From Pain To Triumph: A 200-Pound Weight Loss Story Transcript

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Introduction to Tim Kaufman

Well, everybody sit down, buckle in and get a notepad. You're going to be just blown away by the next 30 minutes with Tim Kaufman, a long time friend.

Buffalo, New York. If you look behind him, you might think that he collects shoelaces or something, but those are actually all athletic championship awards and medals.

And we'll talk about how could this man possibly have all those medals? And it's really a great honor to him. You know, we've known each other, but I don't think I've ever had this pleasure to, talk to you about your, you know, incredible journey.

What your website calls fat Man rants.com. Everybody write that down. Fat fat man rants. Rants.com. It's amazing. Website you're going to want to go to after this interview.

At least for the recipes and probably for everything else. So thank you for being here from Buffalo, New York. Tim. Oh, thank you for having me. It's a pleasure.

You are by far my favorite cardiologist. Oh, yours. Yeah, I know it's, it's kind of you as my favorite undertaker. Kind of fits the same way that, You know, this is a reversing heart disease summit.

And let's talk in a minute about your incredible story that you capitalized in a book called escape. And again, I really mean this. I told him this just a moment ago.

This is one of those books. When I got it, I couldn't put it down. Escape breaking free from a self-made prison. You do want to order it? You do want to read it.

It's powerful that the human mind and the human body can go through what Tim Kaufman went through and come out on the other end still a victor despite so many disadvantages.

So any day I have a bad day as that was nothing like Tim Kaufman in 2011. It was like his days back then. But. So you have a condition. You wrote about it a lot in your book. You talk about it.

That does link you to cardiac disease. The topic of this summit called Ehlers-Danlos e Dash, Diane, and Loss Syndrome. Just give us a little bit about what you understand about it when it came into your life.

As far as your awareness of it, then how it impacted you. Yeah. So I think, EDS is very underdiagnosed and back. Oh my goodness, I hate even saying this, but 30 years ago, actually 35 years ago, when I was diagnosed it, we knew even less about it.

And there was like four categories. I know there's more categories now, but the kind I have is hypermobile.

Understanding Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome

So basically, the collagen or the glue in my body has a genetic screw up, causing the collagen to be very stretchy, almost bubblegum. I actually, you know, with degrees of, you know, I probably am in the middle somewhere of my symptoms.

I've heard stories that doctors will do surgery on people, and the collagen is so messed up they they liken it. I was talking to one surgeon that had said he was like trying to stitch ice cream together, like just nothing would hold.

So as the collagen stretches, it obviously gets weaker and thinner and eventually it will fail. Along with the collagen, comes the scar tissue. That's actually a big key.

When they diagnose me, the scarring, they call it fish mouth. It just oozes scar tissue. And then the third thing that goes in that hypermobile is very elastic skin.

So I don't know if people remember, but way back in the day, they used to have circus people that would pull the skin on their neck, like, way out. And that was a tall tale sign of Ehlers-Danlos syndrome, or EDS.

Hypermobile. One of the other categories they had really has to do with heart. And, and, you know, this, a lot of people have parts where I believe there is that their blood pressure is low in their heart rate, very high. So.

All right. And, and, you know, a whole bunch of murmurs, holes and hearts, valves that won't shut that kind of thing. And it's it's deadly. What I have is not deadly, although there is crossover through the zones.

And so they've always kept a close eye, you know, on my on my heart, in fact, every time I would go get surgery just because of the meds, I always had to go for an EKG and a heart checkup.

Unlike most people that would just get pushed to without that. So that's areas it didn't affect me terribly when I was young. Because I think you're young, you're resilient.

All your cartilage is intact. But if you want to think of, like, my condition, I kind of dislocate or sprain with really every movement. So through the years, that chipping of the cartilage, the cartilage is 100% gone.

And, you know, it gets down to bone when they say bone on bone, my bones actually chip to the point where, when they when they did a surgery on my ankle, they said that the bottom of my tibia was actually black from the bone actually bleeding.

