Doctor Talks Intro and Guest Introduction

Welcome to Doctor Talks, the podcast where every episode leads to a healthier you. Join us as we navigate the world of optimal health, uncovering groundbreaking strategies to conquer chronic disease.

In each episode, we'll bring you the latest insights from leading health experts, medical innovators, and wellness warriors. If you're seeking to transform your health journey, or if you're looking for answers to burning questions, you've come to the right place.

Get ready to unlock the secrets of lifelong health and vitality. This is Doctor Talks, real talk from real doctors on the issues that matter to you most.

All right, everybody, thank you for being back. But this is a big one. This is the one you've been waiting for when you've been hearing about an amazing interview for reverse heart disease.

Naturally. Summit with the one, the only, the former Detroiter. People don't know that, but that is his roots. And of course, I am a Detroiter. Rich roll rich, thank you for being here.

So happy to see you. Talk to you, Joel. Honored to participate. And thank you for having me. Well, you been a man that has changed so many lives through your, you know, your own actions, your books, your website, your podcast, your life's work.

And we're just trying to do the same. And obviously, having you on board, is a tremendous excitement and energy and we've had all the greats, and you can't have all the greats in that average role.

Rich Roll's Health Wake-Up Call

So let me do you the justice and make you blush a little bit. But I want to go through it. But you did indeed grow up in, the wonderful community of Grosse Pointe, Michigan, but then moved on, Stanford University swim team, Epic Stories.

Of course, everybody needs to read Finding ultra, your, smash hit first book, Cornell Law School. I don't know that you've ever gone deep on your crazy life as an entertainment attorney, but, maybe we'll go there.

Maybe not. But, you know, it didn't end happily for you. But resilience. We actually have a wonderful conversation session on this summit. Expert in Los Angeles introduce you to on resilience.

You know, the ability to bounce back, and we'll get there. But you know, you bounce back around age 40 in terms of your own personal diet. You had already conquered addictions.

And then you found maybe law wasn't your calling. Maybe it was ultra distance athletic work and working in, conjunction with your incredible wife, Julie, on educating so many people, leading to.

What are we in now? The, 10th year of the podcast. Yeah, we just celebrated a decade of doing the podcast. So I thought in ten years since finding ultra hit the bookstores.

So, a lot of great things, happening a great decade for you, but I'm really Mark touched great decade in what you've done for other people and, how you've helped them so, so much so, I mean, if if somebody by any chance has a read Finding Ultra and the, revised and updated edition, it's it's mandatory rich, I'll tell you.

It sits on my desk in my office right there next to Doctor Esselstyn. I mean, it's the doctor. Do it next to Doctor

Furman. Eat to live. I mean, it's it's such a fantastic book, but, and I hope you're blushing a little because there's so many people excited to hear your talk, but let's let's, if you don't mind, let's go back and maybe tell the story a little bit about age 37, 38, 39 and, you know, that fateful night up the stairs and then know how I would happen for you that here, you know, a couple decades later, you know, you have, committed so completely to, you know, healthy diet and you've taught so many people about healthy diet.

What the plan found way. But tell us a little bit about that episode. Yeah, sure. So I think and I think it's a pretty relatable story. I mean, in my mid to late 30s, I was on the kind of corporate ladder, you know, working really hard in a law firm and striving to make that, you know, partnership tier.

And you know, doing what you do when you're, you know, ambitious and, and, you know, have a little bit of a workaholic streak inside of you. So I was probably, you know, burning it at both ends pretty hard, you know, trying to be this, you know, professional in the world and, and like, a lot of people wasn't taking great care of myself.

I'd been an athlete in college, but I'd really kind of lost touch with, that side of what makes me who I am. And, you know, never really learned how to eat healthy beyond just, like, oh, fruits and vegetables and whatever.

But when you're working 60, 80 hours a week and you're ordering takeout food in the, you know, at the, at the workplace, like, you start, you know, developing some not so great habits.

And mine certainly were, you know, not winning any shining star. So a lot of, you know, drive thrus on the way home, a lot of Chinese takeout and just oily, greasy food and, cheeseburgers, French fries, and really was medicating my emotional state through food.

