Introduction and Bob Cafaro's Background

– Well, Bob Cafaro. I'm so honored to have you on this episode of of the regenerative medicine summit – And Dr. Karlfeldt, thank you. It's an honor to be here and I truly appreciate the invite and the opportunity to share my story, my journey and my success as well. – Well, I mean what what so we we've had the op opportunity to chat before on, on my radio show and and I was so fascinated by everything that you did in order to be successful with what you're battling, Bob was born in New York city, began cello studies at age nine in the public school system and gave his first recital one year later he entered the Juilliard preparatory division as a scholarship student and later enrolled in the Juilliard School where he received bachelor and master of music degrees. After graduating bob played chamber music full time and served on the faculty of the University of Virginia until 1983 when he became a regular with the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra.

He later joined the Baltimore Symphony and in 1985 became a member of the Philadelphia Orchestra as an avid solis and chamber musician, he has performed recitals and appeared as solace in major cities of the world and has been a member of the Rachmaninov trio since 2003. In addition, Bob is passionately involved in volunteer and outreach activities for the Philadelphia Orchestra and the Saratoga Performing Arts center and irregular visit schools, retirement communities and nursing homes, Bob's cello was made in Venice Italy in 18 16 by, can you say the name please sir.

– It's Santa Giuliana. – Okay, Juliana. Beautiful. I I didn't want to mess that up and I knew I was going to do it and it's a beautiful name to do it.

In 1999, Bob was stricken with a virulent cost of multiple sclerosis which left him nearly blind and without the use of his hands. His doctor told him he would be in permanent disability, Bob has made a complete and remarkable recovery.

Has written a book detail telling his journey when the music stopped my battle and victory against M. S. This book is available in print from bobcafaro.com That's B O B C A F A R O dot com.

And for download on amazon Kindle.

MS Diagnosis and Rapid Decline

And here's the book and I know that you offered on your website a signed copy. Is that still the case? – Absolutely everyone that orders print copy from my website gets a signed copy. So, – I love it. So, I'm so honored to have you on the show.

And this is gonna be so fascinating to hear because here you're faced with something that is completely impossible, medically impossible to resolve. I mean, it's or am I wrong in that is M. S something that is medically possible or impossible. – It's medically accepted as an incurable chronic illness. And just to give you a chronological study with mine. Events. I it was December of 1998.

I started getting a numbness in my right leg started limping and it cleared up. I saw a didn't see a neurologist yet. I saw my family doctor and an orthopedic surgeon. They both said it's probably nothing worry about. Two months later, February of 1999 I started losing peripheral vision in my left eye, which was scary.

And at that point I saw my first neurologist and he diagnosed me with multiple sclerosis and he said you know, numbness in one leg vision in one eye is a textbook case.

But I didn't want to believe this because the MRI's in my brain was clear, there were no lesions and I didn't want to believe this. He sent me to uh wills Eye Hospital. And so this is all in Philadelphia now.

And he sent me two wills Eye hospital where I saw Dr. Robert Sergott who's now the head of neuro ophthalmology, will very esteemed. And he started, you know, he started me on Avonex and well actually no that was two months later I saw Fred Lublin who is the head of M.

S. At Mount Sinai in New York and he was at Hahnemann Hospital in Philadelphia at the time. And he that was where I got a second opinion and he deemed it to be a definitive case of multiple sclerosis.

So because he found lesions in the spinal cord. So I still didn't want to believe this and uh I started on the Avonex drug in April of 1999 at the direction of Dr. Fred Lublin and then it was in July, things went completely downhill for me. I started losing peripheral vision in my right eye, which was scary, the left, I had never recovered.

And I got an intravenous steroids for the second time, you know, it's 1000 mg of methylprednisolone intravenously per day for three days, followed by six weeks of oral tapering down of predniSONE.

So the steroids stabilized things and I was stable for about a week and then I became motion sick. Things really got out of control and I was vomiting and I was motion sick, but there was no motion, it was just my whole central nervous system was, you know, in disarray. And I was hospitalized for severe dehydration when I was released from the hospital, I saw Dr. Robert Sergott at wills Eye hospital who had been monitoring my lack of progress or or my downfall for six months.

And he gave me a basic vision test, I couldn't see the largest letters on the chart and then I couldn't see anything with the peripheral vision with the visual field test.

So that's when I was given a prognosis of permanent disability and I should tell you that also, I saw my fifth neurologist Dr. Clyde Markowitz at university of Pennsylvania.

He did a complete series of MRI's on my brain and spinal cord and my brain had over 50 active lesions. My spinal cord had a legion that was 3.5 centimeters in length. It took up the entire spinal cord.

So basically, you know, I had followed the protocol of standard medicine for M. S. And this is in 1999 which was one of the abc drugs, Avonex data Sirin Co paxson.

And basically there was there was no efficacy for me, I was just continuing downhill. And when I was given the prognosis of permanent disability, that's when I decided I was going to find my own answers to this disease, because doctors and medicine weren't helping me at all.

– And so during this process, I mean because you I mean you're you're an artist and you're a musician, you perform at the highest level of being a cello player at the Philadelphia Phil. Yeah, so so how did that, I mean the impact and you're playing through this process.

