyper palatable, to bypass the neuro-regulation of appetite. And I think that's part of the transition that we're seeing. There was a lot of dying from infectious disease and also diseases of deficiency because of, really, an inadequate food supply because of the very reliance on these grains that were, at that point, unfortified and were causing gastrointestinal disease and stuff like that. And then we see this transition into fortified foods that prevent overt vitamin B deficiencies that would kill people or make them open to infectious disease, but then, coupled with a really, really abundant food supply.

And I think that's kind of my gut sense, my understanding of where this stuff has gone. And then you start coupling that with shorter and shorter sleep, more and more photoperiod dysregulation, more inactivity, I think all these things feed into systemic inflammatory issues, decreased insulin sensitivity. Just the whole package is moving further and further away from a phenotypic norm that would have been good for the vast majority of us. Some people are more robust at dealing with vitamin D and light deficiencies. There seems to be some selective adaptation in people in Northern Europe, you know, like in Finland, those people do not tend to succumb to Seasonal Affective Disorder quite the same way that people who transplant to that area are affected.

Abel: Right.

Robb: And so that's the point that, I think a lot of people have made a very good point: it's not just about what our genes were in the Paleolithic, that we've had all kinds of selection pressure. There's been all kinds of changes. That's absolutely true. And that's some of the fallacious reasoning that has driven this Paleo concept. It would have been better if this was called 'evolutionary diet' or something like that, because it hearkens back to evolution.

So there have been changes. But the interesting thing is that regardless of where the changes are currently—okay, so we don't have the exact same genes as our Paleolithic ancestors from 100,000 years ago—that doesn't change the fact that, for the vast majority of people, adopting something that looks more like that program...

Abel: Yeah, that's a good point...

Robb: ...reducing grains, legumes and dairy; it still benefits them. So this is one of the things, also, I see people get really nasty about, "Well, you can't say that our genes are the same as what they were as hunter-gatherers." Okay, guilty as charged! That's 100% true, I've made that fallacious statement. But then, at the end of the day, if I turn around and ask these people, "So what do you recommend that I do differently so that we reverse metabolic derangement,

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autoimmune disease and a whole host of systemic and inflammatory diseases? And then there's nothing really to add to it.

Abel: Yeah.

You know, some people have more resistance to these effects than others. There's a genetic distribution on that we tend to see the robust resistance to things like grains decrease over time. So, like, carbohydrate load becomes more significant as we get older and stuff like that. I think that, as we move out of the early reproductive years, when selection pressure is very, very powerful, and we see more of these things pop up later. So, again, it's nuanced in that we understand better the 'how', but then the 'why', you know, 'why is this stuff the way it is?' but then the 'how—how do we fix this?' I don't really see that changing all that much.

Abel: It looks like things are really accelerating and getting worse a lot faster. Is that your opinion also?

Robb: It seems like it, as far as Type II Diabetes, and all of that stuff, and I think that a little understanding of epigenetics, like, what was the in-utero environment of my grandmother and my mother, and what is the epigenetic input, then, on me? It almost kind of Neo-Lamarckian genetics. There was this thought at one time that giraffes developed long necks because they stretched their necks to fruit that was high up. That was kind of dismissed and shot down. But now we're circling back around. And it's certainly not Lamarckian genetics, but it's the epigenetic input, I think, that we're finding, you know, when we look at stress inputs, when we look at metabolic disease and stuff like that. It transfers in how genes are methylated so we're not changing the genes themselves, but we're changing how these genes get turned on and off, and that's possibly more important than the actual genome itself, you know? Like, people make the point that the difference between humans and chimpanzees is, like, 2%, 2.5% at most of the genes. But, really, the biggest difference between us is how the vast majority of those genes are turned on and off.

Abel: Right.

Robb: So I think that that's another nuance in what we're getting now is, you know, we're now several generations into post-industrial, heading into post-information age society, where, you know, grandma was metabolically broken, had Type II diabetes or borderline Type-II diabetes, mom was borderline, kid is now hatched, borderline-diabetic. And once those inputs are set in place, it appears to be damn hard to re-set all that. You know, like, the kid hatches out metabolically broken and even with a low-carb, active intervention, the kid is always kind of

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doughy, they don't really put on muscle mass, they don't have normal hormonal signaling. And I think that's some of what we are seeing, and it's pretty horrible. But you know, where that will force a change is when we have a population that is so sick that they either never go through puberty or die before reproductive age. But, basically, we get so far away from what is acceptable for our genetics and our epigenetics that we're not longer able to reproduce and we get a selection pressure. And only the people that squirt out the back end can deal with Slurpees and cotton candy and stuff like that.

Abel: [laughs]

Robb: And what emerges out the back end of that is not very heartening.

Abel: It definitely sounds depressing but interesting. Essentially, we're all just turning into crack babies, right?

Robb: If you've ever watched Idiocracy, it reminds me of that: where they've tanked the global food supply because they're watering everything with, basically, Gatorade.

Abel: [laughs]

Robb: It's just hilarious. So, the first 10 minutes of the movie are really worth watching. The rest of its kind of dodgy, but, yeah.

Abel: Ah, man, I haven't seen that one. [laughs]

Robb: It's a good one. Just Google 'Idiocracy', and find the YouTube clip on the first 10 minutes, it's amazing.

Abel: That's awesome. Well we talked a little in the beginning about fasting. I'd be interested, Robb, in your point of view. How do you incorporate it into your life, and what do you recommend it to others?

Robb: I've always...it's interesting, this idea kind of got on my radar in 2001, 2002, I started talking to Scotty Hagnes about this stuff around 2003, and then I wrote, I think, my first piece for the performance menu in 2005. I've always recognized this thing as having some therapeutic benefit. But I also suspected that, you know, it's a stress similar to exercise, and so you need to dose this thing out appropriately. And even when I first made recommendations for this, I recommended that you figure out what you needed to eat so that you look, feel and perform great. This was one of the rare times that I actually recommended that people weigh and measure their food, which I'm usually not a fan of. But I recommended that they really get a

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good picture of how much food you really need to run effectively at your current output. And then, when you start dropping in the intermittent fasting, maybe go about 16 hours, 14 to 16 hours initially, and just tinker. Make sure that you get the same amount of calories in that you would normally eat, but it's just in a compressed feeding window.

Abel: Yeah.

Robb: And very carefully progress from there. You know, maybe add an hour a month or something like that. So, 3 months down the road you're maybe going 17 hours. And, you know, progress that to the point where you start to see some deleterious effects, and then back it off. That should be about where the thing was introduced. My thought, early on, it's been kind of interesting, because, like, John Berardi, and Martin Berkam have really gotten in and tinkered with this stuff.

And they kind of arrived at the same stuff that I did, which was, if nothing else, I think what intermittent fasting tells us is that the whole body-building paradigm of 6 meals a day is pretty bogus. Maybe some people do better on that, you know, it's by no means the only way that you can get lean or build muscle and all that. So, if nothing else, intermittent fasting, or just simply eating 3 regular meals a day may simplify your life. And you're not neurotic about eating food all the damn time.

And that would be good. And then, from there, it's so dependent on what your stress level is, what your activity level is. But, I've found, more often than not, because I come out of this kind of CrossFit background, that given the sleep deficiencies that most people have, given the level of training that they're trying to endure, that intermittent fasting is often times, like, if you needed 12 things in your life, intermittent fasting was number 13.

Abel: [laughs] Okay.

Robb: It was the one thing too much. You know, I view it very much as a tool that can be used effectively under the right circumstances. But, inevitably, I see people jump too deep into the pool. They start off trying to do, like 24-hour fasts. And I just don't see good stuff come out of that. There's been a lot of good research which, I want to roll this stuff out on the blog, and I think whatever, you know, tertiary book projects will look at this stuff. But Michael Rose, who's one of the leading experts on the world on aging, he's done some really interesting stuff looking at genetic reaction norms in humans and other species and stuff like that. He makes a really compelling case, that severe calorie restriction will likely add only about 6 years to the average human life span.

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And that's it. That's doing, like, the Roy Walford, you know, reducing calories by 40% of normal.

Abel: Wow! Yeah.

Robb: Being cold, hypogonatic, no sex drive, and, like the best that you're going to get is about 6 more years of life.

Abel: Miserable life.

Robb: A miserable life!

And we know pretty clearly that exercise will give you 2 to 4 years of additional life. I think that just eating an anti-inflammatory diet would probably give you 2 to 5 years of life. So, really quickly, if we just exercise intelligently and don't beat ourselves to death, and we eat something that looks kind of like a Paleo-type diet, we've probably trumped all the benefit that we can get from calorie restriction, and we get to carry a little muscle mass around, have a functioning libido and not be cold all the time.

And that's where the intermittent fasting...like, I had hoped there might be this really cool intersection where we could get some significant increase in an average lifespan without suffering the down-sides of, you know, loss of muscle mass and sex drive and all that sort of stuff. For the way that humans are wired up and the way that we birth our young, and all the rest of that, and that all plays into the genetic reaction norms...I just don't think that's the case

So, I would largely just make an argument for people to get a lot of sleep, lift weights, do sprints, do gymnastics, maintain your mobility, eat an anti-inflammatory diet. And that's going to give you, like, 99% of the benefit of any type of freaky, austere, crazy intervention.

Abel: [laughs]

Robb: And, on the one hand, maybe that's a bummer because starving yourself isn't going to allow you to be 150 years old. But then, on the other side, maybe it's also kind of liberating, because, it's like, just live and enjoy yourself.

Abel: Yeah, just live your life.

Robb: You're going to get all the benefit.

Abel: I like that, I think that's good advice. So, Robb, I asked my readers and listeners—they were all stoked that you were coming on, so was I—if they had any questions for you, and they sure did. If that's alright with you, I'm going to transfer to some of those.

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Robb: I'm sure, I'm sure I can botch these

Abel: [laughs] Awesome. So, actually, you were just talking about this a little bit. But this is from Janet, she says, "How much and what style of exercise is appropriate for maximum longevity and overall vibrancy for those of us who put body composition lower on the priority list?"

Robb: Hm. Well, that's kind of an interesting piece. Because I think, to some degree, just focusing on good but not necessarily fashion-model body composition, I think that you could make an argument that that's an important piece to this. I just really like the characteristics that we get out of a balanced program that involves some weight-lifting, some gymnastics-type stuff, you know, basic tumbling and mobility work, and all that stuff. And some sprinting, and some sprints anywhere from, like, you know, 10 meters to up to maybe 800 meters and just playing along that spectrum. And I know that there are a lot of people that look at like the persistence hunting of the Kung San and sub-Saharan Africa. And that stuff's all legit, but the reason why I kind of hang my hat on this stuff is that, as we age, we tend to lose muscle mass and we tend to lose power. And we also can lose mitochondrial density and the ability to produce energy and use that as a fuel substrate and all that stuff. But when we train in a way that looks more akin to a sprinter or power athlete, then we are tweaking the genetics in the phenotypic expression against the primary things that we lose with aging.

So, you know, mobility and the ability to produce power, the ability to learn new movement patters. And that's where the gymnastics, Jiu Jitsu, capoeira, these kind of open-ended movement explorations are super-cool. And then, just the characteristics that we get from a sprint-based athlete...and I think that stuff is all fun. If you still want to go on long runs and swims and bikes and stuff like that. God love you, go for it.

Abel: [laughs]

Robb: The most important thing is to do the stuff that you like. But when I look from an anti-aging perspective that, you know, weight lifting to maintain muscle mass and power, gymnastics-type stuff for mobility and body-awareness, and sprint stuff to also augment the power. But to build that metabolic engine to keep us healthy throughout our life, that seems like a good balance and it doesn't have to be a frenetic pace. Art DeVany's old stuff of like 2 days a week of weight lifting, a couple of days a week of sprinting and just, you know, some mobility work. That's not a frenetic pace.

Every day try to do something active you know just get out, run around and play.

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Abel: And Art could beat the crap out of most teenagers these days. [laughs]

Robb: You know, Art has thrown some wacky stuff out there. And he's got this kind of prickly personality. But, you know, I love the dude. When we were together in New York, that dude is big and strong and fast.

We were wrapping up the TV shoot and we were walking back to the hotel, and we're probably about 40, 45 yards away from , like, we needed to cross the street so we're on our side of the street and we needed to get to the other side of the street and we had a chunk of sidewalk between us. And the crosswalk timer was counting down and it was like 5...4...And Art was like "Hey! Let's go for it!" And there's ice on the ground, it's below freezing. And he takes off running, and I'm like, a pretty fast, explosive dude. And he just kicked my ass.

Abel: That's awesome.

Robb: You know, he skidded on a little bit of ice and completely righted himself. Obviously there's some good genetics in there, but there's also the way that Art has tackled this stuff, it works. This is one of these things, not to go too far off-topic, but Art has historically recommended lean cuts of meat, going back to one of the first questions.

Abel: I remember that.

Robb: His point is just that most people are just not that active and don't need that many calories. And so he would prefer to have some pork spare ribs, but don't add 6 tablespoons of coconut oil to it. You don't need that. And this is definitely one of the places that people have just harangued him. But, as time has gone on, I'm like "Dude, Art's spot-on." Most people are not active enough to warrant just a ladling of fat onto the bulk of their meals. They would be leaner, they would be less inflamed, they would have better body composition if they would just follow this guy's recommendations. And people have just barbecued him for these recommendations. And I see this play out as I coach people. The dude's right. And when you look at the results that he produces in himself and in the people that follow his program, it's like, you do better than that! Get back to me.

Abel: [laughs]

Robb: I think Art's approach to training—I don't think you're going to produce a world-champion Olympian or a world-champ sprinter, but it's the best return on the investment I've ever seen.

Minimum investment, maximum return.

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Abel: To anyone out there who hasn't checked out his book, definitely go grab it. There's a lot of good stuff in there.

Robb: Just that evolutionary fitness essay that you read on his website I think is almost easier and more accessible...it's a phenomenal piece of work.

Abel: That's true. Alright, cool, so this might be a bit of a hot topic, but this one's from Colby. "Is there such thing as 'safe starches?'"

Robb: I always like to tackle these things with, "Who are we talking about? What are they trying to do?"

So, if I have somebody that has a 300 triglycerides, you know, the triglyceride 300, or HDLs are, like, 30, this person has raging insulin resistance and metabolic derangement, I think the term 'safe starches' applied to this person is moronic.

Abel: Yeah.

Robb: Once we do kind of a low-carb intervention with this person and get them a functioning from an insulin resistance standpoint much better and get their leptin signaling much better and whatnot, then I would be totally open to introducing some starch for this person particularly post-workout and see where they go. But, now, might there be people with that 300 triglyceride level and 30 HDL that are not going to respond well to a ketogenic diet? Maybe. There are possibly going to be people out there, but the lion's share of people are going to benefit from that lower-carb intervention. It's going to reverse metabolic derangement so powerfully and just so effectively that that's still where I've got to start the vast majority of people. And if we don't get the type of shift that we want, and we've got the person sleeping, and their Vitamin D levels are good, you're getting a little fish oil, then we can tinker with the starch a little bit.

But it's always important to ask, "Who is the person? What are they trying to do?" instead of just these blanket statements: "Safe starches are good for everybody.' For that matter, is a ketogenic diet intervention the best place for everybody? No. But it's a better place to start more people than, in my opinion, than, say, starting them off with 150 or 200 grams of starch a day.

Abel: I would certainly agree with that. And what about carb re-feeds?

Robb: You know, I love cyclic low-carb eating. Like, I really liked all of Mauro Di Pasquale's stuff, the metabolic diet, anabolic diet and stuff like that. The thing with that is that I don't like seeing it turn into the four-hour body approach, which is, you start like a heroin addict.

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Abel: [laughs]

Robb: You start getting your box out, like tying yourself off 3 days in advance, gearing up for this carb re-feed. And I just don't see good stuff happen out of that. One, people tend to gravitate towards carbs that I think are gut-irritating, more grain-based type stuff. I just like to see this kind of play out naturally. If you go out and you're hanging out with some friends and you get Mexican food instead of the Carne Asada plate with meat and veggies, you're like, "Dude, I'm going to have some nachos." Okay, have some nachos. Don't freak out about it. But I like to see that stuff just happen more spontaneously as part of life versus people planning this out like they're doing a hooker and cocaine binge...

Abel: [laughs]

Robb: ...in Vegas. I just don't see good results come out of that. People don't come back from it for a long time, if ever. I think metabolically it's not all that great a thing. I'd rather see that kind of thing happen spontaneously and within reason and all that stuff.

Abel: And Tim's approach is certainly extreme, I think, in pretty much all cases.

Robb: I think you take that basic template and then actually moderate it a little bit, and I think you've got a better, longer-lasting approach.

Abel: I know that I've had good luck sometimes if I go very low-carb for too long, I feel a little sluggish. I used to have this—especially when I did vegetarian diet—like, some thyroid issues, and that's genetic, my mom's always had that, too. When I started eating meat, most of that resolved itself, but going very low-carb, it seems to make me sluggish again. I haven't checked a lot of my numbers there. But I have found that when I do re-feed once every week or two on carbs, mostly Paleo carbs, then I feel a heck of a lot better for a while.

Robb: Yeah! Totally. Where I've kind of played out with that is that I like to see carbs just go in the post-workout window.

Abel: Yeah.

