Reversing Cognitive Decline: How Peter and Ellinor Reclaimed Brain Health Transcript

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Opening reflections on coping and staying level

It's hard to say. It is hard because being the patient, some days are good and some are bad. But I tell myself that not every day is going to be a good day and not everyday is gonna be bad day.

Just like the stock market is not gonna go up forever and it's not going down forever. You know, so, I think being close to the children, we have one son, my son and his family, our grandchildren makes a big difference, makes big a difference.

I still miss a lot of people back East, but it's taking me about three or four years to find a level. community. And I think that's true too, that I want to just stay level.

I don't need loads of excitement, I need lots of depression, and I just want stay love, you know. This helps me do it. Welcome to the Think Well, Age Well podcast.

I am your host, Dr. Heather Sandison. And I'm delighted to have you join us here today. What if cognitive decline weren't a verdict, but a process that you can influence?

One small, honest, hardworking step at a time. Today, you're going to meet Peter and his wife, Ellie, two courageous partners who chose to face a diagnosis head on, build a team, and do the hard work.

They received guidance from Ricoh-trained health coach Sandy Gleason and geriatric psychiatrist Dr. David Merrill.

Podcast introduction and episode overview

They learned to turn overwhelm into a plan, brain training that went from testing to demonstrations of potential, and a KetoFlex approach tailored to their real life and calendar that made it consistently possible.

You're going to hear how they evaluated the value of prevention, balancing costs and insurance and HSAs and free resources against the very real human financial costs of doing nothing.

Most importantly, you're gonna hear something that we don't hear often enough in this space. You are going hear about measurable improvement, grounded in follow-up testing and fueled by mindset, honesty, and real support.

This is an episode about teamwork, the care partner, coach, physician, and about returning, again and again, to purpose, whether it's grandchildren, community, or just joy and the simple wins of a well-organized day.

So if you or someone you love is noticing changes or if just want to stack the deck for a healthier brain starting now, Peter, Ellie and Sandy will show you what it looks like to keep going, to experiment, celebrate the victories and to choose hope over paralysis.

Let's dive in. Peter. Ellie. Sandy. It is a delight to have you here today. Can you start by just giving us a little bit of the backstory? How did you end up seeking support for brain health?

Well, I had been reading about Dr. Bredesen and his work for about the past 10 years or so because my sister, who was a PhD, is a major researcher and our mother had Alzheimer's, though it's always been somewhere in our minds.

to educate ourselves as the years go by with new treatments and new protocols should my sister or I develop

Alzheimer's. So we moved out to California about 40 years ago and I decided to get some specific testing.

enroll in a clinical trial, not to take any of the medication, but to see if I qualified and I did. And I wondered, well, what made me qualify? And that's when I learned about pitao.

And I'm an APOE-33 and I knew that that decreased my risk because I am not a 3-4 or a 4- 4. My sister is a three-four.

Peter and Ellieu2019s path to brain health support

The p-tau was something that, well, I have to explore this. I had to figure this out. So I got on my computer and started researching and saw that Dr.

Bredesen was local now in Santa Monica attached to Pacific Neuroscience Institute. And I said, well, I think I'm going to keep that in mind should the need arise.

Then Peter was kind of having some adjustment problems. to the move. And we thought at first it was just adjustment problems, to moving cross-country, not having his support, and not have his friends.

When he told his primary care physician about three years ago, I'm forgetting things, misplacing things. All he wanted to do, the primary physician, was write a prescription I said, no, that's not the direction we're going to take right now.

This is reticent protocol. I read the books. Your book was just being published. Had pre registered to get it. When it came out, I bought him his own copy so he can underline and take notes.

Peter was open to getting help. Some people are in denial. Peter is a good patient. He said, yes, I want to go on this journey. Let's do it. And luckily we were in the position to make the financial commitment.

That's how the process started. And once we got with our doctor, Dr. Merrill, and he did all the MRIs and the brain testing and blood testing, we found out that PETA's risk was higher than mine.

He is APOE 3-4. He's had a number of brain insults, concussions, some medical issues. The most important thing for us was that Peter was open and willing to admit that something wasn't right.

And he is a good patient and he was willing go down this path. As far as the financial commitment goes to join Apollo health, you can go pre-code or recode, pre code meaning the beginning of reversal of Alzheimer's, which is, I'm not sure how much that is.

But we're in recodes, Which is $2,500 a person, but there is a wealth of information for that money. We have our. geriatric psychiatrists covered by our Medicare and we can contact him by email, by phone, 24 seven.

And just the protocol itself, you need to go on the website, apollohealth.com to find out everything that it covers. So we felt it was worthwhile. If you break that down to 12 months, You can see that it's not as much as it sounds.

It's probably 300 a month. You would spend that on whatever, but the health aspect was important for us. And then there's the supplements. Peter and I have always taken supplements, so.