It wasn't until many years later that I really understood that, and when, you know, when you're in your 20s, maybe you can. You think you're getting away with this stuff.

This stuff starts to catch up with you in your late 30s, and it certainly did in my case. So on the precipice of my 40th birthday, it kind of all, you know, came to the surface.

I had a bit of a health scare and had to pause, walking up a simple flight of stairs, winded and out of breath and tightness in my chest, and at the same time, having this kind of existential crisis about, you know, this career choice that was making me very unhappy and that was sort of this stew that, you know, created a moment in time in which I became highly motivated to actually change my lifestyle habits.

You know, it wasn't just and I think that's an important point. Like, we all kind of walk around like, I could eat better. I could take care of myself better.

But it's not until you have like a moment of willingness to actually make some changes and jumping on that and taking, you know, some prompt action that things actually start to change.

Plant-Based Diet Benefits and Early Changes

And I had that moment and I recognized that I jumped on it and I got to work, you know, kind of exploring healthier ways of eating and living. And it wasn't overnight.

But ultimately, I found my way towards the plant based diet and kind of begrudgingly took it on as an experiment, you know, basically expecting it to be miserable and to fail and was quite surprised that within 7 to 10 days of really removing all animal products from from my plate and processed foods that I had this incredible resurgence and vitality and this boost in energy, that I hadn't experienced since maybe I was a teenager and how I felt.

And it was a really, you know, impactful moment for me. And I knew that I had found something really special. And, you know, in the sort of months and years that that were to follow, I just became obsessed with perfecting it and learning more and educating myself.

And, you know, this enhanced vitality ultimately led me into this world of ultra endurance. And kind of I ended up distinguishing myself in these races.

And that led to a book deal. And all this stuff kind of happened as a result of making this lifestyle shift. And, you know, the profundity of it in my life has really been the animating factor.

And you know what? I've decided to do professionally, which is try to share things that I've learned for the benefit of other people. And, you know, it impacted my life and benefited my life so dramatically.

I feel a responsibility to, you know, help others experience their version of what I was lucky to experience. Well, that is a lot, you know, literally, it's like your second life.

Another chapter, maybe your third chapter, but, you know, you don't always get that opportunity. Now, in your late 30s, the precipice of your 40th birthday, Julie was your wife.

Yes. So we should interview her and ask you the question. How did you have such an active lifestyle and you tolerated that fast food eating, hard driving lawyer.

How did you keep the faith to stick with him? Because that is one of the challenges people as they now might be in the opposite, you know, they're listening to you and they want to upgrade their diet, but their spouse or significant other, their partner, other family members, coworkers don't want it.

So Julie gets a lot of credit. I mean, she she was hanging on to you, not following her healthier lifestyle for a number of years, right? Yeah. I mean, there's a lot of truth in that.

I mean, she was always eating healthier than I, so it wasn't like she would eat like me to, you know, to ameliorate, to, like, placate me or anything like that.

But yes, I recognize that, you know, she had always been somebody who was taking very good care of herself. And I was not in that period of time. And that is a difficult dynamic.

Like, how do you stay, you know, how do you stay in an intimate relationship with somebody who's, you know, whose lifestyle habits start to diverge from yours, either for the better or for the worse?

Right. Like, I'm sure there's people watching and listening to this who, you know, they're excited about their new their newfound health food, plant based diet, but their their spouse or their partner isn't.

Or they're having trouble getting their kids on board. And that could be really tricky. I had a lot of support. But these things aren't perfect. And I think it's important, you know, if you are trying to take that healthy step for yourself and you're not feeling the support to not be deterred, like you can't be deterred by doing what's in your own best interest because somebody else isn't quite on board.

And through communication, hopefully you can find a way to, you know, make it work for you. You know, the kind of family unit as a whole. And I mean, joy, you must come up against this every single day in your practice.

Yeah. You know, you can, choose to follow the excuses or you can choose to tough it up and do it alone and hopefully set the example. But I hope once in a while she wears a t shirt that said, I told you so.

She, yeah. Doesn't have to say that. It's understood. I just want to make sure we giving a shout out to your amazing, partner in life and, and wonderful lady that she is.