Robb: Based on leanness and the amount of activity that you did and all that stuff, like when I drug myself out to my car after I think I did, like, 6 3-minute rounds of chits today, and all the dudes that were there are like, 22 to 25 and they weigh over 210 lbs.

Abel: Jeez!

Robb: I'm 40, and I weigh 175 lbs. And I do reasonably well, but, dude, it's a mauling, you know? And I've got to work really, really hard, they're all strong and athletic. And when I get done with that, like I know, typically on a Tuesday, who the dudes are that show up. And the sweet potato that I ate after that, it was making my car ride heavy on the one side. It was a monster sweet potato. And that's what I needed to kind of bounce back from that training if I go and do some gymnastics, isometric holds and whatnot, then I have, maybe 30 grams of carbs with that, and then I'm mainly sticking with the veggies and maybe a little more carbs if I know I'm going to do some metabolic training in the day. That's how I've kind of taken that, I meter out my carbs based on 'what is my need coming up?' or 'what did I just do?' And that seems to work pretty well.

Abel: And how long is the post-exercise window?

Robb: You know, it really depends on how bad the beating was. Since this one was bad, I had that big carb meal, and then Nikki and I are going to go hit a Mexican place that makes a seafood stew that has sweet potatoes in it. And so I'm going to ask them to add more sweet potatoes in this thing. And so, because I got bludgeoned, this one...the total carb load will probably be 250 to 350 grams of carbs, all told.

Abel: That's impressive.

Robb: And, dude, I am so bludgeoned after that.

Abel: [laughs]

Robb: It all just gets sopped up. It is in the muscles. It is not getting converted to triglycerides.

And then tomorrow will be more of an off-day. I think I'm doing some gymnastics iso hold-type stuff. It's going to be more of a low-ish carb day. Probably not all that much in the way of carbs, but I'll get this stuff flown in, you know, post-workout. If I was trying to compete, like I'm kind of rattling around the idea of doing some old Jiu Jitsu tournaments later this year. And I might even go a third carb feeding because I know tomorrow I'm either going to have to do some metabolic training or some more rolling. And so I would preemptively, in that case...and that's kind of the inflection point, though, where I would start arguing that I'm probably moving away from health and longevity and doing a little bit of a performance bias. I'm doing things I could argue I could probably see some changes in blood work, I could see some changes in inflammatory markers that probably aren't the best, but for right now, I'm completely cool with it.

Abel: Yeah, it's fine.

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Robb: Makes my life worthwhile. And if I do Jits, then it makes me not as big an asshole when I'm driving.

Abel: [laughs]

Robb: It keeps me out of jail, so it's all a good trade-off.

Abel: That's great! Alright, here's another one from Janice. And she wants to know your opinions on another controversial topic: cold thermogenesis Jack Kruse-style.

Robb: I talked about this one on my podcast. I've always liked hydrotherapy contrast. Hydrotherapy, I think I have a photo floating around the internet where I'm sitting in a horse trough, there's ice on top. I had to punch a hole in the ice and crawl inside of it.

Abel: I have to find that!

Robb: I'll pull it up. I'll ship it to you.

Abel: Cool.

Robb: You can throw it in the program notes on this thing. Funny! For me, this stuff isn't really all that new. But I also think that Jack is brilliant, whatever room he's in, he's always the smartest dude in the room.

Abel: Yeah.

Robb: He's got more talent in his pinky than I'll ever end up having.

Abel: [laughs]

Robb: But I think that this stress, just like heat, just like exercise, I only see this on the spectrum of various potential, what we would call 'use stresses' potentially beneficial stresses. And I think that there's a dose response curve. I think that there are people that are appropriate and inappropriate. And my opinion, if you have someone who has a very low-acting thyroid and cortisol production, you find somebody who's kind of flat-lined in the late stages of adrenal fatigue, then I think a cold thermogenesis as per regular recommended, I think that would be a horrible idea for those people. And I have talked to Chris Kresser about that, and some other folks who I really respect, and they largely agree. So, for me, I see this again as a tool that we ask "Who are you, and what do you need?" Even when I was doing this stuff, I would do a workout, body temperature would get up, I'd go punch a hole in the ice bath and jump in the ice. And it perked me back up, but then, interestingly, I was having mobility problems because I was

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taking the time when I was usually hot that I would be able to affect some good mobility changes in my hip flexors and psoas and stuff like that. I was getting cold, and so then I was doing a tradeoff between mobility and the recovery activity. And the best time that I have personally, for mobility work, is when I'm hot after doing either some Jiu-Jitsu, kick-boxing, or some metabolic work with a bunch of sweatshirts on, I seal in the heat, and then I stretch for 30 minutes. And I stay really mobile and do the front and side splits. I can go from sitting and press into a handstand, and walk into a backbend.

Abel: That's awesome!

Robb: I have some good mobility. And when I started doing the post-workout cold dunk, I started losing that. But then, if I did my mobility work, then I cooled off enough that the cold dunk was miserable. I mean, just...and, granted, you can go under water...literally this stuff was barely above freezing because it had a layer of ice on the top. This was at our gym in Chico. And I'd punch a hole in the thing and, you know, jump in. So you could make the argument that, maybe a little bit warmer water...

Abel: [laughs]

Robb: And that's true. But I didn't have it. Again, with all this stuff, I just can't implore people enough to think about, "Who are you? What are you trying to do?" Not "Is this right or wrong, good or bad," but, "Who are you and what are you trying to do?" And then we can get into a little bit of the nuance: "Does this make sense?" I think we could make a general argument that gluten is Satan's excrement.

Abel: [laughs]

Robb: It's probably not all that good for anybody.

Abel: Sure.

Robb: There are too many absolutes that I would throw out there.

That's where I look at the contrast type of therapy, cold thermogenesis and all that stuff. I think it's a great technique; it's been well-used in the past. I certainly agree with all the thought about deep, deep evolutionary gene expression related back to when mammal were swimming under the ice cap and stuff like that. I just don't think that that really has bearing on us. Currently, the oldest person in the world right now lives in the Amazon. And she lived primarily as a hunter-gatherer, and has never seen a day cooler than probably 70 degrees. So I don't know. But it's

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this thing, again, where let's say 80% of what Jack is saying is right. Some of the theory is not right or maybe it is, maybe it's not. But if it moves us forward and we get some techniques that we can figure out how to employ it properly, let's look at it for what it is. If some stuff needs to be jettisoned, then let's jettison it. If we can adapt some stuff, then let's adapt some stuff and just leave it at that. It doesn't have to be this religious fervor either for or against, let's just kind of look at it for what it is and see if there's some good stuff to it. And I think there absolutely is, but let's apply it in the appropriate way.

Abel: Right, right. And I was talking to Jack about that on a couple of podcasts ago. How it's more important to be directionally accurate than to be 100% correct on every single thing. And one of the issues is that he's being called out on this, was little things that seem like they shouldn't undermine the entire message, right? Because it's just minutiae.

Robb: Yeah, but, you know Mat Lalonde has been kickin' me in the balls on making sure that my minutiae's accurate because we are being very heavily scrutinized at this point. And it's at a point where this concept is going mainstream. We're getting buy-in from academic institutions and city institutions and stuff like that. And so, in some ways, I think that it's more important to really focus on the things that we know for sure and then be cautious about what we roll out on the periphery. And always have the caveat "this may be the case, I suspect this, this is open for interpretation. I think that's part of the reason why I knock on wood. I don't get a lot of trolls on my website because I don't make grandiose claims. And I always have the caveat, "This is my best understanding, if things change, then we'll modify the prescription."

I haven't gone down that route of the all-knowing guru and stuff like that. And it's what I saw on CrossFit. I think within CrossFit there's a lot of great stuff. But then they made some claims that were completely unsubstantiated, and would not modify their position on it. And, granted, has it affected their growth? No. But it has kept them out of being adopted by places like naval special warfare and various academic institutions, because even though it's good, the basic theoretical underpinnings were flawed. So that makes it unacceptable to be applied into a mainstream setting. That is where I think the direction is important, but let's also just keep the science as solid as we can at the level that we have some pretty good clarity. And then the theoretical stuff? That's totally cool. Let's talk about that. But let's not lead with that.

Abel: Right. And I think that one of the reasons that people love you and love your blog and podcasts so much is that you are fairly measured in that sort of thing. You don't claim to have all the answers. And that's where people run into problems, for sure.

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Robb: Yeah. Yeah, and it just...I know on a market-share, market-grab kind of gig that can work in the short run, but this is a really...it's a remarkably educated, really savvy group of folks. And I've thrown some stuff that somebody dug up, like 2003 or something on my ___ that I was like, it's pretty clear that hunter-gatherers ate 6 meals a day. And they were like "you got that one wrong!" Touché, dude, I totally did. I probably have close to a million words out there, and the book was 100,000 words. Maybe I've got 2,000 words out there. I've probably fucked up on some of them. There's probably some mistakes somewhere, ya know?

Abel: [laughs]

Robb: Trying to just lead with quality and really sincere desire to help people and not so much like a market-grab based off sensationalism.

Abel: Totally.

Robb: I just think that that serves everybody much, much better.

Abel: So, this question is actually relevant to that. And I love this one. "If Robb Wolf were to write another book about Paleo, what new and important info would he add?"

Robb: Gosh. You know, really, that little bit that I talked about with intermittent fasting and aging would be the direction which is just: lift weights, sprint, do mobility work, be happy, get sunlight, and just that wacky austere dietary interventions like calorie restriction and really severe intermittent fasting are probably not going to do anything for you. And even may even shorten your life relative to just a more measured approach on this stuff. And, you know, that's kind of the interesting piece, too, which is—and I have just an interesting, I released a budget guide, and a 30-day transformation deal and all that. The interesting thing is that there are more people who will ultimately do this Paleo concept, who lie in the future who lie in the present or the past.

This thing is trending, it's getting bigger, but it is interesting, the old guard, the folks who've been around a long time, it's awesome that they're there, it's awesome that they're educated, but it's easy to forget that you've got lots and lots of new people entering the scene, and we don't know anything about this stuff. And when you consistently have questions about, "How do I do this on a budget? What's an easy way to get started?" stuff like that, then you need to make something that's accessible to them. Somebody's going to, and if you're doing this stuff for both the health people and some sort of a monetized deal, I don't think that that's a problem. And so, like, this second piece, I would argue would have some really interesting science that I could talk about: reaction norms and gene expression to humans relative to say, like, you know, mice and stuff

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like that, and why calorie restriction works for them but probably wouldn't work for us. But by and large, that's not going to be anything different from what I talked about here and talked about on my podcasts and stuff like that.

There's really not all that much new under the sun, but there's a whole lot of people out there that don't know this message. So oftentimes, you know, like Mark Sisson made a 21-day transformation book. That wasn't written necessarily for the people who've already bought in. This was written for people who are sniffing around the periphery. Ideally, we want to actually try this stuff, so that's another thing that I would encourage people to think about, you know, the thing that rolls out as a product which is oftentimes, nobody's holding a gun to your head to go buy it. It's frequently not geared towards you. And then, for the people who really want to geek out, like, we have these certifications rolling out, different stratified levels and everything, so there's effort to continue the education of folks. We've got this relationship going with State University of New York to have an Evolutionary Studies minor.

Abel: Super cool!

Robb: That can be completed online. And that's going to be kind of the glue that seals all the stuff together. So there's lots of effort to generate information for both old guard, that's very savvy and well-educated on this stuff. But we need to also think of what's the next step that's out there. Or it's kind of a visionary thing.

Abel: [laughs]

Robb: It's been kind of an interesting this as this has gone on. Folks sometimes get testy when you whip out new stuff. And it's intriguing to me, but, what are you going to do?

Abel: I know you're a busy guy. Do you have plans on something in the background that you're working on? Another book or something like that?

Robb: Well, you know, I've been slowly chipping away at this food politics book that looks at subsidies and the FDA and all that stuff, and I'm just slowly chipping away at it, not honestly—I may end up turning that thing into a long series of blog posts, and just scrap the book idea entirely, because it's really important stuff, but it's so boring that it just makes me want to lobotomize myself.

Abel: [laughs] Oh no!

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Robb: Because if I were to go on Bill Marr or something, and talking about subsidies and the FDA and all that, I need to know dates and people and facts like just the back of my hand. And I just don't care that much, you know? It's like, the big picture's important, but, so, I'm debating about what/how to tackle the thing.

And I feel like, you know, there's been some interesting stuff that's popped up, like this sustainability piece, the next 5 to 10 years, sustainability is going to be what saturated fat was in the last 10 years, where we're like, whenever the hand ringing, vegetarian crowd says, well, "Saturated fat will kill you!" We're finally putting the final nail in the coffin of all that stuff. So, now, it's defaulting to, "You can't feed a global population in a Paleo way." Boom. And they just drop this on your shoes. They don't have to provide any supportive data to prove this position, and then all the onus is left on us to disprove what their claims are. And so, I think a lot of this gets tied into food production and a not-transparent relationship between the Food and Drug Administration, subsidies, governments...there's a whole bunch of layers to it. And nobody asks the question, "Is the current way that we feed people, or is the vegetarian way that we feed people sustainable?" And I would argue that it's not.

Abel: Well, we're certainly not feeding people right now.

Robb: Ah, yeah.

Abel: Even that's known.

Robb: Yeah. So, you know, the book, I think it's important, but I'm not sure I've got the chutes in me to finish tackling it. Because it's an onerous, boring process, man. The first book, at least I liked the topic. But this topic is important, but it's like, "Man, I could shoot myself over doing the necessary research to be up-to-date on it.

Abel: [laughs]

Robb: So I don't know. I'll link up with Joel Salatin, and have him do all the heavy lifting on that.

Abel: Or get a ghost writer.

Robb: Totally.

Abel: [laughs] Alright, I've got one more question. This is from Susan. She says, "What do you think has to happen before Paleo will be accepted as a treatment for diseases like diabetes, heart disease and auto-immune conditions?"

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Robb: Gosh. You know, I think we are wickedly close to that. Did you read the blog post I did on the Paleo risk-assessment deal?

Abel: Yeah! Yeah. Super cool.

Robb: You know, this thing is so interesting, because the specialty health outfit has 1.5 million people on their database. And they've been tracking the 1.5 million people for 15 or 20 years or something. I mean, they have a monstrous database. And they're a health maintenance organization. And so, they track rates of all kinds of different diseases and whatnot. And then, what you can do with that chunk of data when you do an intervention like what they've been doing with the police and firefighters in Reno, is that you can very, very precisely predict a disease rate within certain populations, particularly when you know different metabolic parameters: triglycerides versus HDL versus c-reactive proteins, blah, blah, blah. And they have very sophisticated, very accurate ways of measuring disease rates. And so now, we've done this intervention on a number of folks. They've got just one small pilot study ended up saving the city of Reno over a 3-year period, like, 25 million dollars. It was like a 6,000 to 1 return on investment. I mean, it is insane.

And the numbers are bullet-proof. And what this then brings up: any other risk-assessment organizations, which there are tons of them now, this gets on their radar, and they're like, "Hm. Let's take a group of 200 people and do what they're doing."

And then, when this works, and when this saves a ton of cash, and you know, like, I made the point in the blog post, let's say some hippies in Berkeley want to do ___ and ___, go for it. Let's see. It's completely like UFC-style. Let's stick these two things in the ring, let's see which one comes up with his hand raise.

Abel: I would love to see that.

Robb: See which one works better, which one costs less, which one has a better long-term buy-in. And let's just see it. And this is where I'm very non-religious about this. If there's something that's better, then fine. Let's shift gears. If it cuts the risk of cardiovascular disease and cancer and metabolic derangement, and it costs less, and people do it, you know, if they'll buy into it and do it, good! Let's do it. I'll burn the whole house down, and let's do it!

I think the way that we're recommending things is pretty damn spot-on. And it's just fascinating, because we've got chief of police, chief of fire, we've got prominent city council members, we've

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got a city, money that is paying for this stuff, and now we've got all of the police force, all of the fire department, and I believe all of the city workers are going to go through this program now.

Abel: Wow.

Robb: And, you know, obviously...here's the contrast of this: is standard of care currently working?

Abel: [laughs] Right. It's a good question.

Robb: It's a disaster. The projections out of the Center for Disease Control project that by 2030, we will be spending 300% of GDP in the United States on just Medicare and Medicaid alone.

Abel: Yeah. That's insanity.

Robb: It can't work. It's impossible. You can't do that. And so, we have to shift gears. And it's either we decide you shift gears and land this thing on our own power, and we're kind of where we want it to land, or it lands kind of Road Warrior style when the wheels fall off the wagon and we just can't do a damn thing with anything.

We're bankrupt, and we're printing money, and we have hyper-inflation. And all of this stuff can get driven one way or the other just by the way that we tackle healthcare.

And I'm hopeful that this Reno phenomenon will literally be like Patient Zero, City Zero, where we try something different. We have the right place, the right people, in the right places willing to make...I won't even say the right decisions, but we're just willing to try. Because the thing they started off with didn't really work. And then they kept tinkering and kept tinkering. And the interesting thing is they have all the data on that stuff, when they did high-carb, low-fat. And they didn't get changes in metabolic parameters. So we haven't even talked about that yet. They've got years of data where they were trying what the AMA tells us to do, and it failed.

And in some ways, the data is more robust than what you could get out of the standard clinical trial. Granted, it's biased. It's not blinded, but from an outcome-based intervention, and then the ability to track disease, we can basically kick anybody's fanny on that right now. And that's really interesting. So I think that this thing is the skinny end of the wedge. It may be the thing that changes the tide completely.