So it's, you know, over time, it gets worse and worse and worse. So by I want to just fast forward from your birth to, 13, 14 years ago, August 2011, when you were really, I mean, at the bottom of a very, very dark, ugly, deep hole, over 400 pounds, painkiller addicted, vodka addicted.

Anybody that reads a book escape, you'll be just mesmerized. How could a human possibly survive to that point? And you're joints and you couldn't walk, and you were trying to maintain a family with a lot of stress involved and, fortunately, a wonderful wife.

But I don't know how she. You know, endured all that you endured. And, tell us about what happened August 2011, in terms of maybe having gastric bypass surgery of one kind or another and, not qualifying.

Yeah. So, yeah. And that's great that we can skip over all that because it's not really fun to talk about that stuff. But I because of the chronic pain with this condition, the chronic inflammation, my diet was set up in such a way that I was eating highly processed food, mostly fast food, many animal products, oils, salts, sugars, like basically anything that would inflame my joints.

I was just consuming massive amounts and anything that actually would have helped me with inflammation. I wasn't consuming things like greens and beans and things like this.

Of course, at the time I didn't know. And probably what's worse is none of the doctors had ever mentioned the diet had anything to do with the symptoms of my condition.

All that said, I lived a life of chronic pain. Pain that was almost intolerable. Especially at night. At night, when my body would kind of my muscles would go limp in bed.

Rock Bottom and Health Crisis

Everything would kind of pull away. And especially where the, the, the big nerve centers are, like my armpits, things like that. When those nerves would stretch, it was just it was so painful I couldn't sleep.

So as a result, I won't get into all the details. I went from, you know, pretty common painkillers all the way up through, at the time, OxyContin was being prescribed, like candy and I ended up on fentanyl.

And when, you know, I went through the cycle of addiction for that. And then when the fentanyl wasn't enough, I started drinking, just to try to fall asleep.

So, I always say that the, the for the, for areas I used to use for escape were the opioids, the fentanyl, the alcohol and the food, because food gave me that same kind of dopamine hit, you know, I would get that temporary happy and then it would, you know, dissipate.

And I be overcome with guilt and hate who I was. So through a series of very unfortunate events by losing my father, to cancer and others mom to cancer, I decided I had to do something to change.

And I think this is what you're referring to. I went to the doctor, to get this bariatric surgery. I really had everything in place. I just had to get him to sign off on the pre-op.

And when the nurse took my. Well, first of all, there was a huge line at the doctor, and, this is where the cardiac stuff comes in. So I had been sitting very relaxed for quite some time, well over an hour.

And when the nurse took me in there, you know, they put me on the scale. I maxed it out. By this point in my life, I was over 400 pounds. I was on at least 20 prescriptions or around 20 prescriptions per month.

Aside from my painkillers. And we'll talk about the heart, medicine in a second here. But when she took my blood pressure was 255 over 115 and she, like her eyes got huge.

And then she went on, got the doctor. He came in, he was actually seeing a patient that was before me. And she said, you have to get he said, you have to get the bigger cuff on him.

It's just the cuff isn't big enough. So you're getting improper reading. They took it again. It was still 255 over 115. So the doctor then took my pulse and my resting heart rate was over. 125.

So he starts panicking. He says, we have to get an ambulance here. You're going to you're going to have a stroke, like right here in my office. You need to get to the hospital.

I would very good at manipulating doctors at this point because I could very good at manipulating them for controlled substances. And I said, look, why don't you just let me relax?

And he went out and saw a couple more patients came back. He had me do some breathing exercises, and my numbers did come down. What was very, scary about this is I was already on a calcium channel blocker, and I was already on, a beta blocker because my blood pressure was just out of control.

And so I would just keep blaming it on the the pain, you know, the pain was making. But I knew that if I kept blaming it on pain, he would give me more painkillers and send me to more pain management doctors.