So, I mean, you said something that's really not been emphasized on interviews here. I mean, people are listening, and maybe they're they're got their foot in the door of the plant based world, and maybe they have heart disease and they know they've heard on this.

A doctor assistant, Doc Gordon is the Prediction Center doctor. Confirm. And, on and on. Juliana Haver and so many. Great. So now you're throwing your experience and, but, you know, is it going to take years to see a benefit you if you think about the human body, you experienced some upgrade in your perception of health in ten days.

Ten days? I mean, who wouldn't give ten days to say I want to feel better? I mean, what do you do? I think I've, you know, read about green, some gigantic green smoothies.

I think they're still a part of your routine, but, I mean, you took bad stuff out. And what did you put in in those early days?

Building Habits and Staying Flexible

I know it's a little while ago, but, it's a it's fundamental that our body will have a completely different biochemistry in ten days if you just feel it different.

Yeah. I mean, I don't know that I could speak to what was going on inside my, you know, cardiac arteries, but I can tell you my lived experience was, as I mentioned, this, you know, just resurgence and energy and vitality and improvement in cognition, you know, improvement in my sleep quality.

And I think, you know, it's it's it's it's it's part of it is what I was removing from my plate, you know, a lot of processed foods, a lot of refined flours and things like that that tend to, you know, create these insulin spikes and kind of, rubber banding in your energy levels and all of that, you know, sugar and chips and lots of greasy foods and salty foods and things like that.

So there's getting in the animal products, of course. And then what are you replacing that with? And, you know, replacing it with like Whole Foods close to their natural state, which was kind of radical for me at the time.

Like what does it taste like to just eat, you know, a broccoli or spinach and a potato and, you know, eat a salad without, you know, dousing it in some insane, you know, amounts of like, ranch dressing or something like that and acclimating to, you know, what it's like to eat real food and realizing how little, my diet had been composed of actual food.

And when you give the body, you know what it's designed, what it's designed to digest and utilize. The body will respond in kind. And the body is an unbelievably resilient machine, as you know.

You know as well as anybody, Joel. And the fact that, you know, you could abuse it for so long and in a very short period of time by changing some pretty basic, simple lifestyle habits, it can bounce back that quickly is really, you know, an extraordinary thing and should give anybody who's, you know, pondering these lifestyle changes or in the early stages of trying to, you know, make these changes in your life like that should be very encouraging and make you feel very optimistic.

Yeah. I mean, I wish we did understand, you know, and we don't have to go deep on this, like at a mitochondrial level. There have been studies take bad diet out and put good.

Died in for two weeks and do the opposite. And it has been analyzed. I mean how quickly your microbiome fancy word I know, but your gut changes and your mitochondria changes.

Just you know, you were such an amazing test case that you could actually perceive it. You know, you might think I ate well for ten days and I got gas.

Thank God you you got energy. And, you know, it kept it going. I'd love some of the things, you know, that you've said in the past, like, don't overthink it. Just begin.

And and another one I love a lot. And I use a lot in my own life. Mood follows action. So tell us a little bit about what those things mean to you for the person.

Again, that's struggling like that. Can I do it all perfect. And do it all right. And I got to do it by next Saturday. In accordance with the books we've been talking about on this, summit or, you know, can you be great?

Can you have some peace on yourself? Yeah, sure. I mean, you know, perfectionism is the enemy, you know, of good. And I think, you know, when you're contemplating, you know, what, to most people would seem like a radical change.

Like, oh, my God, I'm going to, like, take all these things off my plate and I'm going to do that. How am I going to do it? You know, people set themselves up for failure because they imagine a degree of difficulty that that seems almost impossible to achieve.

And and when sure enough, you know, weeks or days or months later, they fail to achieve that bar. They lose, they lose enthusiasm. They say, well, this is too difficult and they give up.

And, you know, I'm always encouraging people to just make, you know, make tiny little changes and celebrate those wins. And, you know, always think about what the next right best choice is.

So when you make a mistake or fail or have a moment of weakness and revert back to an old bad habit rather than flogging yourself for that, just be like, that's interesting.

Maybe do a forensic analysis of what led you to make that choice, but don't judge yourself and just say, well, what's the next best right thing that I can do and just get back on board?