I mean, did you try to push through and fake it? I know, I remember, – I mean, so give you an idea when I get out of the hospital. I mean I the optic nerves in both eyes were so inflamed, I could see silhouettes of people, I couldn't see much more and um the use of my hands was basically gone.

I could hold, I had no feeling in my hands at all. I tried playing the cello, it was completely hopeless. It was just gone and I couldn't write, I have actually, I have a date book from then when I tried to write it looked like, you know, a kindergartner learning how to write for the first time. I was incontinent.

I couldn't hold my urine. I couldn't feel when like, you know, when I stopped defecating, I had no sensation down there at all. And I was very weak. I had walking, half a block was like running a marathon, everything was completely gone. – But in this process also, I remember in your book, you were talking about, you know, going to, you know, performing at Carnegie Hall. And so what when was this in the process? Was this in the process of So, – So what happened when Dr. Robert? Sergott told me that I would be on permanent disability? That was a game changer for me.

That's when I realized there are no help. It's going to be up to me to find answers.

Rebuilding Through Hydration, Diet, and Cold Exposure

And I started all my and I told him that permanent disability is not happening. This was at the beginning of august and we're starting this next season, the 1999 2000 season in mid september. I told him I'm going back to work in six weeks when the season starts. And he said, how are you going to do that?

And I said, I'm going back, you know? And I went back to work and I couldn't see and I couldn't move my hands and I had the library enlarge the music for me and I sat in the stand by myself in the back and I just mind it. I was like I could see silhouettes of people.

So I was just minding their motion. You know, I was vibrating but I couldn't play and I did that for the better part of the first season and you know, it was just I I kept going to work and I didn't give up.

And I so you know, I started all my own research and I found things that very, very helpful and if we can go through those, the first thing I found was a website called The Water Cure written by an Iranian doctor and he wrote a book called Your body's many cries for water, you're not sick, you're thirsty.

And he's a very simple formula, half your body weight in ounces of water a day. So 100 and £60.80 ounces. So I started doing this and I was so worried about getting hit with the fourth attack, you know. So we have number one numbness number two optic, your itis number three was in two waves, optics, your itis motion sickness.

And I didn't know what the fourth attack would bring. And I was so worried. So I started drinking 80 ounces of water a day and I started to feel a little better. It was my first sign of improvement.

So I upped the ante and I started drinking two quarts 64 oz of water every morning before I did anything. And not only was I not getting hit with the fourth attack but I started to feel a little better and I was also doing other things. You know I was so worried about overheating you know because getting hot is considered one of the enemies of M.

S. So I was taking cold showers every day and uh incidentally I found that I could still balance on two wheels of a bicycle which was a miracle. I didn't think I'd be able to. So I started biking and at this time you know my hero was Lance Armstrong. Which we know today as a liar and a drug cheat.

And but you know at that time I wanted to be like him. You know someone who comes back from the abyss meets you know defeats a life threatening illness and then winds up on top of the world. So yeah I I still admire him though for what he did, even though he was better at drug use than everybody else in the tour.

– Well, I mean considering what he's done, I mean yes he used some doping but coming back from testicular cancer where the likelihood of of survival was was very minimal. And then being able to achieve what it did even with the means that he he used I mean that's still an impossible feat in my mind – Right? And it wasn't just testicular, this was metastatic testicular cancer had spread into his lungs, in his brain. And he was given, you know, heavy doses of platinum for the cancer. And then they opened up his head to cut the cancer lesions on his brain and they told me he would never balance on two wheels of the bicycle again after the surgery. And I just think for him, you know, he was one of my role models at that point because He will win everything he does in life and nothing will stop him. And to him, cancer was just another race and he would come in first.

So basically, you know, he was one of the people that I really, I emulated and in my mind, I didn't just emulate him, I became him. And there were other people, you know, Nando Parrado who, this famous survivor from the 1972, Andy's plane crash, he was another one should have died.

You know, he just did amazing unbelievable things. Nolan Ryan, the Great Baseball pitcher who stayed off the aging process of his body for 27 years. You know, the list goes on and have other people that I talked about that I really modeled myself after two to get that mindset and beat my challenge.

– And, that's what you do. I mean like for an individual that wants to be successful in business for instance. I mean, how do you, how do you, how do you become successful?

Well you do what successful business people do and so here you're dealing with something that is a new medically it doesn't have a solution. So what do you do?

You have to then emulate people that have beaten all the odds and done what is impossible, – Like that's not right, not just in areas of health, you're talking health, you're talking survival, sports, chess, music, you know, people who accomplished in you know, people who accomplished these things and you know to me the most basic example was Roger Banister who was the first person to run a mile in under four minutes and he did that, it was May 6th 1956 and he was 25 year old medical student who ironically became a neurologist and prior to that, you know doctors, everybody said no the human body cannot run a mile in under four minutes and then he breaks that barrier. Then two months later that barrier is broken again it's his records bested and then you've had, I don't know how many people have beaten that record and killing kids at the high school level have run a mile in under four minutes.

