Introduction to Healthspan and Independence

Research shows if you just diet down, about 40% of the weight you lose will be muscle mass. How the heck am I gonna know what kind of weight I'm losing?

Our healthcare system is just disbelief that age is a natural decline that everyone goes through. There's nothing you can do to prevent it. Some people are lucky, some people unlucky, but we're all gonna go downhill.

We have Will Harlow. Will harlow, let's go! Will Harlow, physiotherapist, founder of HT Physio, best-selling author of Thriving Beyond 50, and YouTube educator helping millions move better naturally.

What is the hidden price that people are paying when only focus on that lifespan? I think it's good to define the terms first. Trying to work out what is it that actually leads to this loss of independence that we see.

And I found there were four categories of things that I could help people with. So the first is mobility. The second problem is strength. Next, we have balance and then bone health.

What are some of the lies that are out there when it comes to aging? Gosh, there's so many. We run into something as we age called anabolic resistance.

And what this term means, your body becomes resistant to the stimuli that cause muscle gain. What does that consistency look like when you typically see someone who has those type of results play with their grandkids and lift them up?

It's a super question because this is so important. Welcome to another episode of a Healthy Point of View podcast. I'm your host, Sam Tahata. And as usual, we're bringing experts from all over the world to talk about health, wellness, beauty, and mindset.

Today's guest. The conversation today is going to be a bit different. We tend to talk a lot about longevity, right? That lifespan. But what about healthspan?

The quality of life. As we age, taking care of the quality life is extremely important. This is how we create independence. We don't want to be dependent on someone else doing things for us.

we don' want be dependant on somebody helping us walk, grab things in our house, or heck, we dont want dependent of someone having to wipe our butt. There's certain things that you have to do now to take care of those things.

And we bring today's expert all the way right outside of London, comes here, just launched one of his newest books called Independence for Life. We have Will Harlow.

Thank you very much for the warm welcome, Sam. Absolutely. Mr. Will harlow, man, a licensed A licensed physical therapist, correct? That's correct. Did I get that right?

Yeah. Awesome, man. So you're doing some great things and I'm excited about this conversation because I think this is something that a lot of times when we're taking care of our health, we are so focused on making sure our brain is sharp as a tack, right.

Losing weight is one of the big things that we focus on. We're focused making our cholesterol levels are good and all of these other biomarkers and everything which are important.

But then there's the quality of life component when it comes to mobility and your strength that I think a lot of that gets overlooked until it's too late.

Yeah. So but before we get into the bread and the meat and potatoes of this stuff, right. What I want to do is I what the listeners of yours to get to know you a bit better.

Right. I'm going to go way back from when you were a child, let's say about age five. And I wanted to your upbringing and really what brought you to what you're doing today.

Yeah, so first of all, I just want to say, obviously, thank you for having me on. And what you said is absolutely right. So many people now are focused on this longevity game, which is really important.

Adding years to your life. But I've always thought, what's the point in those extra years if they lack quality? If you can't do the things you love, if you're having to rely on other people for help.

I totally agree with your message there, and that's what I'm all about. And if I take it all the way back to the start, from as young as I can remember, I was obsessed with sports.

I used to try and play sport, you know, all of the time growing up.

Will Harlowu2019s Background and Mission

So I'd be out on the football pitch, playing tennis, and I didn't know what I wanted to do with my life until I introduced this concept of being a physiotherapist or physical therapist.

And I thought, that's what I want to do. I'll be a physio in sport. Help people to get back onto the football pitch, I will help athletes to back on the tennis court.

Didn't really care what sport it was, just wanted to work in it. And wasn't good enough to play it professionally. So I though, next best thing, let's be physios.

And I finished university and, you know, this whole time it would be in my mind, how am I going to find this job in sport? And, I had an in, a doctor that worked for the local football club.

I was given his telephone number and someone said, You should call him and just see if there's any jobs available. And it wasn't just any football Club.

It was the one I'd supported growing up. So I plucked up the courage, called him, and he said, actually, there is a job going. Do you want to come and interview for it?

So, I went and interviewed. It went well. And they offered me the job, dream job. So not only was I going to go and work in sport, it was with this club that I'd supported my whole life.

But I got there and I quickly realised that that dream wasn't everything I thought it was going to be. I was just a terrible fit for that culture. It was kind of not what I expected to have to do every day.

And after giving it a go for a year and a half, I thought, do you know what? This is not me. And at that stage, it was almost like a quarter-life crisis because I've spent my whole life thinking this is what I want and I got there and it's not.

So I left and while I was trying to figure out what to do next, i took a job in the National Health System, which is like the big corporate wellness hospitals that we have in the UK and it's kind of like a mill-like clinic so you're seeing 10-15 patients a day, they're all doctor referrals, most of them are over 50 because those are the people that needed the help from the physios.

And I was treating these people. I watching their knee pain improve or their back pain improved. Watching them build strength and regain mobility that they thought they'd lost forever.

And after doing it for a few months, I just looked back and thought, this is the most fun I've had in years, probably ever. So that's how I discovered this passion for helping people over the age of 50 to regain what they though they had lost.

And just the level of reward from a selfish point of view is massive compared to helping someone get back onto a football field. Helping someone to walk again when they've been using crutches for years.

It just doesn't compare. So I knew this is what I was almost destined to do. But the setting I was in, the corporate healthcare system was not really where I could do my best work.

We were very constrained by what we could offer people, we can only see them two or three times before we had to get rid of them to make space for someone else.

So I left and I set up my own practice. And from day one of setting it up, I made the bold claim that this is just for people over 50. This is what I'm going to see.