And I think assembling tiny little actions over, you know, an extended period of time performed consistently. That's how real change occurs. It doesn't occur because of grand proclamations and, you know, audacious goals as much as it is little, tiny little things that you do anonymously every single day.

And I think when you're rooted in those you're setting yourself up for, you know, a better chance of victory. And I think kind of pressurizing it, not making it such a big deal and treating it more like a fun adventure, rather than a burden or, you know, feeling like you're a martyr because you can't eat the foods you used to enjoy.

Looking at it like a grand exploration. Like a travelog. Like you're going to try these new things. And what would it be like to eat this and and just keeping it light and fun, I think, you know, takes all the intensity out of it that ultimately leads people to, you know, kind of burn out or, you know, lose their perspective.

Has it been, you know, you've traveled a lot. I would imagine you'd probably come back a little bit the last three years in the pandemic.

Family, Kids, and Plant-Based Parenting

But, I mean, has it been a challenge on the road or, you've figured out how to maintain that well fueled body on the road? It's it's not that hard. I mean, it's not always ideal.

And I think being okay with it, things not always being ideal is part of like holding it loosely because you're in it for the long run. Right. And it's not the world is not going to always, you know, orient itself in accordance with your preferences.

Like the world doesn't work that way. And if you're holding on too tightly to that, you're going to be an unhappy person. So you do have to have some level of flexibility.

But I just, you know, people say to me all the time, you travel all these places must be really hard. How do you like prepare for that? Do you bring your own food?

And and I've just learned over the years not to get, to like every time I've traveled somewhere, I've always worked it out. It's. And like, worrying about it ahead of time.

It's just never been worth it. Like, you know, it's it's never been a situation where, you know, I couldn't get like a, a good plant based meal with a little bit of creativity.

And that doesn't mean it's not, you know, it's always going to be the way. Exactly. I would like it. But you know, it's it's not, as I guess the point I'm trying to make is that we over complicated in our minds, we think it's going to be this very difficult trying thing, and it's going to occupy a ton of our time and require all sorts of forethought and planning and, and, you know, somebody who's been doing this since, I mean, it's been like my 16th year, like, I've just it's second nature to me now.

I don't really think about it that much. And it doesn't occupy the amount of time that I think people presume it does. I, I mean, they move the crossroads right by your home just to celebrate their commitment.

Yeah. Very. Anybody doesn't know what I'm talking about. What are the world's most prominent, vegan restaurants is now got a few different, locations.

Vegas. But, location that open pretty close to where rich. And that was the most exciting thing to happen in Calabasas in a long time. Sure. That was made.

The news everywhere, even though I'm on the other side of the country. So, I mean, 16 years ago, you have four children. And we were chatting. The youngest is 15.

That means, you know, you're transition was also involved with raising children. And it's another roadblock for a lot of people. You know, my health needs me to make these changes.

And I want to do it and all, but, you know, what do I do with the kids and let alone the spouse? So how did you integrate that? You know what? We're kind of the rules of the roll house as your kids were growing up, with a dad that was, you know, kind of finding his own way in the health and, food world.

Yeah. I mean, you know, each kid is different and at a different age. You know, our the boys who are now my stepsons, they're now 27 and 26. They had, you know, they had already kind of established certain eating habits.

So they were like, you know, in their in their teens at the time, whereas the, the younger ones were still quite young. So, you know, the only way I can explain it is that, you know, we, we try to lead by example and lead by education.

And, you know, as any parent knows, you only can exert so much control over your kids habits and preferences, especially as they start to, you know, differentiate and gain independence.

So the best you can do is like, use food as, as a, tableau for educating people about nutrition when you go to the grocery store. Here's why we're choosing this.

And we're not choosing this. It's terms of rules. Like we never have animal products in our in our house and all our meals are prepared plant based. And that's how the kids were, you know, raised.

And then they have to decide for themselves as they get older and move out of the house and start, you know, spending more time away from the home than in the home.

You know, what they want for themselves. And I think a lot of kids need to go out and, you know, stretch and figure out, like, you know, by doing the opposite of what their parents want them to do, to see if that's who they are or not.

And our experience is that ultimately, you know, kids do that and then they come back and, you know, they have to make the decision for themselves how they want to eat.