Abel: That would be awesome. I'm definitely looking at that. And we're coming up on time, but before we go, you know, Robb, I was e-mailing with you about this earlier. But, we're clawing on the iTunes chart, up to Jillian Michaels. What are we going to do to finally displace the

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conventional wisdom? And she is against processed foods, I'm all about that, which is great, but how are we going to get up there?

Robb: Dude, I don't know! Let's keep Jillian at number one, and we'll back-fill all the way from 2 to 10.

Abel: That works, too!

Robb: You know, the Number One spot is great, but if we occupy more bandwidth, which I guarantee you, in total, between you, and me, and Jimmy, balanced by the other folks that are doing really solid podcasts that are getting really huge re-distribution, it doesn't really matter.

Abel: [laughs] That's a good point. I like that.

Robb: You know, that's to some degree a failing on my part. I'm a little bit more Zen about stuff, I don't really focus too much on numbers and outcomes, I'm more of an experiential thing—and to a detriment. I would do better if I was like “I'm going to make one million dollars a year!” And go out Bill Phillips style and attack that stuff. I'd probably be more effective.

Abel: [laughs]

Robb: But my thing is just like...I just want the community to be critical of the stuff that we're doing. But not so critical that we're in like, and Irish bar fight and everyone pulls a knife and shivs each other. And then, you know, that we unite on this stuff, that we know we've got right, and just push this message, and focus on saving people, just creating the opportunity to save people. Not everybody's going to buy in, not everybody's going to want to do it. And that's totally cool, but every single day there are people that die because they didn't know that there was an alternative to methatrexate for the rheumatoid arthritis. And this is the stuff that just slays me, when people are focusing on all the picky minutiae. There are people dying, and they could have done something to help them, by writing a better blog post, by sharing some information with a co-worker or something. And not in some sort of creepy evangelical way, but like, “Hey, dude. Here's a blog, here's a paper, maybe you should give this a shot.” And that's it.

I think if we do that stuff, you know, the cat's out of the bag. This evolutionary biology, ancestral health concept, I suspect, is not going to go away. I don't quite...I suspect that it's not a fad.

I like the joke, it's a fad 3 million years running.

Abel: [laughs]

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Robb: So I think that the only way that this thing can get broken or de-railed is from within. It's...if we mess up the message, if we become sectarian and just get wacky in that regard, I think it's kind of steady as she goes, keep putting out good information, keep focusing on helping people, and, dude, we'll have the top 20 podcasts related to ancestral health and movement. And we'll have a bunch of cool stuff on YouTube, and eventually we'll end up on a Discovery Channel show, with Erwan Le Corre running shirtless through beaches. The women will love it, and it'll be amazing, you know, so...

Abel: [laughs] Can't wait for that.

Robb: Yeah, yeah, me, too! Me, too. I'm not too proud to admit that. I think that that's just the stuff, you know. Doing it for the love and the right reasons and help people, and I want to start saying this more: my goal with what I'm up to is planned obsolescence. I'm making a living doing this stuff. I'm doing educational stuff, I'm writing books, I'm doing that. I want this message to be so ubiquitous that you don't need me; you don't need any of this stuff.

Abel: Pretty cool goal!

Robb: It's completely planned obsolescence. I will have done my part if this information is part and parcel to every registered dietetics program. If every nutritional science course is talking about evolution via natural selection and the ancestral health, and talking about the bell-curve distribution of genetic reaction norms, and that most people look more like our hunter-gatherer ancestors than not, or maybe that's some place to start them. If there's just some discussion about that, if all medical school graduates have some steeping in this information, then our job is done. And we will have averted catastrophe. And so, that's really my goal. And I don't know what type of timeline to put on that...5 years? 10 years? I don't know, I've been going this almost 15 years now.

But I guess I'll invest whatever time I feel doing it. But that's the goal: planned obsolescence. This information should be so ubiquitous...it's not like a union box. People should not need me. This information should be so ubiquitous that their doctor gets it, their pharmacist gets it, everybody in the healthcare, everybody in politics gets it so that we make decisions based off of good information and a good model. And then they don't need gurus. They just do the things that they do—they raise their kids and live their lives and snowboard and do capoeira. And this stuff is just kind of woven into the background. It shouldn't be an ongoing topic of conversation. It should just be what it is.

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Abel: I love that. And I love that you also train people to be their own gurus. You know? You approach the whole thing as a template that will work for people, to the extent that they test what works—dairy is a good example of that. You're not totally against it, you're certainly not for it, but if it works for someone, maybe it's appropriate. And it has to be an individualized program in order to go on such a massive scale. And I think it likely will.

Robb: Yeah, I totally agree.

Abel: Awesome! Well, Robb, thanks so much for coming on this podcast. We'll have to do it again soon.

Robb: My pleasure, man, I had a great time. You're doing awesome work. You've rocketed to the top of this thing. And it makes me wish I had done a shirtless photo on my icon.

Abel: [laughs]

Robb: But you're kicking ass man, I'm super proud of what you're doing. And you're doing just a phenomenal job.

Abel: Ah, man, thanks so much, Robb. I really appreciate that. Well, I learned from the best: you and Mark.

Robb: Thank you. I—you're doing stuff that I haven't even dreamt of doing. So it's awesome. You know, to the degree that I've been successful, it was because of Boyd Eaton, Loren Cordain, Staffan Lindeberg. They created the scientific template that I could then have something to go out and try to share with the masses: whether it was my clients or whatever. And so, I just think it's...always remembering those dudes who were in the trenches 30 years ago doing this stuff.. And now we've been able to promulgate the site and push forward, it's just awesome. The stuff you've been producing is obviously resonating with people. You're striking a chord and you're helping them and they're coming back and they're telling people, that's why you're nipping at Jillian Michael's heels. It's badass, it's awesome.

Abel: It's awesome that people are listening. I think you just kind of opened up the field, you know, and there's a huge audience of people that are really interested. So, hello everyone! Thanks for listening! You owe a lot of me existing to the guy on the other end of the mic.

Robb: Well thanks, dude, thank you.

Abel: Right on. Well, enough of this stupid love fest. Robb, thanks for coming on.

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Robb: My pleasure, man. Any time you want me back on, man. I'll just close down my podcast and come on your podcast. So, you're way better at this than I am.

Abel: We'll have to do it again.

Robb: Cool! Awesome...

Abel: Thanks, Robb.

Robb: Thanks, man.

Abel: If you want to hear more from Robb, hop on over to RobbWolf.com. Or you can hop on over to FatBurningMan.com and check out the show notes. I'll even add in the bonus of a picture of shirtless Robb in an icy bathtub, screaming "Wankers!" It's pretty awesome, so you should check it out.

I have tons more cool stuff coming out for you guys, so make sure you stay tuned and hop over to FatBurningMan.com anytime to sign up for the email list and I'll got plenty more videos and cool stuff to shoot your way. So until next week, I'll be talking to you guys soon. Cheers!

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Interview with Dean Dwyer, Author of Make Shift Happen

Abel James: Hi there. This is Abel James with FatBurningMan.com. Thanks so much for listening.

Today we're here with Dean Dwyer who's a rising star in the Paleo movement and one heck of a cool Canadian. We're going to be talking about everything from why we don't listen to the diet and fitness experts anymore, to how Tim Ferriss screwed everything up, and how to get zero-pack abs.

What do you say? You want to meet Dean? Yeah, let's do it!

Dean Dwyer: Let's do it baby!

Abel: Let's do it. All right, so today I'm stoked to have Dean Dwyer who's a popular blogger, Paleo advocate, and Facebook wizard. Dean, thanks for joining us.

Dean: Sorry you got me in mid-drink. A Facebook wizard? I like that!

Abel: That's right!

Dean: I need a t-shirt with that on there.

Abel: Dean and I were shocked to learn that we'll both be presenting together, actually, with the goliaths of Paleo including Mark Sisson, Robb Wolf, and Jack Kruse at the Paleo FX at South by Southwest. So, Dean, I have a feeling that we're going to turn the Paleo world upside down, and have some frickin' fun.

Dean: Yeah, It's going to be a blast actually. I'm really looking forward to it. I think it's going to be great just to see all these people that, like the Mark Sissons and the Robb Wolfs, you just basically see online.

It'll be great to actually meet them, and talk to them, and see them for real people. I'm looking forward to, I haven't had this happen in the real world and I don't know if you've had this yet,

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Abel, actually meeting people who subscribe to your blog. I haven't had that yet so that's going to be these people that I see on Facebook or who have sent me emails. I know some of them are going.

That, actually, for me, is going to be the best part of that.

Abel: Yeah, that'll be cool. You're famous and you don't even really know it yet. Right?

Dean: Yeah, I know a couple of people have said that, it may be, but I haven't wrapped my head around that. It just seems a little weird.

Abel: Yeah. So for all the folks out there who haven't been to his blog, I really like Dean's spot online which is BeingPrimal.com. Your posts always have a humor to them, and definitely a shameless wit. How did you get started with that?

Dean: Well, you know, we had chatted about this when we chatted previously, but this was blog number three for me. The first two blogs, I was trying to find something that I thought other people...I was trying to find a niche that was sort of out there that I thought I could fill. This time around, I had decided that, at the end of the day, I really needed to figure out how to solve my own problems. And if I could solve my own, which I managed to do, that there were probably other people that would be interested in my solution.

So that was basically the genesis of how this site came to be which was just simply to share what I knew. I was taking an idea that I had stolen from somebody else.

Abel: [laughs]

Dean: Yeah, I'm a big stealer of ideas, but, to "Write the book you would want to read." I thought, "I'm going to author the blog that I would want to read." It was just basically more about the kinds of things that I struggle with and that no one is really talking about.

Abel: Yeah. Dean and I were talking the other day about how awkward it is to put yourself out there before and after and half naked. I think your picture makes you look a little bit like Bruce Wayne. I think you'd be a good Batman.

Dean: [laughs] My fighting skills are terrible, though. Batman would be losing all his fights if I was playing Batman.

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Abel: But you have the good, badass look on your face. That's actually one of the things I love about it.

Dean: I actually wrote a blog post about that, I don't know where I sent that in to. I joked about that because I take these terrible pictures. I've got a lazy eye and my smile gets all goofy, so I was trying to sort of make everything kind of concentric. Anyway, I forgot to smile. [laughs]

Abel: [laughs] It's OK. It works.

Dean: Bottom line, I forgot to smile.

Abel: I like it a lot. [laughs] I'm one to talk, mine's probably the cheesiest ever.

Dean: [laughs] I was going to say, "If it gives me that badass look though, I'll take that."

Abel: Yeah. [laughs] You should definitely take that one.

So I did want to talk about...I was a vegetarian for years, and always someone who strived to be healthy as I possibly could be by dodging anything fatty and running myself like a hamster, but it left me flabby and miserable. You have a similar story, right? You were a vegetarian I think for 18 years, is that right? And what happened?

Dean: Yeah, almost 19 years.

Abel: Yeah.

Dean: The whole vegetarian thing is very, I think, symbolic of my journey back then. I was doing a lot of stuff. As a matter of fact, I had this conversation with someone last night. I did a lot of stuff, just doing stuff that seemed like it was healthy.

Initially, when I came out of university, I was really heavy. So I started doing some research on diets and exercise and those sorts of things. I kept coming across vegetarian stuff and it really seemed like something that I needed to be part of.

I went cold turkey and did the whole vegetarian thing, but at no point in the 19 years, Abel, did I ever sort of step back and asked myself the question of whether or not it actually worked for me.

Abel: [laughs]

Dean: And it only took me 19 years to realize that it actually doesn't work for my body type.

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Abel: Right.

Dean: Not to slag on vegetarianism, I'm sure there are people out there that it does work for. But we're as unique as our fingerprints. I would have moments where I could get close to where I wanted to go, but I always sort of ended up back where I started or even further behind.

But, yeah, it was 19 years and I finally had that moment that I'm holding my fat in my hands, on my stomach, and I'm like, "This doesn't work for me."

And sort of what I said to you a bit earlier, I should've made that realization about 30 days after I started vegetarianism. I would've realized that it wasn't working and some changes needed to be made. But I just didn't have the thought process about how to go through and evaluate the effectiveness of any of the stuff that I was doing.

Abel: Right.

Dean: I think that's one of the things that people really struggle with, right? We get caught up in doing stuff, we have no way of gauging whether it is effective or not.

Abel: I think when you start something like that, a lot of people don't really believe that they can change. It's just the way that they are. So they become a vegetarian or become Paleo, or become whatever. They just think that their body is frozen in time and it's just their body type or something like that.

It's amazing the changes that can happen when you try different things. You know, some people can do just fine eating tons of carbs, other people balloon out. The same is true with meat and vegetables.

I think for me it wasn't as much being a vegetarian as much as it was eating all the processed crap that is marketed to vegetarians, like that tofu baloney -- literally -- [laughs] and tofu bacon and just processed crap. I still had some in my fridge actually because someone was visiting and they were vegetarian.

I looked at it and it had been sitting in there for...must have been a year or something. But I turned it over and I looked at the ingredients in one of these veggie burgers and it was half the box. It was just nauseating. Just MSG and soy and wheat and it's like, "What are all these things doing in there?"

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Dean: Again, I wish I just had the mindset that I have now back then because there was a part of me that knew, like for example, I used to drink a lot of soy milk and rice milk and buy those veggie dogs and stuff like that and every time I had them I would be really, really bloated. But for the 19 years I was vegetarian, bloating was always a by-product of every meal I had. I just assumed that was normal.

It wasn't till I actually switched to a Paleo diet that within the first week I was like, wow, I'm not bloated anymore. If I was ever going to do a before and after shot when I was vegetarian, I'd have to take a picture the moment I woke up because that was when I was my thinnest. But with Paleo it doesn't matter, any time of the day I'm not bloated with the food that I eat now. So it was a startling revelation to realize that bloating is not normal.

Abel: Right! So, take us from the beginning, I guess, from before your transformation and then up to now.

Dean: I take it that when you say 'beginning' you don't want to know where I was born? [laughs] That's a little too far back, right? We've gone back too far. Sorry.

Abel: Right. [laughs]

Dean: So you mean sort of this moment that I realized that things weren't working?

Abel: Yes, exactly. When you started your change in diet and your life, and what happened along the way.

Dean: OK. I remember the day exactly, it was November 23rd, 2010, and I'm standing shirtless in front of my mirror holding my spare tire in my hands...

Abel: Is that the picture on your blog?

Dean: That's the picture. That's the day. I decided then, I thought, as much as I didn't like being shirtless because it was a reminder of 25 years of failure, I thought I 've gotta document. Part of this journey for me was that I needed to be completely different. Like if I wanted a different result this time, I couldn't do the same things I was doing in the past. So I thought "I'm going to take a picture of what I look like now so that I've got some gauge, a reference point upon which to come back to."

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But I'm standing there and I'm just thinking, "I've got to be completely different to what I've done in the past." So I jumped online, sorry, no, I continued to be a vegetarian but I just started playing around with philosophy so my workouts...I had it in my head that a workout always had to be an hour and I felt like I had to work out seven days a week which is all silliness because it's tough to sustain that, right?

There's no downtime. You can't have an off day which is crazy. I just started playing around with exercise intensity and going five days a week and only 30 minutes or less. And that seemed to work and then I met Tim Ferriss.

I didn't meet him in person but a friend of mine sent me his book, *The Four Hour Body* and there's some brilliant stuff in there. And one of the things he talked about was the slow carb meal, or a slow carb diet. He talked about a breakfast which was right in line with what I was doing as a vegetarian: essentially a good slow carb breakfast would be eggs with veggies, which I was already having, but you mix in quality legumes.

I'm like, "OK." I didn't eat a lot of beans, even as a vegetarian, but I thought, "OK. That makes sense." I started doing that, did that for about three weeks. Then I had my, "Damn you, Tim Ferriss," moment because I realized I was gaining weight. But, luckily, at that point, too, I had also started recording the foods that I was eating. I was just doing it in a Microsoft document, but I knew I'd only made one change. It was the beans.

Abel: Wow.

Dean: So I realized that beans were making me fat. So, I jumped online. I have no idea how I got onto Mark Sisson's site, I don't even know what I typed in, but I came across this Paleo thing which I had never seen before. I'd never heard about Paleo. I knew nothing about it.

I spent about an hour on his site. There were two articles, in particular, that I came across. One was talking about a carbohydrate curve. I looked at that and I'm like, "Wow, this really makes a lot of sense."

Abel: Yeah.

Dean: People get caught up in semantics when we talk about the Paleo diet with the whole evolutionary thing and stuff like that.

Abel: Sure.

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Dean: I thought it makes sense. There are so many things that we do on an evolutionary standpoint. When somebody sneaks up and scares me, you know, I scream like a child.

[laughter]

Dean: That's an evolutionary reaction.

Abel: I'm going to try that at PaleoFX.

Dean: [laughs] I'll look like a marionette. My arms go in the air. My brother used to do it to me all the time, and my reaction makes me laugh.

[laughter]

Dean: Because, dude, you're 46, what are you doing? You're screaming like a little boy.

But I totally lost my train of thought there.

[laughter]

Dean: Which will happen a lot.

Abel: Mark Sisson's carbohydrate curve and then evolutionary things that we do.