But the reality is, the way I was eating my my salt intake, I can't imagine, you know, I was consuming about 10,000 calories a day. I went back and figured out, and most of these calories were coming from fast food, which is loaded with sodium.

And another thing that, that is quite interesting about my, my cardiac condition was I can remember, like, at first it was like a joke. We thought it was funny, but I would lay on my bed and I'd put the remote or the cordless phone.

At the time, we had cordless phones, right. And I would lay that on my chest and my chest. My was my heart was

beating so hard that that phone or the remote would actually get air.

Like you literally could say jump and there would be a space like a gap between my chest. That's how hard my heart was working. As far as blood pressure goes, I could tell, when my heart was really, really working.

Because believe it or not, this sounds so weird. And it's like I get flashbacks talking about this. I could hear it in my ears, but I could feel it in my eyes.

I literally could feel like my eyes, like pumping. It was a while this thing, if my ears would actually hurt when I could hear it. So I did have, you know, heart issues, I guess, or certainly the beginning of some serious heart issues.

And that's actually what he used to deny me the bariatric surgery. He was worried about the narcotics and how my body would react, but really, he was more concerned with my heart than anything.

Well, I want I will just, put my hands around what you just shared with everybody listening, and everybody viewing and that, you know, 13, 14 years ago, you were in this dark, dark, dark place of pain and joint, and tendon and cartilage injury from a genetic disorder you didn't ask for, but does have cardiac manifestations of leaky valves and an enlarged aorta.

We all need good collagen to, hold our body together.

From Juicing to Plant-Based Recovery

And it turns out much science as a whole food plant based diet is very supportive of healthy college. And we can talk about that at this time. And then you had this doctor journey down for surgery.

Now, maybe I'm going way out of order, but you did something. I want everybody to listen. That was August 2011. This man was barely able to get out of a chair due to weight and pain and destroyed joints.

And what did you do in the summer fall of 2024? That most of us couldn't even contemplate doing? Just go ahead and brag a little. What did you do? Well, before I brag, just to kind of set the stage, where I actually was, so with areas the, the common thing is to brace like the doctors love bracing.

And while I understand, you know, what the what results are trying to go for is to stop that dislocating, stop that damage again, the nerves, the nerves were the big things.

By this time. Cartilage was gone. Everything was loose. Everything was torn. ACLs were totally gone. They weren't even intact anymore. And so you brace.

The problem is, when you brace, you stop the muscles from firing and then going to atrophy. So it was this cycle of terrible food, terrible choices. The not only that, bracing the joints, kind of disengaging my muscles, my whole body turned into almost like jello.

So you're right. Like, not only could I not hardly get out of a chair if I did the sheer weight on the loose joints and no muscles, I would fold up. I used to explain to people then do you ever see those toys?

That and these are kind of old school, but you would push the bottom and the whole thing would, like, go limp. I don't know if you remember those. Yeah I get them.

Yeah. So so that's literally how I felt like when you push the button, everything would just kind of fall apart. So it was, it was, a really bad place, especially with the atrophy.

So my doctor used to tell me that every time I used to see him every two weeks, and he said every time he would actually peek around the waiting room window to see if I was in a wheelchair.

And this isn't, you know, this is my mid 20s, that he was checking to see. We interviewed him for a film, and he said that he actually thought it was a small miracle.

Every time I didn't come in that office in a wheelchair. So that's where I was. So and then you refer to, I think you're referring to, Iron Man, Lake Placid.

I share with you. On the finish line. We have yet. To fill the gap between the picture you painted and Ironman Lake Placid, but for anybody that thinks you can overcome obstacles.

Tell us about Ironman Lake Placid. Same human being, same, you know, heart and spirit. But, why did you do this, athletic, goal, achievement. So, Ironman, if people don't know, it's a two and a half mile swim or 2.4, in open water, you get off that, you get on your bike, do you?

112 miles on the bike and then a full marathon. And what makes Lake Placid kind of special or kind of like it's the one on everyone's list is because it's arguably the hardest one in North America.