It just works and into your budget. And fortunately, we're able to do this precision medicine, as I guess it's called now, and it is worth it to us to spend what we need to spent to have this journey.

Yeah. I think the math for a lot of people can be challenging, right? For some people it just not. accessible, but thank goodness there are the books, there the resources that are online that available for free.

And then if you do have access through whether your insurance covers it or you have an HSA account or an FSA

where you can get some of this at least tax deductible or what have you.

My hope is that the math makes sense for prevention and early intervention because The cost of memory care, unfortunately, is so high. The costs of having to get nurses to come into the home or to give caregivers is incredibly high, so if we can at the very least delay, but hopefully completely prevent and avoid this awful disease from taking hold in the brain, then the math does make a ton of sense.

I just have to say, and then I'm going to let him do some talking, we have the proof from PETA's test results from a year ago to today, how much improvement he has made.

And that has make it worthwhile because you're right, everything is so expensive and if we can delay an onset, were willing to spend the money. And what were those tests that were done?

You are referring to these kind of before and after tests done a year ago and then more recently. Which test did you do? That's the CSN. On the Apollo website.

I found it very challenging, very frustrating. Um, I would get angry. And my score in July of 24 was 23. And when I took it and Dr. Merrill was very pleased with the results and he said immediately that he wanted to send the result to you, I scored a 66. I had ones that were low, below average, average.

Everything here across the board was green. My biggest fear is to take it again and see what happens. But I spoke with someone who does a lot of the work with BHQ.

And she explained to me, she said, Peter, these are not tests. These challenges show us your potential. That changed everything. That clicked. I do what they say, the 30 minutes, a minimum 30-minutes for three days, you know, three-days-a-week, I try and get…

What's this using brain HQ? Yeah, brain… Yeah. Brain… Neurological exercises. Right, and it's shown, it is no longer a challenge.

Costs, prevention, and why the investment felt worthwhile

It just shows my potential. And I'm bipolar, so, uh, I am on medication. But the frustration level was very high. I had a lot of difficulty. I did everything I could to avoid it.

What I've realized through this entire process is that's what it, is it a process. I don't know what the end result is going to be. I've had family members say they wouldn't do anything like this.

Just let your body take its course. You know, I'm not that way. If someone said I have cancer, but we have a way to delay it. or treat you, I'm all for it, and it took me.

Yes. That's the other thing. This is very hard work. It's not easy, but once you get into the habit of doing it and that's where the coach comes in. Coach Sandy has been wonderful.

She actually has a guide as to where I should go and what I shouldn't be doing and I don't have to worry about right now. And as a patient, all of that was jumbled in my head.

And now I'm much more organized. I understand what I am doing each day. When I have on my calendar, when I go to the gym, I need that kind of regimentation because I was in the investment business and everything had its value.

You know, it's what value did I bring to my clients? They could go anywhere. What value that I'd bring? And it is the same thing with this. The money that you talk about, yeah, It is an expense, but what do I get for that expense?

I am not going to sit by and let it just, you know process without some sort of a battle. Yeah, this is perhaps the

most important investment you make as you age, right, is the investment in your brain.

That's right. I often will tell people that health coaches are the best bang for your buck, you're going to get the more ROI, the return on that investment.

Out of all of the potential things that you could do, testing, supplements, meeting with doctors, buying the books, I think the investment that you make on this process, in this program is with the health coach because that is where the rubber meets the road, right?

This is when you get that guidance for implementation. So Sandy, I am so excited for you to share kind of how you see your role and then a little bit about the details of you supported Peter and Ellie.

Sure. A health coach is really helpful in implementing the protocol and especially at the beginning because there's seven different lifestyle changes, and depending on kind of how the client is currently living their life, it may be dramatic changes.

It's a lot to handle. They don't necessarily know where to prioritize, how to get started. And that's where a health coach can step in, kind to lay it all out, help them with small action steps, break it up into smaller pieces so that it is more manageable.

helping them decide where do they want to start. You want them to be successful in the beginning, so what kind of small action steps can they take early on to successful and then build upon that.

We help with brainstorming, come up with ideas for how to handle challenges, and celebrate successes and keep them motivated to keep going. With Peter and Ellie in particular, what made them so successful?

There's really three areas that come to mind. I've been working with them now for over a year. The first, and this is what we learned in coaching is you want to help clients understand what is their main reason or purpose for doing that.

And that is so clear with them because they love their grandchildren, their son and daughter-in-law, they have other family and friends. They're just very social, giving, loving people that comes across instantly in every meeting.

So that's been one thing. Second thing is their mindset.

Brain HQ testing, mindset, and early progress

You can hear that in the interview so far is they just approach everything not as perfectionistic, But willing to try anything, willing, to keep going, will to experiment.

If one thing doesn't work, they'll try something else. So just that, you know, just, that success mindset. And then third has been their honesty because it's really hard as a coach or a physician to help a client.