So all of our marketing, all the messaging we sent out was, we are for you. If you feel that you've lost your mobility or your knee is hurting and your doctor's told you there's nothing can be done, come and see us.

That's where it began. and really it just grew from there and you know in in the process of just trying to support the business i started making videos online not really thinking too much of it and then putting them on youtube and over the next few years that youtube channel grew From zero to a thousand subscribers to ten thousand to one hundred thousand now to 1.7 million or whatever we've got so It's just been a crazy trajectory, but the core mission is still the same, to help people as they age to keep hold of the ability to do all the things they want to.

Amazing. And congrats on growing the YouTube channel to that level. That's not something easy to One of the things that you specialize in is a specific age, right?

You're looking at people that are over the age of 50, and when we dive deeper into that, people over age 50. What is it that our fitness and medical industries are really overlooking with that demographic?

Yeah, so I think there are a few problems. And as far as I can tell, those problems are just as present here in the US as they are in UK, where I'm from.

So one of the biggest problems I see is that we wait for people to break before we try and fix them. It's reactive. I think that, and especially from what I see, if you already have a reasonable quality of life, If you've got a mild problem and you go to see your doctor, they say, well, what are you worried about?

You know, you're fine. You can still walk. And they said, come back to me when it's so bad that the pain's keeping you awake at night. I've had so many patients that were told that from their doctor.

So that, I think, is a big problem and we need to be more proactive because, you know this from your work, Sam, if we can prevent something from going wrong, it's going to cost you probably about 10% of what it would cost to fix it, but also you're preserving that quality of life for so much longer.

So that's the first problem. The second problem I see with our healthcare system is just this belief that, well, age is a natural decline that everyone goes through.

There's nothing you can do to prevent it. Some people are lucky, some people unlucky, but we're all going to go downhill, learn to live with it And we now know that many of the things that we assume we just lose with age, like the ability to move your joints, the able to pick up heavy things, we know now that you can protect those attributes if you do the right things.

It's not inevitable and it's just not written in the stars that everyone is going to lose them. And then I think the third problem is we're still kind of obsessed with this narrative that if someone's got pain, that means there's damage there.

And we now know from some of this very modern research that pain and physical damage are only loosely linked. there's actually a lot more that drives pain than things going wrong.

So when someone says, I've got this knee pain, you know, maybe it's just arthritis and I'm gonna need a knee replacement. Maybe that's true, but more often than not, it is a mechanical problem.

They've weakness around that joint, so it not supported. And if you fix the weakness, the pain often goes away. Right. I think we miss that in the typical healthcare system.

But if we had those three things, I do think we could be leaps and bounds ahead of where we are. That's amazing, man. To put it exactly how you said. So when we look at our longevity industry, we start talking about healthspan versus lifespan.

Yeah. Right. I want to kind of break that down a little bit and talk about what is the hidden price that people are paying when only focus on that lifespan?

Yeah. I think it's good to define the terms first. So from my point of view, lifespan is number of years, so how long you live.

Healthcare Gaps in Aging and Prevention

And then health span, I would define quite simply as quality of the years you have. Which one's more important? I mean, they're both important, but I would argue that health span is more important.

Agreed, same here. Because if you said to me, I'm gonna give you an extra 10 years to live, Will, with the last 10 year, you're gonna be constantly in pain, You're going to have to rely on everyone else to do what you wanna do.

You gonna have give up the things you love. Do you still want it? And I'd probably say no. I probably bow out gracefully before with those years before having been of better quality.

So I would argue actually, yeah, I agree with you. I think health span is certainly more important. And the question was about what do we miss? Yeah, what's the hidden price that people are gonna suffer from?

100%. So if we're just obsessed with extending life, and we see this in the typical healthcare system now. So this reactive healthcare we have when doctors will give you pills that will extend your life but then not give any advice or guidance on how to improve the quality of those extra years, We see it all the time, we see people who are living but they're miserable.

So my number one goal really is to stop that from happening to as many people as possible. And the bold target I've set for myself is positively influence the lives of over 100 million people over 50 in some way.

Not just to reach them but to influence them so they can actually say something you said or told me to do has made a meaningful difference. Because people losing the ability to do what they love, it breaks my heart because a lot of the time it's preventable.

So if we miss it, we're doing those people a disservice. It's one of those things that I always tell people. I rather live an additional 50 years versus an addition of 80 years of good quality of life, because who wants to be stuck in a wheelchair, basically a vegetable, not moving.

That's not good, quality a life. So that health span is definitely something that people have to focus on and consider. Now, when we talk about healthy gaining, right, versus the dependency part in your book, Your

Independence for Life, so I want you to kind of explain to us what does that look like, healthy gain versus someone who falls under the Dependency category.

Yeah, definitely. So I think this would be a good time for me to talk about the four pillars of independence that I break down in my book. I was looking at the people we have into the clinic and trying to work out what is it that actually leads to this loss of Independence that we see.

When someone has lost the ability to do what they love, Why was that? And I found there were four categories of things that I could help people with, okay?

So the first is mobility. So they lost their mobility, their joints didn't move anymore, or they weren't able to get in and out of a chair. They weren' able get up and down from the floor because they lacked the ability to bend, to straighten, and to rotate the key joints in the body.

That's the 1st. The 2nd problem is people who lose their independence have often lost there strength. And strength arguably is the most important of these four pillars because it underpins everything.

So if you don't have a strong body, you can't lift things from the floor. You can pick up your grandkids. you Can't carry heavy shopping. Life shrinks really fast.

And inside that category of strength, we also have muscle mass, which I'm sure we can talk about as we go through today. But we know muscle Mass is what I would call the longevity and the health span organ.

Muscle is an independent predictor of how well you are. So the more muscle you have, the healthier you will be in almost every circumstance. Next we have balance.