So you know, once an impossibility is achieved it becomes a goal, you know, so – And that is with trailblazers like yourself and like you know Lance Armstrong and like I mean all these individuals that you mentioned, what happens is that you set up an energetic matrix.

You know a structure that that people can follow and that makes it so much easier to to you know defeat M. S. Or defeat you know all these different challenges that exist because that energetic matrix exist already.

– Yeah absolutely and you know it's that that mindset, you know basically it enables you to basically to delve deeply into yourself to find answers that are overlooked by medicine and neurology.

And you know if you look at, you know basically I used every event in my life to find answers to this. Give you an example when I was very young I read a short story called the Doctor's Heroism and it was uh it's translated from French and it's a story about a man who's diagnosed with a terminal illness and he goes to the doctors, there's nothing I can do for you.

Doctor says do you have money? And the guy says, yeah as a matter of fact I do. And he says go to a warm climate and eat nothing but watercress. So he comes back months later and he's in perfect health and the doctor doesn't recognize him. And the story takes a tragic turn.

The doctor kills him when the police come to arrest the doctor, he's examining his organs with a magnifying glass. So basically I started eating massive amounts of raw watercress.

And from a short story I had read as a child, I had guessed right because watercress is one of the true superfoods and existence it has every vitamin except D.

Which isn't founded foods and vegetables. And it's considered like food in its purest form. So I was living on large amounts of raw watercress and you know I had basically done a lot of research on my diet like worldwide it was very interesting to find that your very poorest nations have rates of M. S. That are one third of your wealthy industrialized nations. So you know I believe that there's a link between that healthy lavish lifestyle and higher rates of chronic illness.

And you know you look at the um you know one of the things that I stumbled upon was the Okinawa centenarian study. And you know it's I think everyone should look at that the O.

C. S. And that study it. They entailed over 900 people over the age of 100 they were all in perfect health. And if you look at what they did, 67% of their diet is organic, Japanese, sweet potatoes.

I didn't need to see anymore. So that's probably at least half of my diet. They live on a very low calorie diet plant based if they do eat meat, chicken or fish the size of a deck of cards and no more and they stop eating when

they're 80% full. So you know having done all my own research then I came up with these answers that when you consume more calories than your body is able to use that free radicals are released into your system which are unstable molecules.

And that becomes the seed bed for just so many chronic illnesses. And I started basically living on a low calorie diet. And what I was doing when I'm drinking all this water, I'm leaving less room in my stomach for food. So without realizing it, I'm intermittently fasting for at least 16 hours every day.

And you know, I mean, I shouldn't speak like a doctor, but I did a lot of research on this. So when you eat food, your body produces insulin and that changes the sugars the glucose into energy. And what's not used is stored in your fat cells.

And the human body was designed for adaptation. We were designed to adapt to different temperatures, which is, you know, I think the cold showers I was doing to keep my body from overheating. Plus the body was designed to go for days at a time without food. And that's why you have these reserves that are built into your fat cells. And your body is designed to tap into those reserves and clean them out.

And the problem is we don't ever use those reserves. We just keep eating three big meals a day and we're, you know, we develop high levels of fat sugar salt and then, you know, we get diabetes, we get obesity, we get all these different things.

So, you know it's it's when you don't have food in your system for 16 hours, that's when ketosis sets in and that's when you're you know you basically clean your cells and you start to heal and rebuild the cells of your body.

So without knowing without any medical background I had just guessed right on so many things so, – I mean what what you've done is that you you've studied, you know like you're saying like we're talking about this this these you know to become a successful business person, you do what successful business people do.

So you have studied, you studied what people do go where where do you have the least amount of M. S. What do they do? Who lives the longest, what do they do? And then you emulate that and then obviously then you are more likely to have the same effect that they do by emulating what they do and things like, you know you're absolutely right.

I mean the body is designed, it's it's an intelligent organisms. And if you don't put stressors on it it is you are actually uh the immune system becomes lazy, your detoxification becomes lazy and you have less of a spectrum of abilities within the body. And so now you're just operating within the comfort level. You know of you know the same degrees.

You know you have everything regulated. So it's only like 70 to 72 degrees that we're in and we're only eating these types of foods and we get food all the time.

So the body doesn't need to develop any strategies how to survive.

Mindset, Placebo Effect, and Meditation

You know, when you don't have food or to clean out like you're saying that the toxins or disease tissue, you know, it doesn't need to do any of that so that it won't and now you have you know, kind of a fluffy body instead of you know, keeping the strongest and the hardiest and the best – Very, very well put by the way. And you know, I like your two things that you said, you talked about the stressors and then you talked about you know that constant level of comfort and you know, again, I'm not a doctor but I do believe that we have essentially put our immune system into a state of complacency and I believe I really awakened my immune system by learning the adaptation by, by reawakening my body's ability to change go days without food and also to adapt to different temperatures.

And also you mentioned stressors, one of the things I do every morning. I do yoga and it was a book called the complete Illustrated book of Yoga by swami Vishnu Devananda and I think it's one of the most authoritative books

on the subject and I do yoga every morning and that I think not, I think, I mean yoga is the oldest science.