It has almost 10,000ft of climb. So not only are you covering the 140.6 miles, you're also gaining, 10,000ft of elevation gain. Which is it's a really long.

It's a really long day, but it's a, you know, it's a it's a goal that I think anyone can achieve if they work hard enough. But it's it's quite a goal.

And it took a lot of work. On you and you completed it. Yes. It took me, three tries, but on the third try, I finally found the finish line. And and I did have to be fair, I had some things, even though I eat very healthfully, I did have some symptoms.

I had to get my ankle fuzed, and I had a few bones, removed out of my back during the three years. So, they were supposed to teach me how to walk in October, and I still lined up in July.

So. Yeah. So, again, I want people just to appreciate where we're discussing health with, doctors and nutritionists and psychologists and chiropractors.

But Tim Coffman went from completely at the bottom of life's joy factor in every way. And then within 13 years, he had brought himself back together just out of grit and, amazing Wife.

Give a shout out to Heather, part of the Fat Man pants.com story for sure. To completely one of the most, you know, amazing endurance events on the planet.

So I mean, that's why you got to read his book escape. Because how do you get out of that hole? Many people listening, you know, have some of the issues.

You have chronic pain, weight issues, alcohol issues, painkiller issues. Or they got their own thing. But your story can inspire pretty much anybody that there is hope.

And it's going to take time and hard work. And, I love, you know, stories like yours. And sometimes I find people to read Penn Jillette book. The famous comedian called Presto about his weight loss journey.

He didn't have the rest of your journey. I think your journey is more remarkable. So somewhere along the way, because if anybody does go visit, all the social media sites, Fat Man rants, dot com and the website, I mean, you're now a plant based health coach duo.

You've got recipes for, sunflower blueberry vinaigrette and healthy vegan lasagnas and Kinloch corn fritters. You're not slamming down fast food and, Pepsi and, craft dressing anymore.

I mean, you made an amazing transformation, and I know that was all you, you know, part of what you've done. But

where along that journey from rock bottom to, Iron Man.

Placid did, plant based eating, And how much of it, you know, do you credit for? You know, you're amazing, you know, bounce back. How much is the the plant based part of of course, the athleticism was the other part of your amazing story.

But where did the diet come in. Yeah. So that's a lot of questions. And and I want to unpack them. But before we do that this is where you're going to learn why they call me Fat Man Ranch now.

But before we do that, you know, it sounds because I know you've, referred to me as hero before and stuff, and that's that's cool and everything, but the reality is, there's honestly, like, there's nothing special about me.

There's really. There's nothing remarkable about what I did. And in fact, my first news interview that I ever did, I can remember the lady saying, well, what makes you so special?

And this just rolled off my tongue. I'm like, I'm not special. I'm just a fat guy. I did eat a bunch of apples, and I bring that up in my presentations because I think it's so important.

I didn't have some, you know, magic box or magic pill. I didn't have willpower, you know, I didn't have this iron will. I didn't have any of that stuff.

And what's beautiful about it, the reason why I love sharing my story is because anybody could do this. Like, anybody can do this. And it doesn't matter if you have 200 pounds to lose or 20 pounds to lose or no pounds to lose, you just want to get healthy.

Ironman Lake Placid and Athletic Comeback

Anybody can change a chronic lifestyle disease. It just takes making healthy choices. So we'll unpack all that stuff. But just realize like is crazy is my story.

Sounds like this is literally out there for anyone. Like it's it's one choice away. That's how close it is. So now we can go back. That's right. Here's a client.

You and your wife, you know, do teach that between the two of you, you've lost 290 pounds. And of course, that's been stable. And I don't think you're depriving yourself.

You're eating. You're eating amazingly healthy. Good, clean, whole food plant based. No more, no more KFC and, McDonald's in your life for a long time, right?

Right, right. So so our diet, so I, I grew up in and still live in a very kind of rural place. My culture was hunting, fishing. When I wasn't hunting and fishing, I was getting ready to hunt for fish.