If someone has lost their confidence and they're falling all the time, it really doesn't matter how mobile their joints are because they don't have the confidence to leave the house anymore.

Because if they fall and injure themselves, that's going to lead to catastrophic outcomes. And the fourth thing is skeletal health. And I break that down to the health of your joints and the heath of you bones.

So the biggest joint health problem we treat in my practice is arthritis. But arthritis is really poorly understood. I'm sure we can go into that in more detail if you like later.

Then bone health, we know that with age people do lose bone density and that leaves us massively at risk of osteoporotic fractures if we're to fall. But if you can prevent those four things, it's almost like having the four legs of a table.

If one of them is gone, the table is very wobbly. if two of the are gone the tables on the floor. But If you've got all four intact, you got a really good chance of staying independent for life.

And to loop back to your question, someone who loses the ability to stay independent has usually lost one or more of those things. Wow. Okay, so healthy gaining really relates to these four pillars that we're talking about.

It's making sure that you keep all four of them intact and functioning properly as you age. And I'll just add, sorry to break you off, but it's not just keeping them in tact, we can also build them.

Build them further. People often think that, OK, I'm just at a level now. I have to either keep myself here or just slow down the decline. But we know from very robust research that you can gain.

Let's make it better. We let's. Make it. Better. Yeah, love that. Hey, it's always there's, always room for improvement. Right. So, you know, You mentioned about we're talking about the aging process.

And you mentioned. About arthritis. You know. There's other things also. That when we start looking at the

wellness industry. there's a lot of things just in general that the mass public is influenced that, when it comes to aging, these are the things that are normal for aging.

And you talked about arthritis. There's other things like osteoporosis, the strength of the bones, how strong your bones are. What are some of lies that out there when comes aging?

Gosh, there are so many. I think there's so many, and I wouldn't, first of all, I would say that these lies are there because anyone has been spreading because of malintent.

I thing the research had just never caught up. And now we've got some really modern research to show that some of the things we used to believe are actually not true.

So let's start with arthritis, because this is a really big one. So people think that what happens is as you age, you're born with a certain amount of cartilage in your joints.

As you get older, the cartilages just wears away and wears, away until you haven't got any left. And that's what arthritis is. Now, that is actually not true.

So we aren't just set with… a certain amount of castellage that wears away over time, the castllage is always regenerating inside our joints. We've got two types of cell, we've one cell which is a builder, which lays down new castillage, and we got one which a collector that takes away the old castilage.

You need both of them, because the collector's taking away damaged stuff, And the builder is putting in new Castillages. So right up until the day you die, We are turning over castilage inside the joints, But what happens with arthritis is the collectors become very active and the builders drop in activity.

So you end up in this net loss situation. Almost like if you have a bank account and you're spending it faster than you make it, you can end with a net lost in your balance at the end of the month.

But if we can understand that, we know that it's now possible to influence to some degree the activity of those cells.

The Four Pillars of Independence

And a lot of that happens through certain types of movement and strengthening and reducing shearing force on the joints, all of which people can do at home or with help from a professional.

It's not something that's just written in the stars and it can happen to everyone. Similar sort of thing with osteoporosis. So osteo porosis is the thinning of the bones with age.

And just like with arthritis, we've got another couple of cells in the bones which build new bone and take away old bone. And again, We can influence their activity with what we do in our lifestyle.

Some of the loss is down to genetics and some people do get it worse than others. That's absolutely true. But about 50% of that loss Is dictated by what We do every day.

Lifestyle. So walking, strength training, impact training. Those kinds of things massively influence the activity of those cells within your bone. So those are just two of the common myths.

Another thing that people often talk about with age is this loss of muscle called sarcopenia. And we used to think that psychopenia was just a loss of muscle mass, but we now categorize it more broadly.

It's a, loss-of-muscle mass but also strength and also your ability to do what you want to functionally as well. And, we do lose muscle with age if we don't do anything about it.

We lose about three to eight percent of our muscle-mass every decade, But we lose strength about- You said three-

to-eight percent? Every decade after 30. So it starts earlier than people realize.

But we lose strength at a rate of two to three times that every decade. This is the default if you don't do anything. If you do do something about it, you can halt it and even reverse it.

And that's where the strength training that I preach about so much comes in. What does that look like? Because some people that might be listening to the podcast, they start hearing, oh, well, I've got to train.

I got do this crazy exercise. Yeah. As I gotta go do CrossFit. Sure. You know, what does it look realistically so people can understand what strength training truly is?

Yeah, this is absolutely another myth as well. So when people think about strength training, they think About Arnold Schwarzenegger in a gym, you know, six days a week, two hours every time and think that that is the thing they have to do.

People think the strength Training is this thing where they Have to go into the gym six hours Every week and really push themselves to the point where They feel like they're going to collapse back into The rack and lift heavy weights.

It doesn't have to be that at all. It can be at the more advanced levels if people love it and they get really into it. But for the person just starting out, you can do everything you need to do from the comfort of your own home with stuff you just find lying around.

Now, to sort of break down how little you actually have to do for a minimum effective dose, there's some really cool research out there with older people that shows that just two 20-minute sessions per week, if you push yourself to the point where you feel a real challenge in your muscles, is enough to build muscle and strength over a period of 12 weeks.

Oh, nice. So way less than people think if they want to get these kind of health spanned benefits we're talking about today. Right. And I actually have a protocol that I walk people through and they're just getting started, which I think is really, really useful.

It's called the 321 method. Really easy to remember. So the three part of it means you're gonna pick three exercises and you gonna do three sets of each of them.

And ideally we wanna pick exercises that target multiple muscles and multiple joints at the same time. We call them a compound exercise. So that's things like squats or deadlifts or bench press or overhead press.