It's 5000 years old and it gives you that ability of your mind to control the body and I'm a big believer of that too. And one of the things I do is the corpse post shove asana, which is you know, you just it's it's a systematic relaxation of every part of the body, the mind everything and that again gives you that control and you know, to get stressed really under control completely. – So with this and I want to kind of backtrack a little bit to get back to exactly what you're saying in regard to the control.

Because here you're dealing with the disease and just like Lance Armstrong, you know said I'm at a race and I'm here to beat cancer and I'm an athlete.

I'm a warrior gladiator, I go out and I beat cancer. And so how did you, because obviously you're you have M. S. You develop M. S. And your shell lowest, you're dependent on your ability to see your movement of your hands.

You have everything that you fought so hard for all of a sudden this is disappearing. How was did you have fear of the M. S. Did that's something that, I mean did you feel that here is this this big beast that is just taking over me and I'm afraid or how how how did that process go?

I mean or did you just come M. S. I'm gonna beat you and then move forward. – Oh yeah I I did I had that you know because one thing Lance Armstrong said was he decided that cancer picked the wrong person. And one thing that Nando Parrado who survived the you know he was up 72 days up in the Andes Mountains and he hiked 37 a half miles through this mountain range and he had never seen snow and when the plane crashed his skull was fractured in four places, they thought he was dead.

I mean just it's an unbelievable feat of human survival. But what Nando Parrado said was he said I wasn't going to die up there, I became a survival machine and basically that was you know to say that I was afraid of M. S. Was it might be a bit of an understatement, I was so worried that you know everything in my life was geared toward you know finding answers and fighting this disease. And you know I say that I didn't fight this disease 24 7 this was 25 8 and you know just constantly and it's funny because I think if you give a person like a neurologist enough books and enough time they can know a lot about M. S. But in one sense they could never know what I know about it Because I dealt with it that 24/7, – I mean you're the most educated because you're not I mean it's one thing looking from outside in but it's another thing to be inside of it and fighting through it.

So, I mean, there, there's no experience that can be substituted by Actu. – But one of the things I did learn was I learned how to listen to the human body.

And I really, I became finally tuned to listening to my body. And you know, it's funny because with modern medicine, we live in a society where we mask all these symptoms. We have pills to mask every little symptom.

And I believe so many of these symptoms are the body's ability there, the body communicating with us. And instead of listening, we tune them out with some kind of a medication and you know, that's basically not where I was. So, you know, just to give you an idea, so I changed my, my hydration, right?

I started drinking at least 80 oz of water a day. And then I upped that to probably closer to, you know, maybe 90 90 to 100 ounces a day. Then I switched to an organic plant based diet and I was intermittently fasting for 16 hours every day without realizing it.

I'm taking cold showers and I'm cycling in really cold weather with a minimum of clothing, just, you know, maybe a t shirt and a windbreaker when it's just above freezing, just so I wouldn't overheat, but yet I could get the, you know, rebuild my body. And you know, Nolan Ryan who stayed off the aging process of his body for the 27 seasons. I basically adopted his lifestyle.

So I started working out with weights and when I started I was so weak I couldn't lift a £45 bar with no weights on it. I couldn't bench press £45. That's how weak my body was.

And I started, you know, when I could finally do that, I started incrementally adding you know £2.5 at a time. And now I bench press £135 every morning and I do handstands.

I do chin ups. I do my whole yoga regimen and I put that on youtube, my entire 30 minute regimen that I do every morning. It's on Youtube. Just Cafaro regimen.

It comes up. So um you know, we talked about hydration, we talked about diet exercise which is a very big part. And it's funny because there's a, it's the Mayo clinic, Doctor for the Mayo clinic.

He says, imagine a drug that beats Alzheimer's by this recurrent breast cancer. Recurrent breast cancer by 40%. When he talks about all these different things.

You know, just imagine if this drug, he says this drug exists. It's called exercise. You know, it's actually very good, – Fascinating. Just just sleep if you bring in good sleep and exercise both there are free, yeah. And there's really no medication that can can beat the effect of those two powerful things, you know.

And I yeah, I have created a webinar series for for people dealing with cancer. 11 things to address. You know, when battling cancer and one component is and exercise, you know, talking to leading scientist Katharine Schmidt about it.

And she says the same thing. I mean, if if you would have a pill that did, what exercise did you know, that would be worth billions of billions of dollars.

I mean, that's how effective it is and the impact on the immune system. – Hang on, I just, I want to read this parents and it's let me see, let me just find this. I should have had this up.

I didn't know we'd uh it was mention here it is. So, I I just want to read this this one paragraph. Imagine a medicine that reduced the death rate of breast cancer and risk of recurrent breast cancer by 50%, lowered the risks of colon cancer and type two diabetes by two thirds. And those of heart disease, hypertension and Alzheimer's disease by 40%. On top of that, it can be as effective as antidepressants or cognitive behavioral therapy.

Encountering depression. That medicine exists, says Dr. Edward Laskowski of the Mayo clinic. It's called exercise to me that says it in a nutshell. So yoga every morning. And also, you know, I'm up in Saratoga New York right now. I just came home for the weekend and every morning I'm biking 30 miles, I do that before the rehearsal in the morning, I biked 30 miles.