Dean: Yes, thank you. Thank god, one of us is listening to what I'm saying.

[laughter]

Dean: Yeah. I came across Mark Sisson's site. It made sense. You know, some people need a ton of convincing, but again, just from an evolutionary standpoint I thought, "Why not?" I wasn't saying it was going to work. I wasn't going into this with any illusion of what was going to happen, but it made sense. I thought, "I'm going to give this a try."

That's kind of how it started. Literally, the moment I read the carbohydrate thing, I thought, "That's it. I'm dumping the whole vegetarian thing," and I did. Instantly, I was like, "OK. I'm not going to be a vegetarian anymore," jumped on my bike, I went down to the grocery store. I think I bought some chicken and some hamburger, I think. It wasn't a ton of meat, but I bought some chicken and hamburger. I thought, "Let's just give this a shot and see if it works."

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Abel: Yeah. I remember seeing that, and I'm like, "Wow! That is the first time I've ever seen visually how a low-carb, or even high-carb, diet makes sense in terms of what happens to you. Because low-carb really gets a bad rap.

This is more just setting a reference point for what makes sense, in terms of, "Can you eat carbs?" Sure, anyone can eat carbs, but it's more scalable based on exercise, and your body-type, and that sort of thing. There's nothing wrong with eating very few carbs. In fact, you don't really need them at all.

Dean: I like what you said about scalable. I was just going to say, the idea of scalable is a great comment. I also think the thing that it did for me, and you talking about the brilliance of it, it actually made this whole thing tangible.

We talk in terms of eating healthy and those sorts of things, but this thing, I thought, it's almost mathematical.

Abel: It is.

Dean: There's a certain number of carbs...now, the numbers meant nothing to me. I was looking at the carbohydrate curb. They were saying between 100 and 150 grams of carbs a day basically allows you to maintain your weight.

That meant nothing to me because I didn't know what that looked like from a meal plan standpoint. But, as you said, it gave me a reference point. What I did, and this is the thing that I tell people, too, I didn't take it literally. I didn't say, "OK, I need to be at 100 grams," because some people get carried away with this stuff.

Abel: Yes.

Dean: The way I looked at his carbohydrate curve, I basically Dean-a-cized it, is that we all have a threshold. I think we have a carbohydrate threshold. As you said, it's different for everyone. There are some people who have an intolerance to carbs, and that's the thing that I realized with the vegetarian diet.

With my diet, with a vegetarian diet, I was taking in somewhere between 300 and 450 grams of carbs a day, which is insane for my body type. It just didn't work. There are other people that could do that, and as you said, they're fine. But it didn't work for me.

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That actually gave me a starting point. It gave me numbers that I could actually play around with and test out to see, and that's exactly what I did. I started, I thought, "Well, I'm going to try to stay between 80 and 120 and see what happens."

As you said, it's not hard. Somebody introduced me one time as being low-carb, and I said, "I'm not low-carb," I said "I'm controlled-carb." I said "I know what my threshold is, and, for me, it is about 80 to 120 grams." But like he says, it's good carbs. It's coming from quality vegetables and some of the other foods that we eat, but nothing insane.

Abel: It's funny that people also call that low-carb, because, like you said, looking at the evolutionary reference point, that's probably medium- to high-carb when you think about it that way, right? [laughs]

Talk about it in today's culture where everyone's eating 600 grams a day or something like that, of course it's low-carb. It's funny because I think there is a little bit of overlap, like Jimmy Moore: I was just talking to him a few weeks ago and he's known as a low-carb guy. But it definitely overlaps with Paleo and all of that.

It's just funny how people talk about it as being low-carb. I think admittedly I do the same thing because that's what resonates with people. That's what they understand it to be.

Dean: Yeah, there is a misnomer about low-carb and I think part of the problem is that there's a lot of products that are geared as low-carb, that are garbage. It falls into the whole...and I think this is where the problem lies, and this is why a lot of people roll their eyes at low-carb as well--- is that you can get low-carb cookies.

Well, a cookie is still a cookie. Even a Paleo cookie is still a cookie. It doesn't matter what kind of a label you put on it, people try to justify and say, "No, that's a Paleo cookie." No, it's still a cookie.

Abel: [laughs] It doesn't count.

Dean: It's crap. It's not something that you should make as a regular part of your diet.

Abel: Right.

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Dean: People get caught up in these labels and I think that's part of the problem that we have with all this stuff. It's like the grapefruit diet. It becomes a little fad-like and tough for the non-believers to kind of buy into it.

Abel: But eating like a human, it should be said, is not a fad. [laughs] I said that in a few of my blog posts. [laughs] Eating real food is not a fad.

Dean: Yeah, I was just going to say it, if someone said to me...I really try actually not to use labels. I think the moment that you start using a label, you polarize people. People either are for it or against it, and they feel if they're against it, they have to somehow, even... It's always overweight people that seem to have a problem with it, and they're suddenly an expert on diet and how I'm getting all this, though.

I try not to use the label. If somebody says to me, "What are you doing?" If I just say, "Well, you know what? I actually just cleaned up my diet and just started eating real foods. I don't eat processed foods anymore. I'm exercising smarter and it's worked really well. I've had these great changes," people will be like, "Oh, cool." No one is going to say "Oh my God, you shouldn't be eating real foods, and what's this thing you're talking about, exercise? That's insane!" No one is going to say anything about that.

Abel: Yeah.

Dean: When I say I'm eating the caveman diet, then they're like, "Oh my God, caveman? What are you talking about? Clubs?" It brings up these images that invite people to jump in and argue against it, which takes a tremendous amount of energy.

Abel: Yeah, right. We were talking about this the other day too, that Paleo somehow co-opted the whole real food movement, [laughs] so a lot of these people identify now as Paleo. I never thought about it that way until I realized that there were other people doing the same thing.

Now, it's really cool because it's a huge community, and these people are so into it and are very, very educated about the way that food works and the body works. I think it's fascinating. I'm definitely stoked to see them all in the flesh, too.

Dean: Well, I think, as you said, the community is actually really close, and much closer than other communities. All the other communities are kind of fragmented, but the Paleo community

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is actually pretty close. They're all really interconnected, which is really awesome. I've never really been a part of anything like this before, so it's actually pretty cool.

Abel: Yeah. Why don't you listen to the diet and fitness experts anymore? At least the conventional ones.

Dean: Ah, yes! My firing of the experts. [laughs] It's a good question and there's a couple of reasons for that. The first reason, and I see this all the time online, is we basically turn over our brains to somebody else, and we ask them to tell us what to do. There's a real problem with that, because what ends up happening is, we become so dependent on someone else to change us that we're unable to think for ourselves. We're unable to make any educated choices about what to do and what not to do.

I see this all the time in forums. Somebody on my Facebook page today basically said, "I've been Paleo for two weeks. It's not working. What's wrong?" That's not the kinds of questions people should be asking.

Abel: Right.

Dean: Tiger Woods said something, not about sleeping with 16 other women, but he said something when he was playing golf, where he had to think his way around the golf course. I remember when I heard that, it was the first time that I realized that golf is not just whacking a golf ball and you get up to it and then you hit your next shot.

It's that have to understand all the elements that are at play. When we put out faith completely in somebody else, we don't understand the elements in play. At the end of the day, Abel, no one can tell me about me. Mark Sisson, Robb Wolf, it doesn't matter who, they can make suggestions about things that I can do, but what works for them is not necessarily going to work for me.

At the end of the day, I'm the final filter in deciding whether or not that information works or not. Most of the time I'm not going to know until I test it.

We talked about Mark's carbohydrate curve. I didn't just say "This is a stated fact because Mark Sisson said..." No. It made sense to me. It made sense to me on an intellectual level, on an evolutionary level, on a whole bunch of different levels.

Abel: Yeah.

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Dean: But at the end of the day, I'm the final decision maker and whether or not I choose to accept that or not. It was really for that. Again, if I was going to have any success with this, the success was going to be based on the decisions that I made, not what somebody else made for me.

I didn't want to feel helpless and just sitting around, waiting for someone else to, "Oh, tell me what exercises to do now," and "What should I eat?" I see a lot of that.

I was telling somebody a couple weeks ago, there was a whole thing that came out with... remember that article that came out about, I don't know who it was, but they were talking about making pizza a vegetable?

Abel: [laughs] Yeah, I did see that.

Dean: Yeah, and people were... It was all kinds of stuff going on about the government and stuff like that. I'm thinking, people can say whatever they want. There's no issue with the fact that somebody has come out to say that pizza is a vegetable. The issue is that some people are going to believe that. They are going to buy into that.

Abel: Right.

Dean: They're just simply going to say, "Well, the government said it's a vegetable, so it's a vegetable."

The bigger issue is we've lost our ability to think critically. People don't know how to wade through information and make decisions on their own about what makes sense and what doesn't.

We hear that thing about pizza is a vegetable and we laugh, but there is a large portion of the population that will say, "Oh, no, no. Don't you know that pizza is a vegetable?" They will state that now as a fact, because they saw it on a commercial or in a blog post, or in the newspaper.

Abel: I prefer meatza, personally. [laughs] I don't know if you've had that yet. Have you?

Dean: No, what is it?

Abel: [laughs] Instead of using grains as the crust, you use the meat. Then you cover it in tomato sauce and cheese...

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Dean: Nice!

Abel: ...and lots of veggies. It's one of the best things [laughs] I've ever had, I got to say it.

Dean: A meatza, I love it!

Abel: Meatza, yeah. Richard Nikoley actually has a good recipe in his book.

Dean: Oh, yeah?

Abel: Yeah.

Dean: Very cool.

Abel: Man, I love that stuff.

[laughter]

Abel: I think I saw something on your blog recently about addressing the naysayers out there. The first time anyone hears something, even if you do say, "Well, I'm eating real foods," they are like, "Wait a second, does that mean caveman?" The caveman's bad.

Dean: I've talked about it a couple of times actually, and again, it's funny. I've had a few people now say, "I really like your no-nonsense style," and I had to laugh because it never occurred to me that that was my style. I guess that's how it comes off in the blog world.

But, personally, for me, I spend very little time justifying the way that I eat, for a couple of reasons. I think number one, and this is having 19 years of being a vegetarian behind me. I'm actually really good at it now because I had to do it a lot, I got to decide pretty quick who was asking...who genuinely wants to know more, and who is asking because they want to prove me wrong.

So I always knew who wanted to prove me wrong, so for them, I would deflate very quickly. I would find a way to get out of it. I wasn't going to spend any time explaining it. But there's a lot of other people who genuinely want to know.

I think we use up so much energy explaining to people why we're doing what we're doing that...you know, it's very tough to change a person's mind. If people already have a mindset

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about how they feel about that, there's not much that I'm going to say that's going to be able to change them.

I'm not looking to convince them that what I'm doing is right. Part of this too, Abel, comes down to most people are not comfortable with their own decisions.

And because they're not comfortable with that, they're really uncomfortable when other people question them. As I said, I realized that 19 years as a vegetarian has actually, I became really comfortable with the fact that, "Listen, I'm doing this for me for reasons that I feel are right, and I don't feel any need to explain or to justify."

So the transition into Paleo has been really easy for me. But I have to make sure that I don't make that sound really simple, because for a lot of people, that's a really tough challenge. How do you go about sort of explaining it?

Again, you walk a fine line, because you've got to sort of get a sense of whether people are asking because they want to argue with you and tell you that you're wrong. That in and of itself takes a tremendous amount of energy away from you.

Abel: Yeah. [laughs]

Dean: It's deflating. You walk away and it's hard not to have that impact you psychologically. Even though we say, "No, it doesn't bother me," it does bother us. It does bother us when we're being bombarded with negative comments about what we're doing. We've really got to kind of shield ourselves from that I think, especially at the beginning.

I'm at a point now where, as I said, if people don't agree with it, that's fine. The reverse is I don't bash. I posted something this morning and this is actually a cool story. So a friend of mine yesterday, I meet with him every two weeks. We meet to talk about our businesses and what we're doing.

Abel: Cool.

Dean: So yesterday we meet and he says, "Hey, listen, I got to tell you something," and I have no idea what's he going to say. I thought he was going to tell me him and his wife were having another baby.

He said, "I've been Paleo for 26 days and I've lost 15 pounds."

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Abel: Wow.

Dean: I'm, "What?" I reflected on that, and on my Facebook fan page this morning I was just writing about...I think I did have something to do with that, but I never once told him that he should go Paleo.

The other thing that I never did, and I don't do this, is I don't bash other people's diets.

Abel: Right.

Dean: I see this way too much. Again, I've done them all, right. I've been a vegan, I've been a vegetarian. I've done the standard American diet. What else have I done? There's another one in there that I've done, too. I've done everything, so I've been in all of them. It doesn't matter where you sit. If you're doing that, you're doing it because you think you're doing the right thing for you.

Part of this, too, is I don't bash other people's diets, so I don't get a lot of negative feedback coming back at me either. I think that that also plays into the whole equation as well.

Abel: Yeah, that does help. It is [laughs] funny though what shows up, especially, as you talked about, on Facebook walls and that sort of thing. I just got one yesterday. I don't know if you saw this, the US News Report put Paleo dead last, like 24 out of 24, in terms of which diets to follow, and which are actually good for you and bad for you.

Dean: I love it. I love it when they do that actually.

Abel: [laughs] Yeah, so someone posted, actually an old friend posted it on my wall, and he's like, "Well, so what do you think about this?" [laughs] I do enjoy discussing things about that, because it was a cheeky way to talk about it, and he was actually interested in the answer.

But you're right. Even the Paleo diet or being a vegetarian... when I was a vegetarian, from time to time, if there were chicken around, I would have a little bit of chicken.

Dean: [gasps]

Abel: I know, right? [laughs]

So many people are just dead set on eating one particular way, but I think there's a good thing happening in Paleo and hopefully, with other diets out there, where it's just more of a framework

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to make decisions. It's a lifestyle choice and that's really what it should be, because if I couldn't eat cookies from time to time [laughs] I'm not sure I would survive.

Dean: I love what you just said, a framework to make decisions. I like it so much in fact Abel, I'm writing it down and I might steal it.

Abel: You're not going to steal it from me are you? [laughs]

Dean: I might steal it, but I will tell you this, I'm a stealer who gives props to people I steal from.

Abel: I appreciate that. [laughs]

Dean: That was actually brilliant.

Dean: Maybe I should be interviewing you right now. It sounds like you're making better points than I am.

Abel: [laughs] This is the beginning of a great relationship.

Dean: [laughs] No, you're absolutely right. You're absolutely right with that. There's a lot of, I call them Paleo Nazis, people that get out there and they bash anybody who ventures outside the lines, who is willing to color outside the lines. Which, again, it's this ridiculous mindset that's out there.

As you said, it is a framework to make decisions, and we all do it differently. The guy I mentioned...I did three treats a week and some people go, "That's not Paleo," and I'm like, "I don't care. I'm not interested in whether or not you think it's Paleo or not. I'm not trying to please you, I'm trying to find something that works for me

I don't need to justify to somebody if they don't think it's Paleo. It's like, that's great. You sleep on that, let me know... Well, actually don't let me know, I don't care what you come up with in the morning. It doesn't matter.

[laughter]

Dean: Again, I'm making that sound easier than it is for some people. Because you really do have to insulate yourself from that and learn how to be at peace with your own decisions.

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People say you've got to grow a thick skin and everything else. I think there's a misunderstanding with that. We just need to learn to be comfortable with our own decisions, and a lot of people with this are not. It takes time to get to the point where it's like yeah I'm OK with this.

Abel: Yeah. And just laugh it off, you know. [laughs] Almost every time I go out, it's with some of my friends and one of them will be like, "Wait a second, is that beer okay with your diet?"

[laughter]

Dean: My friends get me all the time. I was at a friend's cottage. So I stopped drinking beer and I would actually drink wine.

I was drinking like the cheapest wine. Like a white Zinfandel. It's like a nine-dollar bottle.

Abel: Hopefully, it's not in the bag.

Dean: It wasn't in a bag.

Abel: OK.

Dean: But it's got this pinkish hue to it.

Abel: Oh no.

Dean: It's a guy's weekend, so you can just imagine.

Abel: Yeah.

Dean: Everybody's drinking beer and there's this one guy that's got a wine glass with pink wine in it. I took a bit of abuse for that.

Abel: Yeah. How many times did you get punched in the face?

Dean: I didn't get punched. Actually, they're pretty cool. They also know 19 years of being a vegetarian...

They expect all kinds of weird things from me.

Abel: Right.

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Dean: It's just another thing that Dwyer does.

[laughter]

Dean: They roll with it.

Abel: It's good to be the weird guy in the group, isn't it? 'Cause they all just brush it off more easily I think.

Dean: I think now it's the leader in the group actually.

Abel: It is, yeah. That happened to me, too.

Dean: The vegetarian thing, people are all like "I don't know about that."

But the whole Paleo thing... my friends have been great actually. I have not had one single friend that has mocked what I'm doing. They are all legitimately interested in what's going on so it's... It's great to see that once you start to get results, and you've noticed this as well, but when you start to get results, people take notice.

It's off topic but kind of related. That's another mistake a lot of people make is they decided they're going to do the Paleo diet, and they start preaching it to everybody. I just want to say, "Shut up. Get results." You know, when I was a kid we used to have born-again Christians who would come to the door and sell religion.