Or if you just in your house, you can do a wall press, lifting like a heavy bag overhead, something like that, that counts. That will take you about 20 minutes to do three sets of those.

You're going to that twice a week, and the one part is each week that you do it, you're gonna try and progress just one variable. So the variables you can progress are you could do one more rep on each set, or you just ever so slightly increase the weight.

But not at the same time. Just pick one. So that's where I give people, you know, permission to start if you like. And it's amazing the kind of transformations people can get just from doing that.

Like we have patients walking into the clinic who they can't believe what it has done to their body, not in how they look necessarily, but in they feel.

You know energy and being able to lift the grandkids without having to worry about their back going. Just from that simple, two lots of 20 minutes each week.

You know, one of the important parts of that is consistency, right? To get exactly, to be able to have the results that

you just mentioned. What does that consistency look like when you typically see someone who has those type of results where now they can play with their grandkids and lift them up or do any of those things?

What timeframe do you usually typically that in most people? It's a super question because this is so important for people to understand. Now, different things happen at different times.

So when it comes to building strength, that happens way quicker than most people realise. And it's because to gain strength that doesn't rely on you actually building new muscle fibres.

because you can get stronger just by improving the connection between your brain and the muscle via the nerves. We call this the neural connection. And you could build that in as little as two weeks.

This is why sometimes we have people who come in and they have awful knee pain. I can think of a lady in particular that I saw a few months ago. Terrible knee pains.

She was relying on a walking stick. You did not trust that knee at all. and I gave her a very simple strengthening exercise that she could do lying down in bed.

And I just said, just trust me, don't do anything else. Just do this daily and come back and see me in two weeks. In two week's time, she was still using the stick, but she's hardly relying on it.

She said my knee hurts so much less. How has that happened so fast? And it wasn't because she'd magically grown new quad muscles. It was because it improved the connection between her brain and the muscle itself.

So that happens super fast. Now, if you want to actually gain muscle mass, that takes longer. So we're looking at 12 weeks-ish until you see some kind of noticeable effect for gaining muscle.

12 Weeks is a really good time frame to set. And what I tend to find with my patients is after 12 weeks, if you're doing the same thing for 12 week, you were a little bit bored at that point and you are ready for some new exercises.

So that's a great time to say actually you've done well, let's progress and change it up. Well, you know, we're talking about people's physical, their physique, right?

One of the things that I know being in the industry is that people are chasing two major things, they're chasing energy because people always feeling fatigued.

And then number two, the chasing weight loss. We live in a very, at least here in United States, live a in very obese world where people're always trying to lose weight.

But when it comes to losing weight, what I want to talk about is the focus on what the weight actually consists of, because people are so quick to lose weight.

But what kind of weight are they losing? So and I'm more than sure through your profession, you see a lot of this as well, too. Right. 100 percent. So chime in on that.

Yeah, so I think this is a very timely topic as well because of the introduction of these GLP-1 drugs. Oh yeah, that's another thing, right? Which ties into this really nicely.

But let's just talk about basic weight loss at the moment. So research shows that if you eat less than you, well, let me put it another way. If you consume less calories, than you burn, then you will lose weight over time.

Now, if you just diet down and cut your food intake, the evidence shows about 40% of the weight you lose will be muscle mass, not just fat.

Myths About Arthritis, Osteoporosis, and Muscle Loss

So when people are just looking at the weight on the scale and they see it go down, total weight, that might not necessarily be the best thing because if you've lost 60% fat but 40% muscle, for me that's a bad trade because it's very tough to regain that muscle.

It takes a long time but you can regain the fat very quickly unfortunately. Now, this is where we can tie it into the GLP-1s because we see people who have lost a dramatic amount of weight on those GLp-one drugs, which are very, very effective for suppressing the appetite, but not all of that weight is the kind of way they want to lose.

So they end up weaker. They end actually less mobile, even though they've lost what they thought was the weight. Less mobile. I mean, that's a scary thing to say that.

And just earlier, you were talking about how important lean mass truly is for longevity. Yes, definitely. And it's important for keeping your joints healthy as well.

So the less muscle you have, obviously the least strength you, have and then the more exposed your joint's are to shearing forces. There's some people in my clinic, they try and lose weight for purposes of reducing pain on their joints.

That is a really effective way. You have to keep hold of that muscle as, well, otherwise the pain will still be there, but from a different cause because the joints got less protection.

Now, you might be thinking, well, what do I do then if I want to lose weight? That doesn't sound like a very good thing to do. If you add in some strength training work and you keep your protein intake at a reasonable level while you're dieting down, the ratio of muscle loss drops massively.

So you've retained more of the muscle because you're sending a signal to your body that you still need it and the fat drops more. That ratio shifts to more like 80-20 or 90-10.

Right. so that's where we want to be at. that strength resistance training aspect is vital if we wanna lose weight in a healthy way. This is where the science behind losing the weight goes into play.

So if there's a listener or viewer out there that is kind of scratching their head right now and says, well, Will, how the heck am I going to know what kind weight I'm losing?

Right. I get on the scale. The scale only tells me total weight. How do we figure out the type of weight that they have to start off with? Yeah. And then the actual weight as they progress through their weight loss journey?

Yeah, it's a tough one to do at home with no tools. So this is where things like Dexter can come in handy. And I mean, you know all about that, Sam, how effective they can be for tracking body composition changes.

Without access to a DEXA, the second best thing I would say is to look at how strong you are at the start and then to try and not let that drop as your weight is dropping, if that makes sense.

So as you're losing body weight, you want to say, this is what I could do at this start. If I'm starting to see that my strength is dropping and I can't do those things anymore, I am probably losing more muscle than I should be.