– That's incredible. – And, you know, I'm 63 years old, but I'm probably in better physical condition than when I was 20 you know, because I I but but I work at it, you know, and again, you know, when I talk about how weak I was in 1999 when I couldn't lift a £45 bar, it took about 3.5 years to rebuild my body, which makes sense.

If you think that, you know, the entire body, the cells of the entire body are new in seven years, every cell is replaced with a new one and the bones are the slowest to regenerate new cells. But, you know, to say it took 3.5 years to rebuild those cells in my body would make good sense.

– And so you were, because here you were at the lowest of low, you said you couldn't even control, you had no feeling, you know, with defecation or bladder control or anything like that, you recognize that the medical profession, they have no solution for you.

You were doing that. The standard of care. And you went from not having any lesions in the brain to fit the lesions in a very short period of time while being on their protocol. And now you say, you know, let's do it this way. You start to research, start drinking water, you know, kind of seeing what it is that you need to do.

And so from the lowest of low, how long did it take before you felt that you had complete control? And we're starting to be able to consider, you know, playing cello again professionally. – I would say it was the better part of 3.5 years and it wasn't just the cello plane came back magically, you know, I wanted to be like Lance Armstrong. So I wanted

to win a race on the cello, which was an audition. So I started taking principal cello auditions.

I did L A philharmonic Detroit symphony Baltimore symphony and the Associate principal of Philadelphia Orchestra. So I took those four auditions and I was practicing probably 67 hours a day on top of the full time orchestra job plus teaching, you know, and I had to start from ground zero, like the basic things and I learned so much from having to go back and reevaluate everything.

Exercise, Yoga, and Physical Recovery

So, you know, that really came back in a big way, but it wasn't cheap and it wasn't easy. So the other thing I wanted to talk about was the drug Avonex I had been on and what happened was, you know, one rainy day, I'm reading the, you know, the package insert that comes to those things unfold them and they go down to the floor. So I'm reading this thing and it what shocked me was after two years in the clinical trial study, they had an identical success rate in the drug group. And the placebo group was the number of lesions.

I think they had 85 people in the drug group had one lesion or less. I forget exactly. And then you had the same 87 people in the placebo group. So it was basically an identical number considering the large number of people enrolled in the study.

So I was like wait a minute, how could the placebo group have like basically an identical success rate? So I started researching, you know, clinical trial placebo groups in M. S. As well as other illnesses.

And one thing I realized was that M. S. Was one of the most difficult diseases to come up with effective medication for. Because you had a disproportionately high success rate in the placebo groups of all the clinical trials.

And in every clinical trial you're always going to get people in the placebo group that will inexplicably improve. And this is written off by an anomaly by science and medicine because they can't bottle it and sell it.

And you know, I I just realized, wait a minute, wait, you don't I'm onto something here. And if you look at these people that I write about in my book, people who accomplished the impossible if you put these people in a clinical trial placebo group. These people will all get better because they have that mindset. So my goal was now to train my mind to learn the placebo effect as a skill.

So I started meditating. I would just sit quietly close my eyes and I would start saying the M. S. Is going to remission, it's leaving my body. My brain is finding new pathways to the muscles.

The use of my hands is returning. My optic nerves are healing, they're rebuilding the cells of my body on the lesions are vapor rising. And I started just repeating these commands. And I started with 25 minute sessions and I built that up to 2 30 minute sessions a day where I just sat repeating these healing commands over and over again and then actually visualizing it as if you were watching a film, a short on Youtube or Tiktok or something. And I would sit and watch these videos of my lesions disappearing of my M. S. Running with a white flag and you know, retreating. And so I think that also played a very big role in learning the brain's ability. And to me, this makes sense when you think that the cells of your body are dying and being replaced with new cells. The brain can have a say in how those cells are being replaced, whether they're sick cells or healthy cells.

And I believe that that's where the placebo effect comes in and it's not just an anomaly. This is this is real. And I believe this is something I learned how to do with the meditation and you know people say oh meditation why I need to go up in the Himalayas and sit in a cave. You know it's not like that meditation is just sitting and repeating commands of you know things you would want to see happen and it was a book called you are the healer about the silver method that really got me started with this.

– Yeah. And that's the thing is to to show I mean plus the placebo effect is real science. I mean there there's no pharmaceutical drug that is really better than the placebo effect because if you remove the amount of of the placebo effect and and see what only the impact of the drug is without the placebo effect, the placebo effect is always stronger. So it shows that there's no drug that is better than your mind. And then we add that these other

factors that you've done where you know with the exercise and the water.

I mean like you know I mean here you had an Iranian doctor, you know in a prison and all you had to had you know only the only thing he could use to heal people is water. And so he was healing people right and left just with water. So it's just very foundational basic principles and that becomes so powerful – And when he brought his results to the National Institutes of Health and the medical community, he was just created with a palm in his face.

You know, nobody was interested in, you know because I mean I hate to say, you know, we like we live in a war economy, we live in a medical economy as well.