We processed all our own meat. There were weekends. We used to smoke over 300 pounds of meat. And again, this this would be. Although we thought it was, I didn't really care what was healthy.

I cared what tasted good. We were making this stuff at home, but we were still, you know, using pork fat and, like, the worst of the worst, right? And, that just kind of became my thing.

And then when I got into fast food, we got a family. We got busy with kids and stuff. Fast food became cheap, fast and easy. And so I was eating fast food at least, twice a day, sometimes three times a day.

As far as, food choices at home. We ordered out almost nightly when we went, did go to the grocery store. We bought boxed food, tortillas, pizza rolls, box chicken, all things that were fast and simple or fast and easy.

This obviously took a toll. So this was my diet was an awful diet. We won't get into all of this, but actually, the first

thing that kind of tipped for me was finding gratitude.

What the heck does that have to do with diet? Well, for me, it had everything to do with diet. I started becoming grateful for life because like I said, I lost my dad.

We lost Heather's mom, and I realized how precious life is, and I was just wasting mine. And, one thing led to another. I tried to get myself, some weight off.

That's when I went to the bariatric surgery, and I ended up seeing a film called Fat Sick and nearly died. It's a story about Joe Cross juicing for 60 days.

And I don't know what clicked inside of me. I'm like, I'm going to juice, okay? I'm I'm just going to juice. So I went into this juice fast. Oh my gosh. Like, it was amazing.

Like the first three days sucked. It was hell. By the fourth day, hunger subsided. Fifth day I woke up in the same spot I had fallen asleep. I wasn't in pain at night.

Five days. And I can pretend I'm really smart now, but looking back, I eliminated all the inflammatory foods, right? I got those out of my diet, and at the same time, I flooded my body with nutrients.

And what I learned is my body didn't want to be sick.

Coaching, Accountability, and Closing Advice

It just didn't have the building blocks to fix itself. So, you know, you get this nutrient flood, eliminate all the crap. And, every day my eczema would get better.

The color came back in my face. My eyes weren't cloudy. I started breathing better. I didn't have Gerd. At night, I would wake. Oh, it was awful. Like it would just boil out of me.

All these things are going away day by day, you know, like, this is like 20 days into the fest. I'm like, this is unbelievable. But at the same time, I'm kind of freaked out.

I can't use the rest of my life. So I stumbled on the film, Forks over Knives. And, from there, it's all been. You know, I tell Brian that Forks Over Knives didn't just save my life.

It gave me a completely new one. I knew that I can consume what I was putting through the juicer, along with legumes, nuts, seeds, whole grains. And I had this perfect diet that was conducive to keep inflammation at bay.

Right. The chronic pain away. And also, you know, as a side benefit, it gives me all the nutrients I need to rebuild, all the damage. And, you know, I don't know if this is a direction you go in this, but there's another hidden benefit of whole plant foods.

They're not very calorie dense, unlike processed foods. So at the same time, you end up losing weight because there's, you're eating so much fiber and water that it's filling your stomach up and you don't get those calorie dense foods.

Instead, you get nutrient dense foods. And that's how my food has changed. And you're right. I lost, 200 pounds. Heather's lost 90 pounds. And we sustain it. It.

And, you know, I mean, yeah, maybe up and down a little bit depending on training. But overall it hasn't been this thing that we have to keep going up and down, up and down.

We just we eat delicious food, you know, and and sometimes I'm a food addict, sometimes I still overeat. But when you're overeating on good food, it doesn't have all the repercussions.

When you're eating crappy food. So I don't know if that answered your question, but. No, it's, exactly why I wanted to hear your perspective on. I mean, again, there's a lot of theory and science and research and hopeful plant based eating, but when you get one person who can legitimately say, you know, I was on my path to early death and one component of my recovery, my escape has been, you know, forks over knives and, the other, input that you got, Joe Cross, Fat Sack and Nearly dead.