They were great people, but nobody wants to be sold something that they don't want. People push so hard to sell Paleo. Listen, make it work for you first. If you can make it work for you, and there are huge differences happening, people will take notice. When they take notice, they'll come to you and they'll start asking you questions. That's where you're going to have the most impact on people.

Abel: Exactly.

Dean: But you've got to make it work. I've had a guy who used to be a personal trainer. The guy was massive. He was big, but he was 50 pounds overweight. How much am I going to learn from this guy? He's telling me to be disciplined, and yet the guy's got about 50 pounds to lose. There's a lot of "experts" out there. People can't see that I did air quotes on this.

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Abel: It is offensive, too, when you tell someone to eat a certain way especially when they know nothing about it, the other person I mean. So, if I tell someone to eat like a caveman, they're like what? Eat lots of meat? Why would I do that?

It's basically telling them that everything they think is wrong. Even if that may be true, that still doesn't give you any kind of an excuse to say that. Because I was thinking about this: if I talked to myself five years ago, same person, I would get into a huge fight if I tried to tell the other one how to eat. Because five years ago, I was a vegetarian. I was die-hard about it aside from chicken from time to time, when I was trying not to be a jerk to the people who were serving me food.

But, it takes a lot of time to figure out, like you said, what works for you and what is the truth out there. There's so much nonsense, especially if you tell someone...I think one of the quickest and easiest things you can do is cut out processed foods and especially cut out wheat products. But, if you tell someone to stop eating wheat, stop eating gluten, stop eating pretty much anything in a package, it's telling them that they're absolutely wrong.

Dean: I think, as you said, because basically what you're doing is you're telling people what they're doing is wrong. You're right. I would have had the same thing, had somebody Paleo come to me five years ago as a vegetarian...and I remember this as a vegetarian. This has actually shaped how I see this now, but I remember as a vegetarian, I thought I had it all figured out and I remember looking at other people going, "You poor suckers, you don't know what you're in for."

I realize now that this judgmental I've got it all figured out and you don't thing doesn't work. It doesn't help the cause. I'm very sensitive to that now in the sense that I realize that everybody is doing what they think is right. The moment that you step up to the plate and say listen, you should be doing this, what you're really saying is what you're doing is wrong and people take offense to that. And, they should take offense to that, right?

So, yeah, we walk a fine line with that. It's really tough. I'm not a salesman. I'm not going to come out...I'm going to let what I'm doing speak for itself. I do my sales pitch on my blog. But when I'm out in public and in person, stuff like that, people will have to ask me if they want to hear what's going on.

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Abel: Dean, I get the impression that you're a motivated type of guy. I know you started this whole Paleo thing with one thing in mind, or one of several things, which is to get a six pack. But, that's really changed as you've come along the journey. So, tell us about that.

Dean: Yeah, that lasted about a month. I, typical guy, I always laugh because guys have a very different mentality to this than women do, and I had the typical, how do I get a six pack? I was about a month into it and I thought, "You're an idiot, that's not going to get me anywhere."

This journey is so much more complex than I think it is. It really is, not to make it sound hokey, but it's an emotional journey, it's a spiritual journey, it's a physical journey, it's an intellectual journey. It's on so many different levels. It was the first time that I realized that it's a holistic journey. It's not just about diet. It's not just about exercise. It's not just about six pack abs.

And, when I stepped back from that, what I realized was that if I do the things that allow me to be as healthy as I can be, then the byproduct, or the consequences, the good consequences, will be things like leanness, will be things like muscle separation, will be things like abs. But, you can't make abs from nothing. There's a series of behaviors that you need to have.

My focus then shifted from—forget about the six pack abs thing--my goal is to adopt the behaviors that allow me to create what it is I want to create. If I adopt those behaviors, then all those other things will happen.

Again, there's a different approach to it now. It resonates a lot more with women than it does with guys. Because again, most guys are coming at it from where I started with this, it was like, "I want abs. How do I get abs?" Tell me two things, Abel, that I can do to get abs. I'd be like, "I can't tell you any, I can't tell you this. You're not going to get them."

Abel: It might get you abs. I do tell people, because that's one of the biggest questions that I get is, how do you get abs? But, that's really like you said, not at all the most important thing. I got those things. I got bigger muscles and a six pack and all of that other stuff, that's totally superficial. What I really value about it all, is the ability to get out of bed in the morning, just feel awesome all day, sleep really well at night.

All these little problems that I had; bloating and just feeling super tired after meals, the puffiness, the inflammation, all that was just pretty much gone within a few weeks, as soon as I made that series of changes that I didn't even know was Paleo at the time, but it turns out it is. It's those things, and getting six packs is such a little part of it.

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Dean: Yeah, absolutely. Just don't get me wrong. I look at myself in the mirror at myself everyday and I'm always looking at my mid-section to see where I'm at, with this whole process. It's not like I am not worried about that, I am not thinking about that. It's part of what I use as my indicators. I know where I'm at based on what the mid section looks like.

There are so many other things that just... I didn't realize the confidence that I have now, that I exude now that I didn't exude before. I'm not talking like I'm just this guy that sat in the corner, kicking his feet on the floor, with his head down. I just find now, typically, when I'm with people I don't know, I'm really quiet—sorry, I WAS really quiet, whereas I find and I noticed this lately, I'm much more...I start conversations with people who I don't know. I'll talk with anybody, but they usually have to start the conversation, whereas now, I am noticing that I'm starting the conversation.

There's been this change of how I see myself because it's just, that you wake up in the morning...I feel good in my clothes. I don't know if you had this experience. When I was heavy, I would sit down and you could feel my stomach hanging over my belt. It used to drive me bananas. I was always moving around and trying to adjust it and pulling my pants up to my neck, so that things felt comfortable.

Abel: [laughs]

Dean: It was crazy. I don't have any of that now. I like how I look. I'm comfortable now in my own skin. It's something that when I started this, I didn't know where this would go because I didn't have any... I'd never been successful with anything else. It wasn't like, I was going to be like, "Well, this is it." Because every time I started something, I thought this was it.

There was always a part of me that was like, "Dude, you know what's going to happen. You're going to have two or three months and then you're going right back to where you were." It's been an incredible journey on many, many facets.

Abel: You cover some of the challenges for other people when they start Paleo. I think that was one of your more popular parts that you put up that.

Dean: Yeah, I am trying to recall that one. That was actually a fan generated part, I took that off. Are you looking at the barking dog?

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Abel: I don't know if you've seen the video, but that's the Paleo puppy. [laughter] I got a yellow lab a few weeks ago and she is probably as soon as I open up the door, going to bite my face off.

[laughter]

Dean: Yeah, I wasn't sure what my cat's going to do. Obviously, he doesn't bark, thankfully, because he's a cat. I had asked a question on my fan page and different people had responded. I basically took the top nine. Again, it's not just the diet and exercise. You are going to be dealing with other people and you got to have some idea. One of them was not judging people who are not Paleo, which we kind of touched on before.

Again, we tend to, based on all the things we just said, we tend to drop by telling people they need to change what they're doing, we're telling them what they're doing is wrong. We've already put our worst foot forward, so...what were some of the good ones? Oh! "Decide," Oh, this is a good one, "Decide in advance..." Stealing a phrase from a guy named Sasha Dichter, I believe is his last name. He's talking of generosity and trying to change...you know when you walk by a homeless person asking for change, you always say, "No." He works for a non-profit, and he says, you know, "This is not congruent with what I do for a living." So he just talked about the fact that he decided in advance that when people asked for money, he was going to giving it to them. Didn't matter who it was, he was going to give the money.

I say we could use the exact same thing with what we're doing to try and transform from how we look. So deciding in advance is probably one of the smartest things I ever figured out on my own. Because a lot of people show up and then they deal with whatever their surrounding is. They go to a party and then they're bombarded with all these things. They're hoping that will power is actually going to get them through.

The reality is will power is a combination of planning, it's a combination of thoughtfully thinking through a situation beforehand and what you're going to do so you can deal with it appropriately. When I first started, I was scared to death. I remember the first time I went out to eat with somebody, like, I am a bread fiend! I used to act like it was...I'd eat a whole loaf. I buy a fresh loaf and eat it all in the car on the way home.

I was insane. I was just a terrible eater. I'd go out to these places and it would be, okay, like, "What am I going to do? How am I going to react when they put the bread down?" I had a strategy for that. When people had pizza, what am I going to do? But it really made a big

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difference. It's something now that I do intuitively. Even researching when I'm going into a restaurant, I've never been to before. I was worried about, whether or not I'd be able to eat what I wanted.

Then I would go online and check up their menu. I would only know, I'd be like, "Oh, OK, I'm going order that when I get there." It was stuff like that, that other strategies that we don't talk about, that are really, really important. We don't fail because of the diet and exercise. We fail with this because we don't know how to deal with the other aspects of our life or again, like you said, you're going to somebody's house for dinner, how do you deal with that?

I mean, I got really good at this as a vegetarian because people say, "Listen, I want to have you to dinner!" and I'd say, "No, you don't."

[laughter]

Dean: "You don't because I'm a vegetarian, I'm hard to cook for," and they'd be like, "No, no, no no! We want to have you." And I'd say, "What do you eat? What do you not eat?" I'd say to them "Here's what I eat. Here's what I don't eat." If I'm comfortable with my decision to be Paleo, then I'm not going to eat something that's not Paleo. I also have a responsibility to let people know. You can't spring that on people either.

If somebody invites me over for dinner and I don't let them to know how I eat and then I show up. They've made this great pasta salad and I say, "No, thanks. I don't eat that." I put them in an awkward position because they've made that for me. I'm not going to eat it. They didn't know I didn't eat it.

If people invite me out, then I will send them an email and say, "Listen, you can change your mind on this, you don't have to invite me over. But if I do come over, here's what I eat, here's what I don't eat." And I have not had a single person say, "Yeah, OK, we rescind the offer, don't come over."

Abel: Yeah.

Dean: People are more than accommodating but you have to be proactive with this. You can't just show up in a situation and then think that will power is going to take over and you're going to make all the right decisions. In fact, it's the opposite. Usually, when we show up unprepared

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is when we make all our bad decisions. That's when we eat the foods we shouldn't eat and all those other things.

So that pulls sort of a whole series of strategies that aren't talked about that are really important to being able to consistently maintain the sort of Paleo way.

Abel: I really like that post. I guess, worst case scenario you could show up at someone's house and say, "sorry I'm just a partial celiac." And they'll be like, "What the heck does that mean?"

Dean: Yeah, exactly. But, yeah, I think with all these kinds of things, I think there a lot of situations that if we actually sat down and we thought about it, there are ways to navigate them so we don't put ourselves in awkward positions. Because at the end of the day, If I truly believe in this...I always use the analogy of smoking. I'm not going to smoke a cigarette to be polite to somebody. If somebody is to say, "You want a cigarette?" and they're hosting the dinner, I'm not going to smoke to be polite. That would be insane because I know the dangers of smoking.

It's really no different with diet. You have to, I don't want to just say "You have to say no," because again, different people are coming from different places at this. But you have to teach yourself to be comfortable with your decision and to be able to say "No, thank you." But you also again, you have to prep people, too. You got to let people know what you're doing, where you're at with this, how you're approaching this so that they know how to react to you.

Abel: Yeah, so one of the things we both do is give some advice to beginners. What advice would you give someone just getting started on the Paleo lifestyle and diet, that sort of thing?

Dean: I really want to make a joke here and I've got nothing for you, Abel. I'm really sorry, I've got nothing.

Abel: I can edit one in for you if you want.

Dean: Well, I was going to say I had no advice for them; good luck and I wish you all the best.

For beginners, I think I've touched on a couple of things. That's a good question actually. I have to think this out loud as we're going through. But I do think that, I could probably say a thousand things. First and foremost, something I alluded to earlier, is this idea that you are the expert on you and that you can't, you can't turn your body over to somebody else and expect them to create this miracle for you.

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Secondly, there is this misnomer that if I cut out the grains and I start CrossFit-ing or something like that that the miracle's going to happen. That just isn't true for most people, that it is much more complex than that. But I think people do a really lousy job of telling their success stories and they leave out a lot of details, they leave out a lot of things and they're not doing it intentionally but they don't really understand their own success so they have clichés you know "You've just got to stick at it" and "keep working hard". But that doesn't mean anything to people.

So you have to understand that this is, at the end of the day, this is...I was thinking about this today actually while I was walking home: when you're in high school and you're taking science, they teach you the scientific method. The problem is we take that within the context of which we were taught that. So we're assuming that you've got to have a Bunsen burner, I'm wearing a lab coat and I have got safety glasses on. But this is exactly where this applies, that this is one gigantic experiment. Here's the other thing I thought about today, too. I find it ironic that we spend years and years trying to find a quick-fix solution to our overweight problem.

Abel: It's true. [laughs]

Dean: Yet, if I said to somebody, "Listen. Really, what you need to do is, give this 365 days to work." People will say...that book won't sell, by the way. No one will buy that book.

[laughter]

Dean: "Seven Days to Transformation" will fly off the shelves. "365 Days" will be in the remainder bit. That's really the way people need to approach this. You have to look at this, give yourself a year to figure out how your body works and start creating a manual on you. I was talking with someone last night, I said, "Do you journal?" and she said, "No, I don't." You don't have to write the stuff down every day.

But basically what you need to do is every time you figure out something about you, write it down. It could be, for example, that there is a particular food. Even within Paleo, not all Paleo foods work for everyone. Some people have sensitivity to onions or garlic, those sorts of things. Every food that you find that doesn't work for you, write it down and put that on a...so, that goes into a list that "Foods that I can't have," or "I can have sparingly."

Really, this is a gigantic experiment. People need to be prepared to sort of give themselves a year to create a manual for themselves. We don't know how our own bodies work. We just get

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caught up doing...we get all excited about doing stuff. "OK. I'm going to join a CrossFit gym! I'm going to eat healthy and..."

We have no idea what's working and what isn't working. We either say it works or it doesn't work. We pitch the whole thing...uh, you can't see my hands going. I've got all these effects going over here on this end. There's no actors, there's no stuntman, Abel! I'm doing all this myself!

[laughter]

Abel: I'll do some YouTube highlights, how about that?

Dean: There we go. There we go. You've got to be prepared to really go into this with a year of experimentation, to figure out what works for you. Lastly, I would say, if you're not prepared to be brutally honest with who you are and pardon my language for I'm going to...the phrase I use is "If you can't put your shit out on the table and actually, be prepared to deal with it, then you're not going to have any success with this thing.

There are reasons why we do, what we do, that go beyond the whole diet and exercise thing. When I caved to eating junk food, there are reasons beyond, "Oh I didn't have any will power." It doesn't make any...it doesn't tell us anything. It's usually a person that's responsible for that. It could be a person who's a trigger, could be a food, it could be a stress situation.

We got to take a look at who we are and why we do what we do. If we don't do that, then we're going to have the same experience that we've had in the past. We'll get to a certain point, the wheels fall off and then we end up back where we were before.

We keep running through that circle, that, for me it was 25 years of doing that. Until I realized that, I've got to dig deep and talk about things that I'm not really comfortable talking about, that I'd rather not talk about, that I rather hide. That kept me from having any lasting success.

Abel: That's a really good point, too. What you said about being individualized for everyone. Because so many people come in and it's just a binary decision. Eat Paleo or don't eat Paleo.

But as you said there are foods in Paleo even that don't agree with some people. Jerusalem artichokes, some trouble when they go through me I can tell you that. There are also, on the other side of the coin, there are many things that aren't Paleo that many people can tolerate just fine.

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I'm a dairy fiend and I don't really know what I'd do without it. One of the reasons I eat it is because I know I can and it doesn't cause me any problems. If it ever does then I'll have a decision to make. You know what? Maybe I would have an even better six pack right now or something like that if I totally cut out dairy. But you have to make these decisions that are like, "Is this worth it or is this not worth it?"

One of the things that Paleo does is that it automatically takes a lot of things that aren't good decisions for most people out of the equation so they don't even have to think about it. So, if you see the tortilla chips or the bread bowl or something like that, you can just be like, "I don't need that, that's not technically food."

You need to test yourself. I actually read a book that claimed to have the secret of all the geniuses going back like four thousand years. It all said they kept some sort of notes on their body at any given time so that when they had an inspiring thought or breakthrough they could write it down and keep track of it. I think there is something to that especially when it goes to starting off a diet or any sort of life change. Write down what works and what doesn't.

Dean: Let me ask you this question. If I was to ask—and you don't have to answer—but if I was to say to you, "Do you have a philosophy on how you run your body?" Would you be able to answer that question?

Abel: Yeah. "Eat real food"

Dean: I know you do because we've already talked. So I know that you do. But you know what, if I was to ask that to most people, they don't.

Abel: That's true!

Dean: I did a post early on, that was something else that we do, when we don't have a philosophy about this we have no parameters and there are no boundaries. Everything is in play and everything is always a gray area and that wears us out eventually. I thought, I know how badly this will end if I don't do something different.

Even with just how I ate I made this list of 25 rules about what I could and couldn't--it was basically an eating philosophy. Here's what I can do. It's changed, it's obviously evolved and it'll be quite different when I redo it for this year. Not quite different but there will be some changes.

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But what that did was it gave me parameters on which to work. So, I didn't have to think about, "Does this work or not work," or not even know whether it worked or not. But nobody does that.