And if you think that it's really a medical industry we live in. Now, I don't want to you know, start a whole, you know, basically an expose on the medical but you know, there's any time you have that degree of profit with you know, hospitals with doctors with nurses with pharmaceutical companies, device makers, you know, you've you've got so much money is at stake.

– And I think that the important thing for people to understand is that, you know, it's always a question and I and I had that question asked to myself well if this was so effective, you know, my doctor would have told me and so that they recognize that there there's no the doctor exists within a system that is not financially incentivized and it's not that the doctor in themselves are mean and and trying to keep important information away from you, it's just that they exist within a system that they are given certain type of information that support the system.

– Absolutely. You know, and if you look at like the M. S. Society is dependent upon pharmaceutical companies for their survival and uh same thing, you know pharmaceutical companies make big donations we live in that's the world, we live in like it or not.

– Yeah so it's just kind of understanding that landscape and and you don't have to it's frustrating and all these kind of things but understanding the landscape and then taking actions that benefit you instead of just being plugged into that landscape.

And I think that's the key. You know and it's not that doctors are not well meaning you know the majority of them are there to care. It's just that they they have limited amount of information and limited abilities to do things.

– Yeah so I should also add that I didn't go to a doctor for 11 years. You know when I was on my own quest to find my own answers and healing and you know I did take the Avonex for 4.5 years and then I stopped taking it.

So I started the Avonex in april of 1999 and then I stopped it in Uh September of 2003 and I did it on my own without consulting any medical professional because I know what they would have said to me and you know one of the things that I you have to understand this drug, it's an interfere on beta and it's very very strong and you have basically you it's an intra muscular injection you do at night and then the next day you have a just a wicked case of the flu. It's awful.

You know you have a bad headache, you run a fever it's terrible and you have to take ibuprofen to counter the effects of this drug. So you know a question that ran through my mind was if a drug that you're taking to heal your body makes you so sick that you need to take drugs to counter the side effects of that drug you know how effective is that drug really going to be to help you heal and rebuild?

So you know basically 11 of the things also I had read in the package insert that came with the drug was that the drugs slowed down the progression of M.

S. patients. of the people that took this drug had results of slower progression and not only was I healing and not getting hit with that dreaded fourth attack, my body was getting very strong. I was returning to normal.

So that was when I made the decision to not take that drug anymore. – Because that would not be considered a a slowing down of the progression. It would be considered a reversal of the disease.

– Well put yeah that's exactly what was taking place. – And so you didn't go to medical doctor for 11 years. You know what prompted you to go to a medical doctor.

You know when you I mean apparently you were asymptomatic right? I mean I hadn't gone to doctors, you don't know what's going on in your brain or your nerves, but you have no symptoms of M. S. In any shape or form, – Right? So really what what what changed the situation, the the impetus behind by going to a doctrine. And was it was actually April 15th 50 2013, Nando Parrado, the survivor of the Andes crash did a lecture at the Kimmel Center in Philadelphia, where where we play and my wife and I went it was the most fascinating hour and 15 minutes of my life to listen to him.

You know, his whole mindset and his you know basically uh you know, telling the whole story of his survival.

MRI Recovery and Long-Term Remission

And when I went up to him afterwards because I had backstage access. So I went back and my wife and I went and met him and you know I said you know I have to I have to thank you. I said you were one of my guides when I was, my life was over and I looked to you for guidance and you were there for me and you know, this man gave me a hug and something went through me and I felt like for the first time I felt like I had cured myself. So I was like that's it, I'm going to go back and get another, you know go back to my neurologist.

So I went back and he said let's get a series of M. R. I. S. And I hadn't seen him for 11 years. So he said I said no I don't want to put my body through that.

But I think the real reason was that I was so afraid of what those M. R. I. S. Would show because the last time in 14 years earlier right they had all those lesions. And so you know he explained to me, listen, you know because I I told him I was going to write a book about my recovery and how I beat this disease and he said it would be irresponsible of you to write a book unless you had definitive proof that you've bested this disease.

So I basically I gave in and you know I did a whole series of M. R. I. S. And I remember that was probably one of the most stressful periods of my life that between the M.

R. I. And my next office visit not knowing what that was going to show. So when I went there he brought the MRI's up on the screen and he said you did the impossible and there were no traces of lesions or they were all gone. And I actually put those lesions I put those two before and after MRI's. They did a slide show on Youtube.

If you just do a Cafaro M. R. I. 1999 9 Cafaro M. R. I. 2013. I have a whole slideshow of both, you know identical pictures with and without lesions. So that was what really changed the scenario for me was meeting Nando and just feeling, you know that that power that he had was just fascinating to have gotten to know him. So we still stay in touch, you know, and he actually wrote a little something from my book.

– That's awesome. That is so cool. I mean, but how incredible! I mean it's there's one thing to be asymptomatic, I mean that that is one thing and that's I mean that that is a victory in itself and then be asymptomatic without pharmaceuticals taking it to an even higher level and then be completely disease free. I mean that that is incredible.

– Yeah. And you know, I should also add that my wife who is a clinical researcher, ironically she worked for novo Nordisk, you know, the diabetes drug company for maybe better part of 10 years and now she works for the Chung institute for Integrative Medicine and she runs a vitamin D.