And so, you know, our kids kind of run the spectrum, but, you know, they don't eat meat. But, you know, they're not always perfect vegans either. And being okay with that and not vibing them or judging them is kind of the way that

we've handled it, because to judge them will only push them further in the other direction.

And, you know, we still only have plant based foods in the house, and that's the only food that we prepare or serve in our house. And thank God Julie's an amazing cook, and the kids love and prefer her food.

And that's kind of the way that it's that it's been know, you know, and again, at 27 and 26, you think about what, you were doing at that age. Not in any negative way, but, you know, you got to give them a little space for probably being, you know, around a very healthy family and, got to so their way.

Protein Myths and Endurance Training

I've got three children, and, one is that one that, you know, always had a push to find his own place. And he sort of settled in the paleo world, to be honest.

But he's an extremely healthy kid. He's my son, is actually an attorney. He'd relate to what you started out at the beginning of the working 6 to 80 hour weeks.

But, you know, we love them and, feed them broccoli when it comes over our house. He does fine. But, you know, you got to have a lot of room. I mean, did you incorporate the kids?

Because, like, I mean, people are looking for. What do you do with these families? Did you incorporate kids into the kitchen? Did you make that the central point that I've been in your kitchen, and I can vividly remember colors and smells, and it was an incredible, beautiful place.

But did they spend a lot of time there kind of getting. Yeah. You black or your Vitamix. Yeah. Yeah, Julia was really great about that. I mean, you know, I think involving the kids in every aspect of how food plays into your life is really important because it allows them to develop an emotional connection to it.

So that's why, you know, bringing your kids to the grocery store, to the market, to the farmers market is important because every thing that you put in your bean is an opportunity to have a conversation about the whys and the why nots and all that kind of stuff that I referred to earlier.

And then, you know, when they get home or in the meal preparation, like teaching kids at a very early age, like how to cook or, you know, helping them learn how to cook their favorite thing, there's a real kind of like self-efficacy, self-esteem thing that happens, you know, in a young child, when they learn these sorts of skills that they can carry on throughout the rest of their life.

So if you have a healthy recipe and your kid has shown some interest, you know, likes that recipe, teaching them how to make it is like a really great way of making sure that your, that you're empowering, that, you know, habit, that that habit becomes like, you know, solidified.

So that's really key. And, you know, I, I just think like, food is food recipes, you know, how we're nourishing ourselves. These are, you know, when they're kids, like, these are habits that are forming that they're going to carry throughout their whole life.

So it's less about, you know, what did the kid what did my kid eat when he went to the birthday party? Did he have a cupcake or not? And it's more about like, how are they going to be eating when they're 30, when they're 35, when they live alone, when they have their own partners?

Like, are they going to remember, you know, these principles, these tenants, these these skills, you know, that we taught them when they were a young person.

And I think even long term and like not being so much about like rigorous about the day to day, but more about the broader principles is, is is a is a better way to go and important.

So, I mean, I want to shift gears a little and I agree entirely just to incorporate them in and, let them get their hands dirty and mess up a little bit, have some fun with food and they'll probably stick you.

You did an amazing job. It's easily seven years ago before Garth Davis wrote Protein Aholic, you wrote a blog that I recall. Slaying the Protein Dragon. And, you know, you really took on the issue because it's coming back right now.

I mean, the carnivore movement's been around a while. It's strange. Keto has been around, obviously paleo, but now it's sort of been relabeled muscle centric, muscle centric physiology, muscle centric medicine.

And, the only way to feed muscles of the proponents, some are doctors, PhDs is obviously meat based, support of muscles. I mean, you took that on in a sense, under different labels, slaying the protein dragon.

So in your own life, in your own training, what have you learned and share about those that are concerned? I'm not going to get enough protein. Yeah. I mean, I just think that there's a lot of misplaced, worry, concern.

And, and confusion around this subject matter. Throughout my 40s, from age 42 to 47, I was pushing my body incredibly hard training, you know, adhering to a training schedule that would very most people, 20 to 25 hours a week of really rigorous, endurance challenges, that required my body to bounce back day in and day out.