So I need to slow down the weight loss or I could try and increase the protein or try to add in some more strength training to keep that muscle mass. Yeah, and I'm happy you chimed in on the DEXA scan.

Obviously, that's the golden standard for true body composition analysis. Because some people always get fixed on total weight. Well, what is that weight truly made up of?

How much lean mass, how much subcutaneous fat, much visceral fat? All of those things are important data points

to understand what the things that we're talking about And there's other tools out there also that which we even have them in our longevity clinics like an in body Yeah, you know that are pretty pretty darn accurate Yeah They have a quite a bit of data in their system to have the accuracy that it needs sure but um Really important to make sure that you have lean mass when you're losing this weight You know because it could affect a lot of these four pillars that we talked about so you Know The other thing that I want to touch up on, Will, is when people reach a certain age, like I'm in my 30s, soon to be 40 in less than a year, and I remember in 20s hearing people that were a lot older than me, they would always say, oh, just wait until you're in your 30, it's just waiting until your in 40s.

Things become harder. And when you in you 20's, you don't really understand that until get into that other decade of life, right? So you work with a lotta people age 50 and above.

How hard does it truly become to rebuild muscle above the age of 50? It's certainly harder. There's no denying that. So we run into something as we age called anabolic resistance.

And what this term means is quite simply, your body becomes resistant to the stimuli that cause muscle gain. And the two biggest stimuli are resistance training and protein intake.

Okay. So your body actually is less sensitive with age to building new muscle mass from the same resistance. and it's less sensitive to the dietary protein that you consume in that, you know, that protein signals to muscle cells that we can use those amino acids to build new muscle, basically.

That is dampened down slightly, okay? What I would argue is this effect is probably slightly overstated. And I think that most of the problems come from a lifestyle that doesn't match up to goals the person wants.

Now, one of the other things that is not really my wheelhouse, but is definitely worth mentioning is changes to hormones over time. Okay. And we know that drops in testosterone, IGF-1, growth hormone, and if you're a woman estrogen as well, that also reduces this anabolic effect as So if someone is really struggling to gain muscle and they're doing all the right things, there's definitely a conversation to be had for do you need to go and get your levels tested.

Is something not quite right? Is that holding you back? Because that stuff can certainly make a difference. But with proper programming and really good diet, The evidence is there.

You can build muscle at any age. And one of my favorite studies was done with two groups of older people. One group was between 65 and 75, and the other group with 85 plus.

Now the researchers put them through a pretty robust three-session a week resistance training program, And they did it for 12 weeks. Both groups did exactly the same program.

Same exercises, same sets, Same reps, everything. Now at the end of the study, the younger group had gained muscle, they'd gained about 11% extra leg muscle.

But so had the older group. There was no difference between the two groups. They both gained between 10 and 11 percent more muscle mass. The older groups strength had gone up by 46%. So that is quite literally the difference, between being able to do stuff yourself and having to rely on help for that group, So I have no doubt that the people in that study, those results were life-changing for many of them.

But it shows that it is really never too late. If you're programming your diet, your hormonal system is optimized. It's still possible. You know, it's interesting as a physical therapist, you bringing up other pieces of functional health.

Like you talked about hormone optimization and these other things that have to be considered. So you as a physical therapist, are you working in combination with other functional health providers when it comes to your patients or at least directing them to go see and get tested for hormones and those things?

Not as much as I would like, but it's something we're getting into more and more. Before we set the cameras off

today, we were talking with your team about how the UK is almost always five or 10 years behind what's happening here in the US.

Oh wow, really? And it is really less of a conversation back home. But for me, particularly when I come over here and I see this kind of stuff happening here, it really inspires me for what's possible for people back home.

So it's certainly a conversation I'd like to be having more of our patients.

Strength Training Basics and the 3-2-1 Method

If we see something that we think is definitely holding someone back, we will definitely help them to find the right referral. But we very much, you know, stay in our own lane.

We pass it on to the person who's got the most knowledge about that. Absolutely. Will, I want to talk about grip strength. Is it true or false that it's a major health indicator?

It's 100% true. Why is that? Is a really interesting one because grip-strength is a better predictor of longevity than blood pressure, which that blew my mind when I read that because obviously blood-pressure is is, is massive risk factor if you've got high blood But the reason grip strength is such a strong predictor of how healthy a person is, is because it's a brilliant proxy for overall strength.

There's nothing special about the grip itself. Yes, grip is important because you need it to open jars and pick up heavy things. And of course, having weak grip, it is a bad thing for life.

but it's a brilliant marker of overall health. And we find that when people improve the strength of their legs and their core, their grip strength actually improves even if they haven't worked on their group.

So the grip is also one of the easiest things to screen because handheld dynamometers are great for that. They're these things that you can pull. You can get like a gauge of how strong someone is as a starting point and then keep measuring that as they progress.

So if you do have a weak grip, the answer is not to do loads of gripping exercises. The answer to try and build up overall strength. And as a brilliant place to start, which is a bonus exercise because it builds grip as well as full body strength, I like something called the farmer's carry.

This is something I give to a lot of my patients and it's very simple exercise. It just involves picking up two heavy things, typically dumbbells, but you don't need a dumbbell if don have one.

and then walking with them for 30 to 60 seconds. And when we're talking about heavy, we mean as heavy as you can manage it really. So I like to get my patients to hold 25% of their body weight in each hand, if they can.

Maybe not as a starting point, so you start from where someone is, but that's a great place to shoot for. If you're a younger person, and if you are sub 40, I would say that carrying 50% your bodyweight in your hand is a brilliant thing to aim for, And how high would you say someone should go?