Three study for hospital workers. So basically she told me you have to take vitamin D. Three every day and I was like okay, so I got covid in January and I was completely fine in 2.5 days. I remember you know, I had I got it and then I had the cough and then two days later I coughed up a big flame ball, then I was fine and then day four I by 10 miles. I lifted weights.

I got home, I was right back – Because your immune system is is a it's a survival machine, right? – One thing I

should ask, so Dr. Robert Sergott, who's the head of neuro ophthalmology at Wills Eye Hospital after I wrote the book, he was the featured speaker at one of my book signings and it was fascinating to hear his take on what I did. And he said, I changed my immune system in two ways. Number one, switching to an organic plant based diet, changed the microbiome in my gut, which transformed the immune system.

And number two, he said that I'm cycling outside, which, you know, I wanted to be the lance Armstrong of the cello world, but I was also, you know, cycling a lot because rebuilding my body and he said, I'm cycling outside getting high levels of vitamin D.

From the sun, which was true. And you know, he talked about the correlation between low levels of D. And high levels of M. S. So he felt that those two things really changed the immune system, but reflecting upon what he said, I think also exposing my body to cold and for any of your listeners that no Wim Hof is the iceman, you know, um you know, he swears that that's that keeps the immune system sharp, you know, that again, we're back to the body's ability for adaptation, ironically, my son is an M. M. A. Fighter and he studied with Wim Hof and my son does ice baths every day for 10 minutes.

And also the other thing was the fasting see, so I'm not realizing I'm fasting for 16 hours every day because there's no room in my stomach for food with all the water. So I'm also changing the immune system with adaptation to temperature and adaptation for you know, fasting.

So I think those four things did really play a key part in changing my immune system and that I think really showed its true colors when I was hit with Covid and I was fine in 2.5 days completely.

– So kind of looking back, why do you think you got M. S. – I believe it was a stress trigger having gone through a very very stressful divorce with two young Children.

And you know, no one can say for sure but you know Dr. Terry Wahls, I'm sure I've got to know her very well. You know, she contacted me after I wrote the book and she kind of took me under her wing and you know pretty fascinating person. And I went to her seminar twice to play the cello and speak and actually met a whole bunch of people that had reversed various chronic illnesses other than M. S. Including M. S.

And she said that she felt stress was a major trigger for her M. S. As well and you know everyone knows she was wheelchair bound for years and then reverse the disease with her own wisdom diet, You name it, – Yeah I get to hang out with her in Florida uh earlier this year.

And yeah, she's a sweetheart and I mean she's such a fighter, just like yourself. I mean – Yeah, take no prisoners, you know, she's, yeah. And to me, you know, when Dr. Terry Wahls speaks, stop and listen, you know, I mean she's a medical doctor and to reverse it after four years.

She felt that I really my situation was advantageous in the sense that I only had eight months before I really took aggressive action to change everything about my life.

You know, hydration, lifestyle, diet. You know, like give you an idea of the day I was diagnosed, that was 23 a half years ago. That was the last time I had alcohol.

I don't do recreational drugs, I don't eat junk food, I don't drink soda. You know, I'm very strict about what I live still, you know, and I, I should show you my water filter system in the house here.

We live in New Jersey where I think the water would glow in the dark without treatment. But you know, so I have a whole house filter downstairs. It's huge. Ta see granular activated charcoal and then in the kitchen I have reversed osmosis and when I travel I have my own silver impress updated manual activated charcoal filter that I take with me.

So, but it's interesting. I'm going back to Saratoga next week and it's the only place in the planet where I don't filter the water because it's spring water.

And I've seen tests on how pure the water is up there. So it's very good. But at home here in South Jersey, you know, Jersey has got a very high toxic waste sites – And that's important to know, you know, for for all the viewers to really understand what kind of water that you have.

And it's it's easy to go, I mean their websites where you can kind of type in your your zip code and then find out what kind of heavy metals and chemicals and things that exist in the water. – Yeah, because you know, it's my understanding, they treat the water here with chloramine, which is a mix of chlorine and ammonia.

Very effective disinfectant. But is that going to help the cells of your body heal and rebuild drinking a mix of chlorine and ammonia every day. Especially if you're drinking half your body weight in ounces of water.

– And what does that do to your gut bio my mean talk going back to the shift in your bio mom and being one of the reasons why you were able to beat the disease.

So now you're going to be drinking and chlorinated water that's gonna kill off. It's gonna work like an antibiotic kill off the friendly bacteria. And now you just have an unfriendly biodome continually and you're continually feeding that by drinking poor quality water. – Yeah. You know I I don't know that in terms of a doctor, the way you do, you know you can spell it out so well but I just lick finger in the wind that I had guessed right, you know? So – But again going back to you, you do what people do that are successful. – Exactly.

Yeah, exactly. You know and I think that you know, you know and I say my book that you know environmentally friendly living is healthy living as well. So my wife and I we compost food scraps, you know we try I live half a mile from the train station.