People don't have a philosophy about how to approach their eating, how to approach their workouts, or how to approach changing their body. We get caught up in just doing stuff and when it doesn't work we don't know what to do. Like, "I've been Paleo two weeks it's not working what do I do?" This person has no idea, at this point, what works for them and what doesn't. Your point about keeping notes and stuff like that, I know people kind of roll their eyes at that, but if you can't figure you out, no one else will.

Abel: I was also talking to Jimmy Moore about this and he said so many people start Atkins that have never even touched the book or read up on it at all but claim to know what it is. I think that happens with Paleo, too. They wonder, "Why isn't it working?" [laughs] It's like, "Because you don't know what you're doing! Read the book. It takes a lot of learning."

Dean: That's a good point.

Abel: You need to relearn the way that your body works and processes. [laughs] Are you writing this down?

Dean: I am, actually.

[laughter]

Abel: I need to watch out for you. [laughs] But, you know, it's not only education, but also I guess, re-convincing yourself of the truth. Because a lot of these things go totally against what you thought was true beforehand.

You know, if you're eating...some people say potatoes are Paleo. Some people say that they're not, right? If you start of Paleo, not knowing anything about that and you said, "Oh, they are." And you eat nothing but potatoes and a steak every once in a while, it probably won't work all that well for you, if you don't tolerate carbs very well.

For some people, they do it right and magically within two weeks they lose 15 pounds. Others, if you do it in a sloppy way, you might get lucky and it might work. If you want to invest in your success, you really need to educate yourself, I think, in the beginning and then just go for it. Because at some point, once you get past the sugar cravings, [laughs] the success is a huge motivator, I've found, for people.

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Dean: Absolutely.

Abel: When they see that they can fit in jeans that they haven't worn in 15 years, "Whoa! This is awesome." And that's a really good reason not to touch that bread anymore and not to eat that cupcake or whatever it is.

Dean: A huge motivator with this, you're right, success breeds success. Back to your point about education, I think there's a period of unlearning, where we need to basically...we've got all these myths and fallacies about diet that... I said this thing about firing the experts, I guess, that is also basically, ignoring every thought that I had about diet and exercise and basically rebuilding my philosophy.

On stuff that I could actually say, "Yes this works and this doesn't work." That's all I used. I was the test, I was the one testing it out.

Education is a huge part of this. The other side of that too is, there's a whole bunch of people that get caught up in...I get emails from people, "Yeah, you know, I'm still two months into researching Paleo." I'm like, "Two months."

Abel: [laughs] Just do it.

Dean: It took me an hour. I'm not saying what I did was right, but it took me an hour to make a decision. We get caught up sometimes thinking that reading is a form of problem solving. It's just, it's an illusion to think, "Yeah, I'm working towards a solution, but I'm not doing anything." You know? At some point, you got to start acting on this stuff and, again, your own experimenting, you've gotta start testing this stuff out for sure.

Abel: Cool. Dean, this has been really fun. I'm sure we're going to be doing it again, sometime soon.

Dean: I would think that we will be, my friend. I would think we will be for sure.

Abel: Awesome, awesome.

Dean: I'm totally looking forward to meeting you at PaleoFX thing. It's going to be great.

Abel: It will be!

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Dean: I really, as I said, we mentioned earlier, I love how you're approaching all this. I think you've got a great mindset for this that I think is really going to help people understand the proper approach, that they need to take to this. I thank you for using your space very well.

Abel: Well, thank you very much, Dean. For all you folks out there, do yourselves a favor and visit Dean's website, it's BeingPrimal.com and take the gander at his blog. It's a heck of a lot of fun.

Dean: I heard that blog's amazing!

[laughter]

Dean: Oh, sorry, was that a self-promotional plug there or something?

Abel: No, I dig it! So go check it out.

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Interview with Dave Asprey, Biohacker and creator of BulletProofExec



Abel: Hi there, and welcome to the Fat Burning Man Show. I'm your host, Abel James. Today I'm very excited to be here with Mr. Dave Asprey and Armi Legge of BulletProofExec.com, which reached the status of being one of the top 100,000 websites on Earth in less than 15 months of being in existence. So pretty cool stuff. Dave is a Silicon Valley **investor**, **computer security expert**, and **entrepreneur** who spent 15 years and over a quarter million dollars to **hack his own biology**. He **upgraded his IQ** by more than 20 points (maybe more, we don't know). But he's a pretty smart guy, let's leave it at that. He lowered his **biological age**, and **lost, most interestingly, 100 pounds without restricting calories or exercise**.

The Financial Times calls Dave a "bio-hacker who takes self-quantification to the extreme of self-experimentation."

His work has been published by the **New York Times** and **Fortune**, and he's presented at Wharton, Kellogg, the University of California, and Singularity University. Sounds like my kind of guy. And actually, Alyson and I got to spend some quality time with Dave and talk coffee and bacon while we were at PaleoFX. He's one heck of a cool guy and Armi is, too.

Today we're going to be talking about

- How to not to burn yourself with ice

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- The benefits of caffeine as a performance-enhancing drug
- Why mycotoxins might be making you fat
- And why exercising might not be a very good idea if you're not getting a whole lot of sleep.

So without further ado, let's hang out with Dave and Armi.

Abel: So, it was awesome hanging out with you guys at PaleoFX, and I was glad you could make it to Austin. Your site is getting pretty huge pretty quickly, so congrats for that. What were the numbers again?

Dave: We just hit the top 100,000 websites on Earth, which is...

Abel: Crazy...

Dave: ...phenomenal for a blog that's about a year old. People really care about this stuff.

Abel: Yeah, it is fascinating. So not only are you superhuman, but you're also taking over the world.

Dave: You know, I'm not that interested in taking over the world as long as, you know, the world's improving, I'm happy to just be part of that. But I'm very grateful for the success on the site. It's a lot of fun, and it keeps you motivated. It's not even my day job. I'm the vice president at a big security company most of the time.

So this is a labor of love.

Abel: That's so cool. Yeah, I know all about the double life. But once upon a time, Dave, you were pushing 300lbs. And now you have a 6-pack. So what happened along the way?

Dave: Well, I stopped off at 7-11 and picked up some Schlitz and...oh. The OTHER kind of 6-pack.

Abel: [laughs]

Dave: You know, I was working out like six days a week. And I'm almost 39, so this happened when I was in my early 20's. And I'm like, "Alright, I've had two knee surgeries, I'm fat, and I don't like this. And so I'll just work out six days a week, an hour and a half a day, half cardio, half weights, and I just won't eat very much, and I'll lose weight." I did this for 18 months.

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At the end of 18 months I hadn't lost any weight, I was stronger, but I was flabby and no change whatsoever. The same pants I always wore were still there. So I decided to go to my doctor. And he was flat-out useless. So I told him he was fired. And I spent four years, and over time, I'd spent almost a quarter-million dollars of my dot-com, early, 26-year-old millionaire kind of time, I spent that money upgrading everything I could about myself starting with my brain, because my brain was failing as a result of being so fat and inflamed. So I started taking 'smart drugs,' learned about metabolism, and now I've got a guy who lost 75 lbs in 75 days on the protocols that I've got published for free on Bulletproof Exec. It's like, the stuff, it actually works. And it's not painful, it's not hard, there's no deprivation.

I like to show that to people because I'm angry that I spent 25 years obese and sick most of the time for no good reason.

Abel: You know, I was a vegetarian for years, and ate a low-fat diet, and that's what eventually kind of broke me. Not in a serious way, but I was headed downhill pretty quickly. And it wasn't until I completely did the opposite—which it sounds like you did, too—that everything got better.

Dave: Oh, yeah!

Abel: So, your views on exercise are pretty unique. And as I understand, you don't do a whole lot of it. Why is that?

Dave: Well, I mean, I've definitely done it, I mentioned the hour and a half a day of heavy weights and all that. And I've done high Alps mountaineering and training for that, and I've climbed the Andes and the Himalays, and you know, I put a picture of myself without a shirt on on my website. Which is frankly, being a computer hacker guy, that's the geekiest thing I ever could do. But, I'm like, "This is real, this is two years without any exercise." I didn't exercise for that two-year period because I was sleeping less than 5 hours a night by design. I was a senior executive. I moved countries, started a blog, ventured back to the company, sold another company, and I have two young kids who I actually spend time with. So it was like, if I'm going to exercise, I need two extra hours of sleep a night for recovery.

And right now, that's not what I want to do, given that I can still maintain everything that I need to maintain. In fact, actually improve a little bit from a fat perspective without exercise. I'm not saying you shouldn't exercise at all, but I will flat-out say that if you're exercising every day, like some of these CrossFit friends of mine, I know that when they hit 40 and 50, it's better to exercise all the time and eat a Paleo diet than it is to be a vegetarian from a long-term

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perspective. But, better off, don't over-exercise and eat a Paleo diet and you last longer and you'll actually have more energy.

Abel: Yeah. And so, those two things, sleeping very little (at least relatively speaking) and exercising don't really go hand-in-hand. But it seems like a lot of people are doing that these days. Why doesn't that work?

Dave: If you're going to exercise, at least if you're exercising right, you're putting a stress on your body, and your body needs to recover from stress. And sleep is one of the best ways you do it. You can optimize your sleep, and I wrote a lot about sleep hacking, about, like, how does this work? And what can you do to get more deep-wave sleep? And I've actually done some things with electronics. But sometimes I've worked out, and, oh, geez, I don't have time to recover. So I'll sleep two hours with an electrical current putting me into that deep, restorative state, and wake up feeling restored. But I don't know that I want to do that every night forever. Although maybe I would if I was certain of what the long-term effects of it were!

Abel: Yeah! [laughs] So, you're a biohacker, and I have this image of you Dave, just kind of sitting there subtly electrocuting yourself, right?

Dave: I did that in Sweden on stage, I gave a talk about how to hack yourself to handle more information.

Abel: I saw that, yeah.

Dave: And how to handle information overload. There's electrodes on my head and I'm running a current across my head on stage. I think that's the first time anyone's ever, like, hacked themselves actively on stage. But this stuff works. It's real. It's not even that new of technology, it's just, no one knows about it. I'll give it a try if I think it's not going to cause permanent harm. And so far, I don't think I've caused any permanent harm with biohacking. It's hard to know for sure.

Abel: So tell us about some cool new hacks that you're working on right now. And Armi, feel free to pipe in also.

Dave: Right now I'm working on the Jack Kruse cold thermogenesis thing. And that's probably been the most harmful thing I've done in the last year.

Abel: Really?

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Dave: Yeah. So, for people who aren't familiar, Jack Kruse is a neurosurgeon and an awesome guy. We all hung out.

Abel: Yeah, he's a blast.

Dave: Including Armi and all, at the show. And we actually had dinner with him. So I'm like, alright, I'm gonna do his cold exposure protocol, which helps you with fat loss and improves the quality of your sleep. And probably lengthens your telomeres. It's a very powerful anti-aging thing, it looks like. And it's probably good for ya. And plus I live in cold environment up here, outside Victoria in Canada. So if I could not wear a jacket in winter, then all the Canadians might respect me being an American. So start sticking my face in cold water every night. And I noticed benefits to sleep right away. But then I get to New York, and I'm staying in this stupid \$500 a night—actually gorgeous—hotel. It doesn't have a sink in the bathroom, just a little square/rectangular splash pad for the mirror stuff. And there's no bathtub. And there's no washing machine. So I told them, "Six buckets of ice, please," and they bring it up. And then I put them in baggies and I packed them all over my body. Which you're not supposed to do yet, especially without a compressions shirt. So as we're talking today, I've got 1st degree ice burns on 15% of my body.

Abel: [laughs]

Dave: It hurts like hell! That is truly the most painful biohack. And there's no electricity involved, it was just ice.

Abel: Oh man! [laughs] For those of you who are listening and don't really know Dr. Jack Kruse, he's been known to kind of smother himself in bags of ice and sit outside naked writing blog posts in below-freezing weather. So the reason that this didn't work in your case is because you didn't really ease yourself into that. Is that right, Dave?

Dave: Yeah, he's really clear. What you should do is that you should figure out..basically you should wait until you can keep your face cold. And I can. I can hold my breath for a minute under water and ice water no problem. But he said, then stack ice with a compression shirt, and I just don't pack a compression shirt with me when I go to hotels in New York to speak at conferences. So I ignored that step, and that would have pushed the blood out and prevented the capillary problems that I experienced. It's my own damn fault, but man it hurts!

[laughter]

Abel: What about some hacks that are working?

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Dave: Well, let's see here...there's a lot going on. Trying to think of stuff...are you looking for more like nutritional things, or more like electrical funky stuff that's out there?

Abel: So, my background is in brain sciences also, so feel free to talk as much as you want to about that.

Dave: Alright. Killer. So, I have a new kind of brain training software that we just launched at SXSW. It's called Bulletproof Mindware. And it's designed for intelligence enhancement. It's called Dual N-Back training—that's like half of what it does. And Dual N-Back is for people who are interested in that sort of esoteric stuff, is one of the most studied ways of raising your intelligence. And it basically doubles the working memory that you have in your mind. Right now, most people can remember seven numbers, this gives you a second set of seven numbers that you can remember and I'm kind of grossly over-simplifying. But when you do this, your IQ usually goes up on a test by 10, and sometimes even 20 points. So we have that training. It takes about 20 days to do the training. It's hard. It's like lifting weights.

Abel: Yeah.

Dave: Like, it's boring and it's irritating to do it. You're like, "Are you kidding? I missed that one again?" It's frustrating. It's not like Jazzercise, where you listen to some music and jump around.

Abel: I wouldn't know about that.

[laughter]

Dave: There are some fun brain games, like "I'm gonna play a crossword puzzle, and then I'll be smarter." No.

Abel: It's no Angry Birds.

Dave: [laughs] Exactly. But the other thing that's really cool is, I'm a big fan of enhancing creativity. And one of the things you can do, is you can teach your brain to have enough of your...it's called the default mode and there's basically an activity mode in your brain. And the default mode is what happens in your subconscious when you're not actively doing something. And you can train yourself to have a little bit of memory and a little bit of consciousness running in the background when you're in this kind of default creative mode. So there's software that uses tones that I designed that put your brain into an Alpha or a Theta or even a Delta state, usually like semi-sleeping kind of lucid daydream sort of states. But then it trains you with a little chime to actually remember what's happening then, and the targeted results for this kind of thing are that you end up having better focus, even times when you're kind of feeling like you're

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not focused. You have a little thread that's always recording and keeping you aware of what your own brain is doing. It develops mindfulness, but it also develops creativity. And there's nothing else like that out there. And I've been doing a lot of that lately just because I find it helps my creativity and my performance.

Abel: Yeah, that's really interesting. It sounds like you could use it for evil. [laughs]

Dave: You know, you could, to be perfectly honest. Any time you increase your intelligence dramatically, if you're a prick, now you're a smart prick, and you'll do more bad things.

Abel: [laughs]

Dave: And that's the way it is. In my blog, I actually do worry about that a little bit. There's some really powerful stuff in there. And if people focus on enhancing their own personal power but they haven't done their emotional work to understand who they are and why they're here to learn how to be kind to themselves and others, then yeah, we could be reaping some real bad people. So let's hope that people start with the heart rate variability training that I recommend, and they develop their emotional body as much as their mental body and their physical body. Because if you only do two of those three, you're not going to be happy with the results.

Abel: Yeah, and that reminds me that there are a lot of people who coach other folks to lose weight, including myself, who really try to focus on the mental aspect in very much the same way, because some people find that they lose 50 or 100 pounds, and they're still not happy. They assume that once they get to that point, every problem in their lives will be solved and they'll just be 100% happy all the time. But if you don't mentally prepare for something, then when you arrive, you're not really any better off than you were before.

Dave: You totally hit it on the head. In fact, Armi has been doing some of the kind of stuff we're talking about. Armi, you wanna talk about that?

Armi: Sure. I've been doing some of the m-wave training. Also I've found it's not only improved my mental capacity on a day-to-day basis, but also improved my recovery and performance in sporting events, like 5K's and running races.

Abel: I heard your podcast. That was really interesting.

Armi: Thanks! I'm not exactly sure of the mechanisms, but it seems to work, so I'm working on it. I'm doing a few other things. One thing that's kind of boring unless you're the one being tested, is I'm getting a lot of blood testing done. I've got a doctor who's giving me a deal on it, so I'm just getting kind of a full gamut and kind of going crazy with that. And the other thing I do

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pretty much all the time, and it's part of my job at the Bulletproof Executive is tons of research. So we're planning on cranking out some really cool articles on various topics. One of my favorite personal topics, is actually tooth decay and tooth health.

Abel: Really?

Armi: And being 17 years old, I was actually told recently told I needed to have my wisdom teeth removed. And from an evolutionary perspective, that didn't make a lot of sense to me. I know, obviously most doctors recommend that, or dentists or orthodontists.

Abel: Yeah.

Armi: So I did a lot of research on it, and I ended up writing a 25-page report with about 80 references and bringing it to my orthodontist. And when he asked me why I hadn't had my wisdom teeth removed, I just handed it to him. So, he was very cool about it, too. He wasn't a prick. Which is great.

Abel: [laughs]

Armi: And hopefully he'll read it, or stuck it in the trash when I walked around the corner. Either way.

Abel: This is really interesting. Why doesn't it make sense from an evolutionary standpoint?