Go as high as you can. Really? Yeah. But obviously with good form, make sure it's safe. Absolutely. People can build up to insane amounts of weight with that exercise.

It takes time and it takes practice, but the functional benefits are massive. And you said 30 to 60 seconds walk with it. Yes. Okay. Yeah, I'm trying to think like what I would be capable of doing.

You know, but I think I could do probably my own body weight. I reckon so. Well, i'm going to try it tonight when I go to the gym. We'll see. So Will, what are some non-negotiables you'd be looking at if you had five minutes to assess someone's health at home?

That's such a good question. We have a number of physical markers that we look at with patients when they come in. So things that tell us how healthy a person is from a functional level.

One of them is something I call the 30 second chair stand test. And this is how many times you can get up and down from a normal dining room chair height in 30 seconds.

Now that test reveals a lot because it tests the strength just about all the important leg muscles. And to a certain degree, it test someone's stamina.

So if you see them start strong and then they start to wear out by the end of the 30 second, you know that maybe the engine's not quite there. And as a rule of thumb, I mean, there's different standards for each age group, but I would be worried if anyone was below being able to do 12 in 30 seconds.

Okay. So if someone comes in doing less than 12, we would say it's a real priority for us to build up your leg strength. Another screen we look at, very simple, just can you get down to the floor and then get back up again with my patients?

And it's amazing how much that reveals about a person because you need full mobility of your knees and your hips. You need a bit of upper body strength.

you needs strength in your important quads and glutes to be able to do it. And many people lack it and it is a great screener because some people will come in and they say, I'm actually all right, you know, pretty healthy.

I don't have that much pain, but they can't do that test. and you know there's a problem there under the surface, probably waiting to come out. So it catches things early.

And then the final test I would do if we only had five minutes would be asking someone to just stand on one leg. In my practice, if you've got a patient who's over the age of 65, we need them to be able to stand one on leg for longer than 10 seconds.

Because there's some really robust data to show that someone who can't stand on one leg for longer than 10 seconds has something like a 2x all-cause mortality risk.

Really? Yeah. And that's really solid data across like 100,000 people. So we look at that. If they're under 65, I would like them to be able to do that with their eyes closed, which is more challenging.

And you can test yourself at home with that test. And that's very, very revealing. But that screens directly for falls risk. Okay, so people are more likely to fall if they can't pass that simple test Yeah, that's all of this stuff is very interesting, man.

You know, us being young, sometimes you neglect these things. So you don't understand how important they are. And I'll tell you, my years working in the fire department where I would actually go to people's homes that have fallen, they can't get up.

They're unable to to move. they have no mobility. There are unable a shower. Yeah. you know. and you really start thinking you take a lot of these thing for granted when you're young.

Right. And sometimes it just makes me think like, am I able to am, I am able. To catch myself if I slightly slip on the slippery floor of the shower because of.

The shampoo I used on my hair, you know. I could do it now, but when I get older, do I have the proper mobility, the strength to grab onto something where I don't fall, crack my head, or break the glass of the shower door, you know, and then cut myself?

And these are things that I saw so much of it, right? I thought people die. from a simple slip and fall, something that

they could have avoided. So definitely things that people have to really consider now while you're young and make sure you have that strength and work on these different four pillars.

To go to the four pillar, mobility, strength, balance, and bone health. What breaks first when you neglect these four? Great question. What I would say is I'll just come back to your point about can you catch yourself if you were to slip?

The margins are so fine and this is why it's such an urgent thing that we're talking about today because people are absolutely fine until they're not.

Right. And something goes wrong and it can be catastrophic like you must have found so many times in your work before. In terms of what goes first, if I had to put a claim on what I think goes first for most people, it's strength.

And the reason I this is so significant is because strength underpins everything else. So we know now that if you're not strong, your joints are less mobile.

We know that, if your not' strong you have less muscle mass. If your'e not's strong your balance is worse because, strength is one of the key components of balance.

and if, you not're strong in your muscles you probably not stronger in you bones either. So for most people, I think it's this decline in muscle strength.

And a lot of that comes from a false belief that I'm active. That's enough. I don't need to do anything else. You know, look after my garden. Even walk 10,000 steps a day.

Surely that's not. Maybe I run, maybe I cycle.

Weight Loss, Muscle Preservation, and Body Composition

Do I have to anything? I would argue that we do have do something else, and that is specific training to help you keep that strength and muscle mass. Nice.

Which that kind of leads me to my next question. What separates the people who reclaim their strength and independence from those who don't? Consistency.

So being able to stick with something when you don't feel like doing it every day, that's a big, big component. And being to push through when don t always see results straight away.

We know that quite often that the best results, the things that people actually want, are on the other side of some hard work. And once we have all the information about what we need to do and we've got a clear guide to tell us what I need do first, then second, and then third, the only thing that stands in your way then is motivation and consistency.

I think that's the biggest thing holds people back. Well, I'm less than a year away from turning 40, right? So I have a lot of friends that are around the same age, age group.

And what is one habit that someone in their 40s can start today that's going to change their life in the 60s? It's that strength training thing. And for everyone who is in their 40s, I would say the 3-2-1 method is a brilliant place to start.

But for someone like you, Sam, who already goes to the gym, you're already strong, that's obviously not going to be enough because your body now needs a challenge that is over and above what you do today if you want to improve further.

but you can still use that 3-2-1 framework as a foundation and then build upon it. So build all your sessions around

those three compound movements. You can always add more in, so you could add in some accessory movements or another exercise, maybe another session each week until you find a balance that works really well for you.

But if everyone took up a very simple basic form of resistance training now in their 40s, life is going to be so different in the 70s and 80s when they get there.