So I use the car as little as possible to go into Philadelphia for the for the orchestra and you know we try to basically live a very clean life in that sense – And kind of I want to touch a little bit kind of going back to you know you're talking about the stress and you think that was the trigger in regard to M.

S. And I don't disagree with that at all. How do you feel that your childhood had an impact?

Stress, Childhood, and Final Reflections

I mean what do you I know you you spoke a lot in your book in regard to your father, your relationship with your father, you know and I mean how do you feel that impacted your nervous system and your immune system and and how it was behaving, – You know, I was probably stressful my father, you know, he was raised having been beaten by his mother and that carried over and my older brother took the brunt of my father's belief that, you know, beating a child was a good thing to do.

And for me, I was just frightened of it, that I was, you know, I said in my book, I felt like the gladiator that I was next to go out into the colosseum, you know, watching the guy before me get, you know, so, but you know, it's funny because the day I was diagnosed, I had a dream.

I remember I, when I was given my first diagnosis in February of 99, I remember I came home and I was just devastated. I crawled into bed and I I fell asleep in the middle of the day and I had this dream and it was a dream about something that had really happened, when I was three years old, we moved from queens New York out to Long Island and it was, you know, really undeveloped at that point and we moved, I think there were only two houses on our whole neighborhood and the major highway was still a dirt road, which is now clogged with traffic and so what happened was the builders dug this pit in the woods and they threw all these sealants and chemicals and you know, asbestos shingles at all. It was just a anyway, I used to go in there, there was a little kid and I would play with all this stuff and I had this dream, I woke up and I was had been playing in this pit again and I hadn't thought about that since the time I was there. And you know, I always wondered about that. Playing with those chemicals when I was a little child, could that have had any long term ramifications?

That could have been a trickle for M. R. S. M. S. As well. And again, there's no way none could it have been stressed? Yes. Could it have been playing with toxic chemicals in a pit? Yes, but there's no way to know.

– And in your journey also you went through some some testing, you went to an integrative doctor, you went through some testing uh in regards to food. And so how did how did that play out a little bit And how how do you feel that played a role in your recovery as well?

– So, I was tested for everything you could imagine. I was tested for AIDS Lyme disease. I think three times I was tested for heavy metal toxicity, I was tested for uh every rheumatoid disease under the sun.

You know, lupus vasculitis, you named it. I was just went through the whole gauntlet of tests. I had, you know, numerous, you know, bone scans, x rays, you name it. So I went to see a doctor Ronald Hoffman in New York who he ran a radio show.

It was basically an alternative medicine doc. And he gave me a whole list of foods that I should avoid, which I did. And then I did something. I started to slowly after I was getting better and better, I started slowly reintroducing those foods one at a time.

And ironically this is exactly what Dr. Terry Wahls advises people to do to cut out basically everything other than, you know, your most basic sustenance and then start introducing foods one at a time, small amount, wait a few days.

Do you see anything start another small amount, wait a few days. If you don't see anything, you can, you know, that can become part of your diet. That's what I did. Then again, all about, we're back to learning to listen to the body instead of masking those symptoms with some kind of medicine – And kind of connecting that because one of your favorite favorite tv show was that that kung Fu.

Remember you're talking in your book about the little grasshopper. But yeah, but it is that key to, to allow the body to communicate and listen to it and to be in tune and like you're mentioning that the pharmaceutical is all about making us feel comfortable, you know, to get rid of symptoms, but this is the way that the body communicates is through symptoms and that's the only way. So by looking recognizing up this is what's going on and then trying to pin point and see what is causing that symptom and then addressing that rather than just shutting down the communication of the body and now the body, you know, you pretty much muscle the body, you know, so now it can't speak. – Right. And it's funny you're alluding to one particular scene in that kung Fu series that I liked and you know, as a, he's basically, he's in something of a nomad in the drifting in the American west during the time of the gunslingers and this was the time the railroads were being built, I guess. And he keeps in every situation, he keeps reverting back and he would go back to his childhood training in the Shaolin Temple with the monks and there's one part in it when he's with the blind man and you're going through their philosophy session and blind man says, you know, grass hopper, he says, do you hear the sound of your heart, Do you hear the sound of the water? And he says, this is when he gets the name, he goes, do you hear the sound of the grasshopper at your feet and the boy looks down and this grasshopper flies away and he says, old man, how is it? You can hear such things.

And he looks at him and he says, young man, how is it? You cannot, and I always loved that, and you know to me that you can be put to work as far as listening to the body, you know, because we do that, we mask the symptoms with medicine instead of listening to what the body's trying to tell us.

– I love it, I love it. Well Bob, I I so appreciate you coming on onto this episode and to give us an idea of what a a winning formula is, you know, to be a gladiator in in your own battle against disease, and I mean obviously the best disease is the one that you never get and by doing by never getting the disease, you know, you then want to have the winning formula and is then having doing what other people do that live long and have beaten disease or do not get the disease and you are one of them and you kind of late fourth example of how it can be done and yeah, I mean I this this is an awesome book, you know, when the music stopped, loved it, thank you Bob, – Thank you so much. Dr. Karlfeldt, I really appreciate the opportunity to be on your show and again, I'm so appreciative, okay