What an amazing documentary. And you're right. We really can't sustain ourselves on juice alone. But it's a great start for a lot of people. So, and just, you know, I do call you hero, even though you're the common man and anybody can do it, but a lot of people don't do it, so it's very inspiring.

Just in the last few minutes, you know, you and your wife have become great educators. You've been to Detroit speaking for the plant based nutrition support group.

And, you got your own meetings. I think I saw on social media you've recently been in Rochester, New York, where there's a very big education group for plant based eating, but, you know, on your own website in addition to your book, but you have membership groups, you've got, what you're five by five, plant based eating transformation program.

What would a person expect? They hear this, they say, you know, Jim and Heather are my, coaches. I want to get involved in their five by five training.

What are they going to get in terms of, input for success? Okay. I hate to keep doing this. Let's go back to just a little bit. Just rewind just a little bit.

I know we're short on time here, but I wanted to to say, what you said, like, not everyone does it, and maybe that's some I could just spend one minute on, talking about why everyone doesn't do it.

Everyone doesn't do what I did because the truth is, this stuff is not complicated. It's very simple. You know, these diseases that are, caused by chronic lifestyle, we can fix them by making healthy choices.

So you're right. The question then becomes like, why don't people do this? And I'm going to just sum this up really quick. I think it's super important, especially people that are attending this summit.

They're going to see all this great information. And the reality is most people will do nothing with it, like they'll just hear it and move on. And that's sad.

So I would just like to submit this to you. Many times we go through life and we think that we need motivation. We need inspiration to change our health, destiny by healthy choices.

And I would submit to you that at no point in life do we ever count on motivation unless it's for health or fitness. And I find that to be the most fascinating concept.

If I called my, you know, if it was income tax time and I wrote the IRS and said, you know what, I was going to pay my taxes, but I'm not feeling motivated.

I'm in trouble if I don't pay my mortgage because I'm not motivated, I'm in trouble if my kid comes home. My kids are 30 now, but if my kid would have come home and said, dad, I got homework to do, but I'm not motivated, I would have said, you get your butt to work.

Because here's the thing motivation is crap. Responsibility, right? Responsibility and accountability is what we make decisions on through life. I'm responsible to pay my tax.

I'm responsible. I know I'm not crazy about going into work tomorrow, but I'm responsible to do that. So this is what I would submit to people. You have the information.

Be responsible with your health. You don't have to be motivated. It's when you know better. It's your job to do better. And I think that's the difference between someone that hears it and does nothing.

Someone hears it and actually starts making changes. I think that's a really important concept and I'm sorry for getting off track. No, I actually am so glad because I think, you know, that's what people need to hear is, why are you at this point in your life and viewing it as a responsibility to yourself, your wife, your children, and your parents and, not viewing it as, something that you need to go and listen to one more podcast to get motivated to do it. Yep.

It's a beautiful, beautiful item. In fact, I don't think we can top it there. There's no possible way to cover, you know, every aspect of your amazing, journey.

And again, I just can't stress it enough. Everybody should have, you know, on their nightstand. And don't let it sit there. You got to read it. The very, very dark journey that becomes light at the end called This Escape by Jim Kaufman.

You know, all the book sellers, plus Tim's, web page, fat man rants. Com. Well, let you get there. Plus, there's recipe books you might want to pick up along the way.

And they're all wholefood plant based. This guy is on our team. He's fueling his athletic body, with, plants, and he's doing very well. And you hear over and over, it's got to be meat, got to be animal protein to fuel an athletic body.

But we just got to talk to, one Tim Kaufman and some of the others that were interviewed already on this summit and that you've listened to. So, Tim, thank you.

Thank Heather, for the time that you've spent with me in the audience today. I know you're active. I hope everybody that isn't following Tim starts following him on Instagram and Facebook.

And YouTube, because he is a great teacher, I can tell you that firsthand. So, much appreciation to you. Okay? And I appreciate you having me and guys go do something.

Make one choice today that makes a healthier you in the future. That is a perfect closing. Thank you so much.