They're going look at their friends who can't necessarily lift the grandkids, they can go on holiday anymore because they've lost that mobility and they'll still be able to do all those things because started that habit early.

Absolutely. So I love the 3-2-1 method. But besides the three-two-one method, for someone who's not like myself, who works out every day and does different type of strength training, zone two training and all of these other type trainings that I implement into my life.

Someone who sits in there and says, man, I've let my health slip. What is that first thing that they should do tomorrow? Yeah, and I think this is so many people who, it's manana mananna, isn't it?

Until suddenly it has gone 10 years and haven't done anything. First of all, I would never discourage people from doing what they love from an exercise point of view.

So if you know you have something you enjoy, that's where you should start. I know we've talked about strength training a lot, but if you hate strength, training and you love walking, start there and commit to that and get some momentum and then you can look at how to bring in strength work later.

But if someone's not doing anything and they really feel like they've let themselves go, just pick something that you feel you could stick to. And it doesn't have to be long.

I would encourage people to commit something. That's much less than they feel they could actually do. So if you think you could walk every day, just pick four times a week to begin with, because then there's some slack in the system.

And if say, oh, I didn't hit seven days this week, what a disaster. It's not because you've said, well, only have to hit four. If I hit any more, that's a bonus.

But I think just starting where you are, picking something you know you can stick to, and then making a commitment to just slowly build up over time. I think that when we're talking about getting someone healthy for the purposes of staying independent later in life, there's also a tendency to think, well, it doesn't feel that urgent right now.

I'll come to it later. And to a certain degree, you're right. That's just human nature. It's like we don't worry about deadlines until they're quite close.

But what I would say to that person, if there's someone watching this video thinking that, is the same things that keep you independent later in life are the things today that are gonna give you more energy, more vitality, better mental sharpness, and just better quality of life today.

You don't have to wait until your 70s or 80s to feel those benefits. They start from the day that you start. I love that. Well, you know, a lot of people that view and listen to this podcast, they do that because they're looking for answers, right?

Or they are looking guidance. And I'm a firm believer that I always say every great athlete has a coach. So when it comes to the four pillars, and we're talking about these things as you age, how important is it for the people who are listening to these podcasts to have a couch to guide them through this process?

I mean, it's everything. It's that accountability. Because when you are trying to do something big, like make a transformation to your health, doing it alone is so tough.

because A, you might not have all the answers, You might want to ask a question. But B, there's going to be days where you wake up and you're thinking, I just don't want do it today.

But if you know you're checking in with someone, it becomes much harder to skip it. So you can almost use that social pressure of knowing you are accountable to someone to get yourself over the hump on those bad days where you just don't feel like you want to do it, and there's really robust research.

It doesn't have to just be someone that you've hired like a coach or a trainer. Just having a friend that do something with increases stick with new habits by like 100%. So it's you twice as likely to stick to something if because A, it's more enjoyable, B, you're accountable to them, and C, is motivating seeing someone else make progress alongside you.

So I think it is absolutely vital. I agree with that. You know, as we're talking about guidance and accountability, You mentioned something earlier that you want to be able to educate and touch X amount of lives.

It was 100 million people throughout the globe.

Anabolic Resistance and Building Muscle After 50

And one of the things, as we're talking about guidance and accountability, you wrote this book, Independence for Life, which I think kind of falls under that category of giving people guidance, and help them create accountability.

So what made you write this and what is the book about? So the book is my complete guide for someone over the age of 50 who wants to improve their strength, regain their mobility and stay confident and able to enjoy life for as long as possible.

And the reason I wrote it was because I kept seeing two people in the clinic, two types of people. The first person. was in a bit of a state when they came in.

They had pain somewhere, they'd been told by their doctor that, you know what, this is just your age, there's not much you can do, They were feeling hopeless.

they didn't know it was possible to get the kind of improvements that we see every week. So I wrote this book to give them a guide so that they might use those strategies to Get the kinds of improvement that I've seen so many times.

That's the first type of person. The second type of person, I think there's possibly even more of these, are people that are already doing a lot for their health.

They're trying to do all the things, they're try to walk their 10,000 steps a day, They are trying their resistance training, trying Pilates, yoga, eat healthily.

all the things that they've read online that should do, but it feels very overwhelming. There's so much noise. Someone's told them to do this diet and then someone else comes out and says, actually, it's the worst thing you can do.

You're doing it all wrong. And they just feel overwhelmed and stuck. They don't know where to go with it. So I wrote this to cut through the noise to tell them, here's what the science says.

Here's, what's actually going to make a difference to your life. And if you're like me and you've got a busy life, this is the bare minimum you need to do to actually see the results you want.

Awesome. Where can people find that book? They can find it anywhere that books are sold. So all major booksellers. If you just type in independence for life it will come up.

Amazing. So, you know, right now, well, there's a big movement happening in the United States. Make America healthy again, which is something that our medical industry has not.

It hasn't seen ever, we're taking a different approach to health. Are you familiar with this movement? Not as familiar as most Americans. I know that there were some changes to certain guidelines and one of them was the change to the protein recommendations.

What do you think about these things? I wholeheartedly agreed with the proteins changes. Because it's so evidence-based that more protein is better for retaining muscle mass.

And there's a myth that as we get older, we need less. It's actually the opposite. As we gets older we, need more proteins because of that lack of sensitivity in the muscles.

Now that anabolic resistance we spoke about, you actually need a stronger signal to drive more muscle growth. I can't speak to any of the other changes because I've not seen them, but that was one that I thought was actually really positive.

Yeah, I mean, that is one of those are the the food pyramid was was upside down this entire time. Got it. I've heard that phrase. Yeah. So that's a change that we've all been looking for for quite a while.