Armi: Well, it seems like if it was providing enough of a selection pressure that it was actually causing large amounts of damage, the people who had that damage would be dying out. So basically, if you had lots of people with impacted wisdom teeth and it was causing lots of problems, to the point where those people were dying or it was preventing them from nourishing themselves enough because they had some kind of inflammation of the jaw periodontitis or something like that, that it would be able to wipe out the people who had that pain or those problems. So that's the kind of from an evolutionary perspective, people could die after they get it. But I just decided I'd do some research on this. Just like doctors that told me saturated fat was bad and I didn't believe them. I did some research on that and it turned out to be false, too. It's not that you should not ever have your wisdom teeth removed. I'm going to go ahead and give away the ending here. It's basically, if you don't have any problems with your current wisdom teeth as medical terminology would be, if they're asymptomatic, then it's generally to get them removed. The benefits usually do not outweigh the risks.

Abel: Yeah. That makes sense. And it could be that we're screwing up our teeth listening to Weston A. Price and the folks over there. There's a huge link between nutrition and what

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happens to your teeth. And it could just be something like a grain overdose that's causing our wisdom teeth to go all wonky on us.

Dave: Did I ever show you my back molars? I don't know if we ever got into that...

Abel: [laughs] No, I don't think so.

Dave: You brought it up, I gotta mention it. My mom ate, you know, coke and donuts when she was pregnant with me, for the most part, you know, that's what they did in the 70's. And that was probably the least of what they did in the 70's.

Abel: [laughs] Yeah.

Dave: I actually have a flattened upper spine. Some of my lower vertebrae aren't all the way fused the way they should be. These are things the Weston A. Price and essentially, and Pottenger described as things that happened from excess grain-fed mothers. So I had my top palate was sort of mushed together more than it should be, which meant my lower jaw had to really be forced back and up by my muscles in order to chew. At first I was unaware of this, because that's how it's always been since day one and since I formed my jaw. So I went through about a two-year process where we used a metal orthodontic to spread my upper palate enough to make room for my lower jaw to come forward. So when you saw me, I have a half-inch more chin than I used to have without any surgery.

Abel: Wow.

Dave: And in order to get that to happen, they added about a three millimeters to my molars on the very back teeth on both sides. The net effect on that was less top stress. But most importantly less stress on the trigeminal nerve, which means less central nervous system stress. If you have this going on in your jaw, you have to really crank your teeth down, your front teeth are bumping, your lower teeth are crowded and pushed back, you're basically firing your fight or flight nervous system every time you take a bite, every time you chew.

There's no way you're going to calm down and reach that calm, alert, 'I feel good, I'm not stressed' state, because you have a physiological stress that is tied to eating. I fixed that in myself with the help of some craniofacial orthodontia. It's kind of unusual stuff. And, man, huge improvements in quality of life come about as a result.

Abel: That's wild! Well shifting gears a little bit, to your diet and what you recommend, your personal nutrition is pretty similar to mine, but you really stress avoiding toxins and mycotoxins. So tell us a little bit about that and why it's important.

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Dave: Well, over the course of designing the Bulletproof Diet, I started out almost 15 years ago, really focusing on what works, what doesn't work. I decided that first, let's look at this Atkins-style thing, I've been a vegan, a vegetarian, I've been a raw vegan, a raw omnivore, I've eaten raw chicken, and raw turkey, and I'm willing to experiment. But over time I came back in and said, I basically said, "Look, there's more to it than just eat more meat," which is kind of the Atkins thing, because it turns out the quality of your protein, the quality of your fat matters. So I fixed that, right? More butter, more grass-fed butter, more coconut oil, more grass-fed animals. In fact, I only eat grass-fed animals. But from there, there was something else that was going on. And I could feel it, because I've been trained, both because I weighed 300 pounds and because I've done extensive amounts of neuro-feedback and all. I would eat some foods and I'd like coffee, and I'd say, "You know what, I feel good for a little while, and then I'd feel like crap." And I'm like, "Something's not right..." And I traced it down over time to two big classes of toxins that people don't usually know about. And one is called mycotoxins. These are formed by molds that grow in our houses and in our food. And we feed those grains to our animals and the toxins—some of which are actually hormones that cause you to get fat rapidly—those get built up in animal fat, and even worse, non-organic cows in particular are intentionally treated with mycotoxins to cause them to get marbled fat very quickly. So there's a reason we have an obesity epidemic and mycotoxins are part of it. So that's one class of toxins, the other one is called biogenic amines. These are things like histamine. So some foods, particularly meat, that are stored improperly, which is endemic in our food supply chain, they actually cause a histamine and allergy response. So could take two pieces of grass-fed meat, and depending on how they were processed and stored before they got to your store or before they got to your plate, one of them may cause an inflammatory response in your body that makes you gain a pound or two of water, and the other won't. So the whole process of making something like coffee or meat becomes really, really important.

Abel: Right. And I'm a caffeine hound. [laughs] So I'm very interested in coffee-related issues. Actually, I made some home-roasted coffee with Kerrygold and coconut oil this morning, so tell us a little bit about Bulletproof coffee and why toxins...and how they play into that.

Dave: Okay. It turns out Bulletproof coffee has been like a breakout success. It's why people come to the Bulletproof Executive. I'd like to say it's because of the articles on cognitive enhancement and how to be a better person or something. It's actually because of the coffee and the diet.

[laughter]

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Dave: And here's what you do for Bulletproof coffee. What you do is you brew low-toxin coffee, and I have instructions on the site that tell you how to find the most likely low-toxin in your town. I finally, after years of trying to find coffee that was constantly, constantly low-toxin that made me feel best, I finally launched my own line of coffee that is obsessively processed every step, from where it's grown, how it's picked, in particular how it's turned into green coffee, how and what it's shipped in, who roasted it—it's roasted by the top roaster in the US as voted by their peers in the specialty coffee association... Every step is optimized. That's been a really popular thing on the blog, because people are universally skeptical. They say, "Dave, like, really, your coffee's not ...just admit it." And it's like, "No! Just mix your coffee with butter and MCT oil, blend it up, use unfiltered butter, it's the same fat, the same cream, it tastes even better than cream and coffee, and the way it makes your brain feel is different. And it's like, they say "No, no, no." But then they try it, and if you look at the comments on the Twitter streams, it makes me happy every morning when people go like, "Okay, I finally tried it. I thought it would be gross. It tasted awesome and I feel like a great golden god all day long.

Abel: [laughs]

Dave: I didn't feel hungry, I didn't feel an energy dip, and I lost a pound. It's just, it sounds too good to be true but it's real!

Abel: I love that. I love that! What about caffeine as a performance-enhancing drug?

Dave: You know, it absolutely is. I gave a talk at the BUILD conference, which is tied into the TED conference, in Southern California I guess about three weeks ago. Caffeine is a performance-enhancer. And certainly coffee is more of a performance-enhancer than just caffeine. But in fact, even for triathletes, and people who like this endurance exercise, people like Armi, it definitely works. Armi, in fact, you wanna talk about your bad coffee experience because you just told me about it the other day.

Armi: Yeah, it's funny, actually, something horrible happened to me and I ran out of Bulletproof upgraded coffee, and I had to use some organic stuff that was in my freezer for a long time. And about 15 minutes into a 5K, which is almost at the end for me, I just had this horrible headache. And I don't think it slowed me down or anything, but it was crazy. And I had no idea why, but the only thing I'd really changed was the coffee. Obviously, I'm not, like, in a controlled environment, I can't perfectly isolate it. But it definitely made an effect. But it's funny, because one of the first times I really tried Bulletproof Upgraded coffee before a race was before a testing session with

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my triathlon time. I'm actually on basically a feeder team for the Olympics for the triathlon. And I tried it and it was crazy. I did extremely well; I drank a pretty good bit, too. I drank about 6 cups.

Abel: Jeez!

Dave: And Armi does not weigh 300 pounds, just so we're all clear.

[laughter]

Armi: And I actually looked at it, and I had to look up the legal limit for caffeine, because there actually is one, and caffeine used to be illegal.

Abel: Oh really?

Armi: Yeah, caffeine used to be an illegal substance banned by the United States Olympic Committee.

Abel: Wow! I didn't realize that.

Armi: Yeah. Actually, and the International Olympic Committee. So I had to make sure I wasn't violating any rules, and hopefully I wasn't. But it's definitely a performance enhancing drug. But luckily it's legal.

Abel: Yeah, I can definitely vouch for that experience. When I was running marathons...and I'm embarrassed now, but I used some of those goo packs, and I tried the goos with and without the caffeine, and the caffeine definitely gave me a boost.

Dave: I'm to the point where you look at the history of the evolution of science, a lot of the stuff that happens in the 18th century was coffee houses in Europe. Coffee is an integral part of being a fully-conscious person. It makes it easier for your brain to do the things it can do. There are people who never have coffee who are fully conscious, I don't want to say that, but it's a performance-enhancer cognitively and physically and it tastes good, and it helps you build muscle if you use it right because of its influence on mTOR, and it helps you burn fat, and it makes you less depressed, and lowers your chances of diabetes and prostate cancer. But at the same time there's a huge number of studies that say it's bad for you.

And the difference is the quality of the coffee, and they never control for that in studies. So I've built the coffee that has as many of the good things in it as we can optimize and takes every step possible to minimize the bad things, so you kind of tilt the scales in your favor, and all of a sudden you feel different.

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Abel: Yeah, that's totally true. And for those of you out there, Dave definitely practices what he preaches. He was walking around at PaleoFX with a backpack, and coffee in that backpack, his own blend. There was some issue, wasn't there? You couldn't find hot water, and I saw you by the elevators...

Dave: Yeah, I was kind of sad, they closed the little Starbucks there. I'm the guy walking to Starbucks, "Can I please have a cup of hot water?" And they give it to me and I'll bring my hand-grinder, and I'll grind up my own beans. They'll say "What's that smell? It smells really good in here..." And then I pour my ground coffee into the water and brew my own right there, and it's like rolling your own cigarette only cooler.

Abel: Way cooler.

Dave: People look at me funny but, I was like "I have coffee, but I have no hot water." It was a sad day.

[laughter]

Abel: We've got a picture of you looking like you're about to fall asleep. And I love that picture, by the way.

Dave: That was a great picture. In fact, someone...it's funny, you look like you're about to bite someone, I think. And I'm sort of looking, like, half-drugged, on purpose because we're posing, and someone on Facebook was like "Oh, Dave, maybe those long nights with less sleep are finally catching up to you." And I'm like, "Dude! We were awake! It was just a joke."

[laughter]

Abel: We did it on purpose! Shifting gears a little bit to nutrition again, how is the Bulletproof diet distinct from Paleo?

Dave: Well...

Abel: And don't get cheeky and call it Paleo 2.0.

Dave: No, I do have upgraded Paleo on there to help people who are into Paleo find it. This diet did not evolve from Paleo. I had never heard of Paleo when, in fact, Paleo didn't exist when I started doing this. This is, like, biochemically derived. So some of the things I recommend for folk are looking at it not from, "What do we believe our caveman ancestors ate," but more like, "What works biochemically?" One example there would be xylitol. A lot of Paleo sites say don't eat it, it's a sugar, you should just not enjoy the taste of sweet. But I'm like, "Screw that noise. I

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like pudding.” So if I make pudding it’s basically with raw egg yolk blended with unsalted butter and very lightly cooked or even just eaten raw with a little bit of gelatin mixed in. Like, there’s a lot of ways to do it, but you toss vanilla in there, we’re actually working on low-toxin vanilla, because vanilla has a lot of mold in it. What am I gonna use to sweeten it? I could do a sugar-bomb thing and add a bunch of honey because cavemen might have eaten honey. Or I could add xylitol, which stops tooth decay, fights ear infections, increases bone density and erythritol does some similar things. So, I’m not opposed to sugar alcohols based on the scientific stuff. I also select for cooking methods that reduce the formation of toxins. I see Paleo recipe sites all the time, and it makes me mad. Like, “oh, add some olive oil to this and cook with it.” Thankfully, Paleo leaders in the last year, guys like Robb Wolf and Mark Sisson and all, have really come around, have really started talking about this, and saying, “Cook with animal fats.” But I’m sorry, if you look at the fatty acid breakdown of an animal fat, you don’t wanna actually cook with that. You want to cook with coconut oil or butter because it’s more saturated, and then add the tallow in at the end for flavor and for nutrition. But you don’t want to cook in tallow, because tallow is actually more monounsaturated than saturated. So it is one of those things where people don’t pay attention or they broil at 500 degrees because it tastes good. But denatured protein is inflammatory, even if you’re Paleo. So there’s a lot of things like that built-in, including avoidance of mycotoxins, avoidance of heterocyclic amines and all the other biogenetic amines that are created through the process of food. It sort of stands on its own. And people tend to lose weight really quickly, and maybe break through some barriers. Like you see people are doing LeanGains style intermittent fasting who’ve posted on the blog have plateaued, and have tried the Bulletproof program and I’ve broke through my plateau. I believe the reason they’re doing that is that we’re addressing core inflammation, not just the Paleo macronutrient and micronutrient things that are appropriate.

Abel: Right. And I’m really glad you mentioned xylitol, too, because that’s something that people pick on me for is using xylitol in some of my recipes. And I’m very specific about using organic birch xylitol because now a lot of the big guys are coming in and making crappy corn xylitol and all this other nonsense to put in processed foods. But I remember someone came to my blog and left a comment on one of my recipes. And this is a Paleo person, they’re just like, “Xylitol! Are you effing kidding me?” I’m like, “What’s the problem here?”

[laughter]

Abel: But there are lots of things like that, and it’s funny because you talk about how you’ve been doing this for a long time and I’ve said this before, but Paleo has really co-opted a lot of

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other approaches to nutrition and diet. Like, I kind of came more from reading old bodybuilding texts from, like the 70's...

Dave: Yeah!

Abel: Which, from the macronutrient perspective and from the view of exercise, a lot of those are pretty much saying exactly the same thing that Paleo's saying, or vice-versa. Paleo's saying the same thing as those, both from a macronutrient perspective and from training. I mean, you look at LeanGains and that style of training has been around for a while, it's just, it was before the Internet, so it was really underground. And I had no idea what Paleo was, either at the beginning. When I first heard about it I didn't like it because of all of the things it restricted, you know, salt, alcohol, caffeine...

Dave: Yeah.

Abel: Those are all, you know, the most fun things in my life.

Dave: Let's talk about salt. And I'm about to post a video about the history of salt studies. And, there's outright scientific fraud. It was outed in the British Medical Journal in 1996 about the NHANES study, the one that our government to this day still relies on when they tell us to stupidly lower our salt intake.

Abel: Right.

Dave: And when you look at the actual data, versus what they say about the data, it's really clear. In fact, Michael Alderman, head of the American Society of Hypertension for many years, and a well-established medical professional, direct quote: "If you want to live longer, eat more salt." Period. That's what the data says, and certainly I've been on 10 grams of salt a day for almost 8 years, and I consider quality sea salt the performance enhancing substance. And going without that is a bad idea. And it increases stress in the body.

Abel: So when you go and pick up salt, what's the best kind to get? What are you looking for?

Dave: You know, ideally you want salt that's been mined from a salt mine from a very old ocean because there are no modern pollutants in there.

Abel: Yeah.

Dave: So, what I like is the Himalayan stuff. I've tried Andean, from the Andes, I've tried Himalayan, I've tried the stuff from Utah. The most flavorful best stuff is from the Himalayas, but I tell you the maldon sea salt, those flaky finishing salt, those big flakes that are from modern

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seas, they're so good I'll use those, too. Even though I know they probably have some crap in them.

Abel: Yeah I like the Himalayan salt a lot. And that's another thing. There's a big difference between salt in processed food and natural mineral salts.

Dave: that's a really good point. And if anyone else is interested in this, there's a really good article actually published in 1998 by Gary Taubes, before he ever got interested in the more detailed parts of nutrition, called the Political Science of Salt. It goes into a lot of the science and pseudoscience surrounding the benefits and health detriments of salt. It's very good.

Abel: Wow!

Dave: I can send you a link to that, too, if you want to put that in the show.

Abel: Yeah, I'd love to see that.

Dave: Gary Taubes is truly an awesome, amazing researcher. He came in and spoke at the non-profit that I run called Silicon Valley Health Institute.

Abel: Oh, cool.

Dave: That's at SVHI.com. There's actually a video up on the site we just posted about 3 months ago, all the videos for the last 10 years of health professionals who've come and spoken, we have one a month come and speak for a couple of hours. Gary was represented by Good Calories, Bad Calories, which is, I think, a phenomenal work.

Abel: It is, yeah.

Dave: There were questions about, is it just insulin or are there other things involved in making us obese. But anyone who reads that book and sits down and eats Wheaties, I don't understand. Like, I do not understand their cognitive process. And Gary was kind enough to introduce me to his agents. My first book is coming out at the end of this year, published by Wiley and sons, really as a direct result of Gary introducing me to his agent at ICM, a talent agency in New York.

Abel: Oh wow!

Dave: So I'm very grateful to him personally, as well as just for writing that book. So I can slam 500 pages on the desk of someone who tells me butter's gonna kill me and just say, "Dude I don't have time to explain this to you, can you just read this?"

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[laughter]

Dave: It's so good!