And and, you know, me really pushing the envelope of what I was physically capable of. And throughout that period of time, I was able to continue to make progressive gains and strength, speed, agility and endurance, doing it all on a plant based diet and not really overly concerning myself with protein intake, like I would meet my daily requirement.

And maybe, you know, I'm training 2020 maybe a little bit more. I think it's like oh point 7g/kg is kind of the, you know, the recommended daily amount of protein.

I was probably a little bit above that, but not much. And not really using, you know, protein supplement powders and things like that. And just by dint of grazing on a wide variety of plant foods, found that, you know, I was having no issues building lean muscle mass, recovering, you know, expeditiously between these workouts and, and making, you know, dramatic gains and not for nothing.

Being a guy in my mid to late 40s, 40s doing it and now I'm 56 going to the gym, I'm able to make gains and progress in the gym without much concern about protein.

So look, we need protein in our diet. Protein is an important macronutrient. But you know all plants have protein in them. Protein is made up of amino acids.

Current Projects and Closing Remarks

The nine essential amino acids are the ones that, you know, we need to get in our food because our bodies can't synthesize them ourselves. And and if you're eating like a robust, diverse plant based diet, you're going to have no problem meeting you're, you know, intaking enough of those amino acids to assemble those proteins and keep your body exactly where it needs to be.

And, you know, the fact that people are obsessed about protein is it's just, you know, that energy could be spent, worrying about something else, like how much fiber are you getting, your diet, etc..

And you know this as well as anyone else. And so I'm just I'm not a scientist. I'm not a doctor. I only have my own personal experience and end of one.

But I can tell you that, you know, from my experience, I just haven't I've never had an issue with this, and I really don't spend any time thinking about it.

So, a ritual at 56 shakes a lot of people because you look a decade younger than that and seems like you deserve

to be eternally young. And, you're doing a great job on that.

What's got you fired up? We're going to be listening to this in early 2023. We're going to get back on the road of doing, retreats in Italy with Julie, or other parts of the world, if the world permits.

Yeah, we we're, I think we're going to be doing our retreat in Italy this May. We're just trying to work out the details. We haven't done it since the beginning of Covid, so that's sort of exciting.

And beyond that, just I have some creative media projects that I'm working on. I'm trying to, you know, crack a new writing project and, you know, honestly, jobs really fulfill doing what what I do every day with the podcast.

It's a it's a gift that I get to talk to all these amazing people and share these conversations with the world. And, you know, I just want to stay enthusiastic and engaged with it.

And, you know, it's been a real blessing. And, and it's a responsibility that I take seriously. So, you know, that's really the focus. Just keep going, keep doing that.

Knocking out great episodes every week. And in case anybody doesn't know, Rich and Julie have a book called Plant Power to Italia. It's sitting on the coffee table in my office, and it's probably the one that people reach for more than any other, including my own books that are on the same coffee table.

They like to pick it up and look at the beautiful photography and the beautiful recipes and, and just, the grace that that book, offers to people. So it's follows the other book plant powered way.

Correct. And that's, that's spelled w h e y that's w. Hey, why is there's no away from, dairy and the first one, which is just, another great, great resource for people, starting down this path looking for some tips and, recipes and just beautiful photography on top of that.

So, I don't know, this has been just practical stuff. I mean, you know, you're, well known human being. You've made the transition. You've raised a family or teach and inspired so many and, the reality is it's just small steps.

And, the fact that you do it and talk about it, makes it seem reachable for everybody else. So I just want to thank you so much for taking the time. And, didn't mean to dig at you a little bit about how wonderful your wife is, but she deserves it. So.

Wonderful. Yeah. Yeah. She's great. She deserves all the credit. Let's just give it to her now. Yeah. Thank you for having me. Joel is great to see you. Great to talk to you.

Great to share with you. All right. God bless these implants. All right. For some, I might say that. Yeah. That's good. Thank you for tuning in to Doctor Talks.

We hope today's episode has enlightened and inspired you on your path to optimal health. Each day is a new opportunity to make choices that empower your well-being.

For more insights and strategies, subscribe to our podcast and visit our website WW Dot doctor Talksport.com. Stay connected, stay healthy and join us next time on Doctor Talks.

Real talks from real doctors on the issues that matter to you most.