Sure. Well, if you could give advice to someone who wants to just live longer, but live better. Right. What is that last piece of advice that you can really give them?

Someone who wants to live, not necessarily live longer. Not just live long longer, but live better. I think know your body now is a really good piece of advice.

So know where your problem areas are. Know what's at stake and know what your goals are for the future. Because once you have those three bits of information, you can start to formulate a plan.

And everyone's plan looks slightly different. I recommend resistance training to just about everyone. But some people want to play tennis. Some people to run.

And their program is going to look different from the person who just wants to live as long as possible. You have to know what your individual goals are and then build from there.

But the foundations never change. to avoid pain. You need to have strength and muscle mass. I have these conversation cards. There's Stephen Barlet with the CEO.

Yeah, he came up with this. So I'm going to have you grab that. You'll open it, open up and grab two random cards and run them anywhere in there. Yes.

Are you going read it and you're going answer it? OK. Let's have a look. So the first one, when was the last time you cried and why? Wow. We're going deep.

Uh, I can actually remember the time I cried. The last one I cry was at my wedding and I was walking up the aisle. Um, that was in, um, July, 2024. Okay.

It's gone super fast. Yeah. Two years ago. I'm not a big cryer. I, I I not saying I am an unemotional person, but I guess I express it in different ways.

Not all of which are healthy. Probably more likely to bottle than I have to express. So maybe I should correct that one. What made you cry when she was walking down the aisle?

Do you know what? It was, we've been together 10 years and she's one of the best things that's ever happened to me.

Grip Strength, Functional Tests, and Fall Risk

And just the journey we'd been on has been phenomenal because she is heavily involved in this journey that I'm on now. She left her job in 2020 to help me run the clinic.

When I had nothing and nobody and I was starting from scratch and it was like I'm gonna take a chance here and she said I believe in you and i'm going to come and join.

So I paying her something like £400 a month. It's like $500 to sit on the front desk. Well, she did a bit of client work, but just to welcome the clients in and yeah, so she believed in me and she's been there every step of the way.

And I think it was just a combination like watching her walk down the aisle. Obviously she was stunning. All our friends were there. It was a beautiful moment, But it just like reliving those 10 years.

That's amazing, man. And, you know, a man's success is very dependent on having the right powerful woman right next to him. It's a superpower. So it's something that's always a work in progress, right?

But it is something you want to work on and maintain and keep that close to you. Yeah. What's the next question? Okay. What is one aspect or feature of your life that causes you the most friction or discomfort and how could you change or fix it?

That's a great question. One aspect, or a feature, of you life. If I'm gonna be 100% candid right now, I've been working a lot of hours. We've got essentially two businesses because we've the in-person practice and then everything we do online.

And the last few months, ever since the new year turned, i've seen a complete loss of personal time. no time to do anything for myself because I've got these commitments that I made for my self.

It's not commitments to others, it's commitments I have made to me. I take them very seriously. And just the last couple of months I thought, you know what, I need to shift some priorities around.

Because at the moment some of the work is causing friction. And it's like, I would like to get back to a place where I'm in better balance. We go through seasons, right?

Like sometimes it is a season of pushing and that's cool. That's great. But you can't live there your whole life. You need to go on the other side of the seesaw from time to time.

Very well said. And, you know, as an entrepreneur, um, As a fellow entrepreneur in the similar industry as well, You know sometimes I tell people, We talk about work-life balance, right?

But is there truly such thing as balance? And honestly, the answer on my end is no, there isn't. And what we have to do is we sometimes create it. But what I like about what you brought up is, for all the other entrepreneurs that are out there, is that there's a level of sacrifice that you have make, which you just explained.

Consistency, Coaching, and the Book Independence for Life

This is a sacrifice You have to make to be able to succeed and it's not just about succeeding on a professional level or on financial level Yeah, you know what you're doing is you driving through your God-given purpose Which is hitting those hundred million people so they can live a better life full of vigor and vitality and hit those four pillars So that sacrifice is not Just for you on the sacrifice of what your doing that's taken from your personal time that you can put towards your family or anything else and there's a bigger purpose behind it.

And that's something to recognize, not just yourself, but other people need to recognise that as well, too. Even the people around you, because listen, I've gone through it, and I heard family members say, oh, Sam is never around.

Sam, yeah, he's traveling. He's in Washington, D. C., or LA, or Las Vegas, speaking at a conference, trying to fulfil my God-given purpose. So don't let that ever bring you down.

You're doing the right thing, man. I love that. So we'll, as we wrap up here, if there's someone listening or viewing this podcast who truly resonates with today's message, what is that last thing you can leave them off with?

Improvement is possible at any age. This is just the thing that runs through everything I do. No one is too old, no one's too far gone, and no-one should be left behind.

And no, we can't cure everything. We can get people back to living like they were when they're 30. If they are 80 now, that's not always possible. but we can always improve.

Even if it's 10%, 15%, that's still worthwhile. And those improvements are often enough to make a massive change to someone's quality of life. So one of the big messages I try and share is that no one should feel helpless or hopeless because there's always something that can be done.

Absolutely. Amazing. Well, it was a pleasure having you on a Healthy Point of View podcast. This is a powerful message. Thank you. Guys, you heard Will.

It's never too late. This podcast here, we went deep into something that we don't talk too much about in the longevity space because we're always so focused on lifespan.

So we all know that you have some friends, some family members, your parents maybe, that can truly benefit from the information that was spoke about today.

Make sure you share this podcast, make sure like, subscribe, do all that fun stuff and we'll see you for the next one. Amazing. Awesome. That was great.

Yeah, thanks man. Really appreciate that. So good. You're a great host. Thank you.