Abel: It is good. But compared to a lot of diet textbooks that are written at the second-grade level, his books certainly aren't like that, especially not Good Calories, Bad Calories. He's very thorough. Yeah, I definitely recommend that to anyone who's interested in doing that research. Unfortunately, not too many people are. They just want to do the diet.

Dave: Yeah, the diet works.

Abel: They leave the research to us. I guess that's fine with us because we like to nerd out on that stuff, right?

Dave: It's cool to nerd out, it's also cool to be a biohacker and experiment with this, because I did a lot of these diets because I'm like, "Okay, there's good stuff." I read the China study, which is about the dumbest book I've read in a long time. You read it, and it's very convincing, because you trust that the author really did the research he said he did. But then you try it, and you're like, "Wow. I feel like crap." Well, the reason for that is that, actually, when you look at the data, what he said isn't true, and he made some gross logical errors in the book. But today, I've got a big long vote on my comments section on my site, BulletproofExec.com, where someone's saying, "Ah, I just read the China study! How can you eat meat?" You know, "I feel great, I'm a vegetarian!" Or, "I'm a vegan!" What I find is that people remember feeling great the first three months of being vegan, and then they start to decline. But it's a slow decline. And they don't realize...they know that they felt better than when they ate the standard American diet, so they must still be feeling good. But their hair's falling out, and their eyes are really big and bulging and they're starving. But they think they feel great. And it's kind of a psychological trap. Because you really do feel good for the first six weeks to three months on a vegan diet because you're hiding a cellular energy deficit by excess Omega-6 oils. We understand the mechanisms.

Abel: Right, right. And I think that definitely happened to me when I was a vegetarian, because I was on and off for a while. And the reasons that I would go off is because all of a sudden I felt like crap, and especially if I tried to combine it with exercise... I remember I was lifting weights once, as a vegetarian, and I'm just like, "That's it, I'm finished, I'm going to get a steak." Because I was listening to my body, and I just felt it. There was something wrong that needed to be fixed, and in my mind that was meat.

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Dave: You were ready to listen to your body. And one of my first public talks on this, I talked to a room that was probably a third vegetarian and vegans, and I talked about curing vegans on stage. And I was logical and I would tease, but not rude or hostile.

Abel: Sure.

Dave: And afterwards, someone e-mailed me, one of the guys said, “Dave, I’ve been a vegan for 18 years and after your talk, it just made so much sense that I went to a restaurant with a friend and I had a grass-fed rare steak for the first time in 18 years and I hadn’t felt this good in so long I can’t remember, thank you.”

Abel: Wow.

Dave: That’s kind of touching to me, you know, because people who are choosing a vegan—we’ll call it a lifestyle—they really are genuinely trying to do it for their health or for the environment. But what they’re doing is they’re hastening the destruction of the environment, they’re killing more animals, they’re destroying topsoil. Like, a lot more animals die from tractors running over them and cutting them into little pieces than die from a grass-fed cow. And, from there, it’s kind of like, “Okay...” And then you want to minimize suffering and you didn’t do that, and now you want to be healthy and you didn’t do that either. So you’re not helping the planet, not helping yourself...why are we doing this?

We’re actually going to be publishing a vegetarian version of the Bulletproof diet sometime soon.

Abel: Oh wow!

Dave: Yeah, I think it’s important to remember, too, that we’re not trying to make vegetarians or vegans feel bad, we’re actually trying to help them, even if we do pick on them every now and then.

Abel: Well, they pick on us, too.

Dave: Yeah, it’s okay, I guess.

Abel: We’re all friends.

Dave: Yeah, it’s interesting, because you know, a lot of vegetarians will look at the Paleo diet and think it’s completely incompatible. There are many paleo people that eat far more vegetables and fruits than vegans and vegetarians do. It’s very interesting.

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Abel: I say that to people, too, and as much as I joke about the whole vegetarian/vegan thing, I do say to people at the end of the day, “Look, what I recommend is kind of a Paleo template, something similar nutritionally to what cavemen would have eaten, but, when you look at it, it’s 50 to 75% vegetables and especially raw foods. So I joke with people saying, “I recommend a 2/3 raw vegan diet.”

[laughter]

Dave: Yeah, you know, we also have a lot more in common than we don’t. It’s still relatively overall whole foods, it’s like even with grains and stuff, it’s still probably better than Ho-Ho’s and Twinkies. So I will give them that.

Abel: Totally.

Dave: There’s also the whole fresh and local, and it really matters, and support of local agriculture. If you’re not a vegan, you’re just a vegetarian, you’re probably still interested in the raw milk thing, and having healthy agriculture that’s near where you live. So there’s a lot of commonality there, and I don’t hold it against someone who’s vegan or vegetarian at all, but I do know that there are ways to optimize what they’re doing, and I’ve struggled since the first month of having my blog out, where I’ve worked with Indian companies for more than half my career with lots of vegetarians. And they’re like, “Dave, can you give us a vegetarian Bulletproof diet?” I’m like, “Look, you’re not going to be bulletproof if you’re on a vegetarian diet, you will not be as optimal as you can get. I can make you stone-proof. If they throw stones at you they’ll bounce off. But if they shoot you it’s not going to bounce off. But your level of resilience will not be as good as it can be as a human being if you keep being a vegetarian. That said, let’s crank up your fat, let’s crank up your healthy proteins, let’s get rid of the soy and all the other crap.” And that’s why we’re introducing the vegetarian version of this, not because being vegetarian makes you bulletproof, but because if you’re already a vegetarian, at least do it as good as you can.

...knowing that you’re still making yourself weaker than you would be otherwise.

Abel: Right. Yeah, and that makes a lot of sense. So, along those lines and against the processed food, you talk a little bit on your blog about microwaves, and why microwaving food is not a good idea. Could you tell us about that?

Dave: You know, it’s one of those things where some of the hard-core engineers who follow the blog, we have some of the trans-human sort of singularity types. They get sort of offended because it’s high-tech cooking. But here’s the deal. Microwaves heat very small portions of

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proteins in food up to very high temperatures. They don't target proteins, what they do is they target water molecules, so you excited a water molecule, it reaches a very high temperature, and it denatures the crap out of the proteins nearby, and maybe doesn't touch the ones past that. That's not what you want to do when you're cooking your proteins. You want to gently heat your proteins so you have less inflammation. And there's also this little problem where we don't regulate the amount of microwaves that come through the doors of the microwave very well whatsoever. So you're exposing yourself to biologically active microwaves when you cook your food. Especially in my book on fertility and pregnancy and how to have a child with better genes and a bigger brain, one that gets passed on to your grandkids, you know, especially if you're pregnant, toss your microwave. And if you don't toss it, for God's sake, go to the other room if it's turned on, because it has an effect on you.

[laughter]

Dave: And people say, "That's not true!" And it's like, "Okay, let's look what the Russians did in the 80's to the American Embassy in Moscow. What they did is they basically focused microwaves on our embassy and people would get really sick, and they'd have weird cognitive dysfunction, and even strange cancers. And they'd put them on hazard duty, three months on and three months off. They couldn't figure it out, and they finally tested and found out what it was, and they called the Russians and said, "What the hell! Can you stop doing this?" The Russians smiled and said, "Oh, no. We're beaming them at you at the exact level that your own government has said is safe for your population. So, no, we won't stop, because we're only doing what you feel is okay to do to your own people."

Abel: Cheeky.

Dave: Exactly. So, you know, Cold War has to have been fun, right?

[laughter]

Dave: It has a biological effect. The best writing about this is Robert O. Becker. I think his book is called Electromagnetism and Life. This is the guy who figured out how to cut the arm of a salamander and cause it to re-grow using electricity. Like, he knows his stuff. He's a lifelong researcher into electromagnetism and life. There are real electromagnetic effects whether we like it or not.

Abel: You also wrote a killer post recently about why getting your nutrients only from food is a bad idea. So what are some of the benefits of strategic supplementation?

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Dave: Well, it turns out that if you're going to get enough food to meet just the US recommended daily allowance, you're going to need somewhere between 17,000 and 22,000 calories. Armi, do you remember the exact—like 22,500 or something?

Armi: 27,575 calories for the average quote-unquote balanced diet. One of them was about as high as 34,000 calories.

[laughter]

Abel: That's a lot of potatoes.

Armi: Indeed, yeah! There's some other really good research in there, too, just basically highlighting the various aspects of what blocks nutrients or exhausts nutrient stores in your body, or even things like water and nutrient depletion in food, too. Modern agricultural practices and how they deplete nutrients from food, and increase the volume of food without increasing the nutrient density.

Abel: So, this could go to either of you: what are the most important supplements these days?

Dave: So, magnesium is one of those things many people are short on. It helps with sleep, it helps with muscle relaxation. Fortunately most of the Paleo people out there, I've started saying, "For god's sake, take your magnesium!" I've been on the D3 bandwagon for years because of the anti-aging non-profit that work I do, and that's also reached like...okay, everyone in Paleo gets that you need vitamin D, but I still find people who are on the Paleo diet that don't take enough. And unless you test your blood, the numbers that we recommend to people come from the Vitamin D research panel with Dr. Kanel, and it's 1,000 IU vitamin D3 for every 25 lbs of body weight. For me, I took about 10,000 IU's, but my blood levels were so low. I don't respond to it that well to it. So I actually need about 16,000 IU a day to get my blood level up to mid-80's to 90 where I want it. The test is \$45, it's the cost of dinner out on the town at, you know, Denny's.

[laughter]

Abel: Denny's...

Dave: Yeah, it's not a big expense. So, from that perspective, I highly recommend just getting it done. From there, the cod liver oil or fermented cod liver oil is a great way to round that out with some K2 and A. I'm also a fan of supplementing with K2. Potassium taken at exactly the same time as the magnesium is actually important because in order to enter the cell you need to have them together. And it's something that a lot of people miss.

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I'm a fan—for Paleo people in particular—I'm a fan of turmeric, which is also kind of reached consciousness there because of some things how it does for nitric oxide formation in the body and actually avoiding extra, it's called inducible nitric oxide synthase. But it's a precursor to many types of inflammation, so turmeric's good. The one that no one seems to think about is something called calcium D-glucarate. I have a whole blog post on that on Bulletproof Exec, but if you're going to be eating a high-animal products—especially a high cooked animal products diet—you really want to invest in this supplement, because it helps you to excrete extra toxins. There's a process called gluconeration. And the two things that really help it are both inositol, which is one of the B-vitamins, and calcium D-glucarate. So I'd say if you're going to be doing a lot of meat, especially if you like to barbecue or roast and things like that, you ought to be taking a capsule of that with those meals, because your liver and kidneys will thank you when you're 70. Yeah, there are 2 other supplements I would recommend as well, and that's iodine and selenium

Armi: Yes.

Dave: The iodine especially, since most people are not drinking well water, they're drinking municipal water or city water, which has fluoride added to it. And there's a lot of evidence that it might not be that good for you.

Abel: It's a waste, really.

Dave: Yeah, actually. And iodine is a good way to help detox from that. And most people don't get enough from the Paleo diet. If you're like me, you eat beef way more than seafood, you don't eat a lot of seafood, then you should be taking iodine. A lot of people are deficient in selenium as well, and there are studies showing that even if you are sufficient in selenium, some extra can still be beneficial for you.

Abel: Right, right. I recommend to a lot of folks kelp and Brazil nuts, which can both help with the iodine and selenium in kind of a natural way. Because I'm still...I try to take everything a step back and just think about it almost philosophically. Does it make sense to use a synthetic when you have a natural option? I would say, most of the time, no. But I was talking to Paul Jaminet, actually, about synthetic versus whole food supplements. And it's a really interesting thing that's happening in the field right now, because whole food is catching on, and some of the science is saying, you know what, maybe it's not so good. Maybe you don't need some of those co-factors. So we're still figuring some of that stuff out.

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Dave: We are. There's something about Brazil nuts, which are a classical way of addressing that, especially the selenium problem. It turns out that I've been unable in the last two years at any normal store to find Brazil nuts that aren't significantly moldy, they even smell moldy. So there's a real problem with storage. So even if you can't see or smell it, doesn't mean you're getting something that's free of toxins.

Abel: True.

Dave: So I'm to the point where I don't eat Brazil nuts anymore because most of them, I'd say like 90% of the ones I've been able to find, have mycotoxins. I'm sensitive, I've lived in several houses, including one that had *Stachybotrys* before I knew any of this. And that's one of the nastiest molds that has immune activating effects. I'm a canary, you give me a moldy nut, my brain swells up. You can see my forehead, it's a little bit Klingon.

[laughter]

Dave: So I'm not going to eat those Brazil nuts anymore, I'll get my selenium supplements.

They've got that methylselenocysteine, which is a good form of it that's more absorbable than what you'd get in the form of a nut anyway, then you need to look at how they were grown, were there radioactive isotopes that they picked up, was there enough selenium in the soil? And the dose depends on the soil quality, and the soil quality depends on the state. Were they Chinese Brazil nuts? So I'm kinda done with Brazil nuts. And very few nut processors take care to refrigerate and properly humidity control them from the minute they're picked.

Abel: I would say that synthetic sounds much better than a rancid, moldy Brazil nut.

[laughter]

Dave: You just don't know, like, rancid and moldy, it's not like a yes or a no, it's a question from the second it's picked, you start on the path towards rancid and moldy. And it's just a question of how far down the path are you. So if I had a Brazil nut from my back yard, when they're first ripe, I'd probably pick some and freeze 'em and eat 'em with no problems.

Abel: Yeah.

Dave: But the one that came at Whole Foods packed in a wholesale bin that's from God-knows-when, maybe I don't want to do that.

Abel: Yeah. You know it all gets very complicated. But we're coming up on the time, but before we take off, I know you're working on a bunch of things, like a book, whey protein powder, coffee, very busy man! So what's going on, and what do you want to talk about?

Dave: Well, the coffee's been really popular with the Paleo community. If you want to post a link to it on the blog.

Abel: Oh, totally.

Dave: By all means do that. And then, the whey protein stuff is really cool. We just, in our last podcast, we recorded—it hasn't even gone live yet. Some new research just came to light that talks about the amount of bovine serum albumin in whey protein as being the number one indicator of how much it'll raise glutathione. The average listener may not know what that is, but glutathione is a major detoxifying enzyme in your liver and actually in all of your cells. And the more of it you have, the faster you can clear toxins and generally the better you're going to be. Well, our whey protein is formulated with 20% bovine serum albumin added in. So it's actually way stronger than any other whey protein you can buy, particularly for those immune-stimulating compounds. And so we call it upgraded whey, because it's actually 75% from raw milk, unprocessed, un-denatured whey protein that was hard to source, plus this added bovine serum albumin, plus MCT oil, so you actually get the full feeling and it helps you with thermogenesis. So putting together a product like that, from a biochemical perspective versus, "Oh, look, it's grass-fed, we're just gonna do straight, isolated, just go for it." It's just a different effect. So I'm stoked that we have chocolate and vanilla coming down the pipe line next that are both specially processed to have different cognitive and health and anti-inflammation effects than normal stuff. That's kind of the direction we're headed.

Abel: That's really cool. I'd like to try that stuff a lot. It sounds a lot better than some of the ones I know that I have. I have a whole shelf of different protein powders. Because, like you, I test pretty much everything on myself to see what works and what doesn't.

Dave: I would love to hear your feedback on that. We can actually send you some. You know, we don't do sample packs, so I'll send you the full 2-pound bag.

Abel: Oh, man.

Dave: But just let me know. So far, the feedback has been, like, "Wow, I take 12 spoonfuls a day, I don't get sick anymore." That's a typical comment we get. I'll send you some. I need your address, though.

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Abel: That's awesome, thanks Dave. Alright, cool!

Armi: I just wanted to mention real quick, the tooth decay article I was talking about earlier for wisdom teeth, that's actually going to be available on our site, and we're going to make it a PDF download, too, so if anyone wants to print that off and take it into the orthodontist, and you know, not get their teeth cut out...

Abel: That's an awesome idea. Spreading the love.

Armi: Right!

Abel: Alright, guys! This has been so awesome hanging out with you guys. We'll have to do it again sometime soon.

Dave: Anytime, Abel.

About the Author

Abel James is a bestselling author, consultant, musician, and health crusader.

As host of the wildly-popular [Fat-Burning Man Show](#) and author of the best-selling [Intro to the Paleo Diet](#) and [the LeanBody Lifestyle](#), Abel brings Paleo, ancestral, and real food principles to the mainstream. In addition, Abel unveils deceptive marketing practices, exposes misleading corporate propaganda, and highlights powerful special interests that have accelerated the worldwide obesity epidemic and health crisis.

Abel has conducted research studies, presentations, and guest lectures in North America, Europe, South America, Africa and Asia for Fortune 500 companies, the Federal Government, and Ivy League Institutions. Also a [professional musician and singer-songwriter](#), Abel James has toured North America and Europe as the bandleader of several groups including the Dartmouth Aires who were recently awarded Silver on NBC's "The Sing-Off."

A tireless researcher, Abel James completed high school and college in a total of just six years. Distinguished as Valedictorian at New Hampton School, he earned his Artium Baccalaureatus from Dartmouth College and graduated as a Senior Fellow with Honors concentrating in Psychological and Brain Sciences.

Abel recently published "[The Musical Brain](#)," a best-selling exploration into the biological and evolutionary basis of the faculty of music, language, and the brain.

Hailing from the frosty backwoods of Center Harbor, New Hampshire, Abel now calls Austin, Texas home.

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