If they maybe are struggling with something, but they come to the appointment saying, oh, that's great. I got it. It's going well. Right. So having that honest conversation with them, they let me know when it isn't working, what they're struggling.

Sometimes they are having challenges with each other and we get through that. And we know those meetings are fun too, But they just bring a wonderful, fresh honesty to it and I think that combined with such a positive mindset has they've really been a joy to work with.

That's amazing. So you mentioned small steps that people can take. I'm curious in your experience as a Brettison-trained health coach, as recode coach.

What are some of the examples that you see people kind of step into this, dip their toe in, if you will, like get those

positive reinforcements, those wins early on.

what are examples of those so that our listeners can maybe start something today? Yeah, okay. So a good example with the Bredesen protocol is they follow the KetoFlex12-3 diet.

that might be a new way of cooking, a lot of new dishes, you gotta have new recipes and menus. And Ellie has been great at this. She has decided she wants to buy her protein, her animal protein.

So maybe she buys a roast chicken or a kebab or something. Then she can do the vegetable and the salad. she's like, I'm comfortable doing that, but I wanna buy a pre-made protein Like that's a good example of you just make it work for you.

And then that takes sort of one headache off your list. Another would be exercise. Ellie was having a little bit of trouble sticking to her exercise schedule.

Peter is amazing at exercise, so Ellie decided to join Peter's gym. And now Peter gets her to go, right? And she's being very consistent. So that, you know, they're doing that as a partnership and playing to each other's strengths, to allow that to happen.

And then what's another one? Sleep. Ellie likes to go to sleep earlier than Peter, so they've kind of been compromising with that. Peter's been willing to, you know, go bed a little bit earlier so that when he comes to bed, it doesn't wake Ellie up.

But just kind specific examples to them, but that's where, a coach can help because you're constantly trying new things and experimenting until you get the outcome that is necessary.

And it's always a work in progress, right? So I know that there have been challenges that come up along the way. Peter and Ellie, would you mind sharing sort of how you navigate things as you move along this path?

Yeah, I'll go first as a care partner. I like that word better than a caregiver, a caredtaker, because I don't really feel like we're at that stage yet.

Self-care is definitely a challenge for me to get time to myself. If Peter's in the house, sometimes I have to set up boundaries. I had to say if I'm at my desk doing work, if i'm doing my yoga class that's online, If I need to read, which I love to do.

Peter is more accepting now of giving me space. and not asking me random questions constantly. Peter drinks a lot of coffee and he has a lotta questions all day long, whether it's help me on my computer or when are we going or who are seeing or whatever.

So that is something that we've kind of established and it has taken its time. The other challenge is definitely the keto-flex diet. But we are eating healthier.

I will cook two or three meals a week. Sandy recommended that we look into chefs, chefs for seniors, we're getting that. We've been through two other food delivery companies that weren't quite as good.

My local chef for senior is, that helps a lot because takeout is not using the right quality of meats and oils. We just have a lot more awareness. I did take a KetoFlex course.

And Sandy's been so instrumental. We could not do this without her guidance and advice because she knows the program inside and out. And we know a lot in a year, but there's still so much more to learn.

Now I have to say your component to reversing Alzheimer's, your Marama, I took your marama workshop, Um, make things even simpler to tell you the truth.

Why coaching matters for implementation

You lay it out so simply in your companion worksheets and workbooks. And that really has been very helpful. Also, sometimes I say, Oh, I got to go back to I know that Dr.

Sanderson outlined this or spoke about this, or, you know, your recipes or your, You know don't be socially isolated and just, um, Um. The challenges are not outweighed by the hope and the faith that we have in the journey because we found this program.

Now, of course, people don't have to pay if they learn, oh, I have exercise more, have the eat better, socialize. You know, some people can do that without a structure and God bless them.

And honestly, we have cousins that have an extremely busy social life and they're very active and then exercise and. They just do everything naturally and We need the structure, we need information, listening to the webinars, reading the Apollo current town halls, that's what it is.

I'm still doing my research, listen to all the new things that are coming out about things that'll help. And I do trust my Dr. Merrill as a geriatric psychiatrist to be on top of all the new research to advise when he thinks something's not working for Peter and maybe we're at the next stage in a year or two or three or four.

that, okay, we've done all we can do and maybe there will be next steps and we will rely on him for those next step. And even Sandy might even know, but Dr.

Merrill recommended Sandy to us and it's wonderful that she lives close by so we could see her in person and she's very knowledgeable. Peter, Peter. Peter just loves to see her.

I love seeing my coach Sandy. Coach Sandy says this and coach sandy says that. Well, yes, whatever coach sandy says. There's something I want to add here. I was diagnosed with mild cognitive impairment.

When I heard that diagnosis, I went straight down to a panic, to depression. I, it was like a death sentence. It was terrifying. Um, through whoever listens to this or sees this, they have to understand it's a process.

This whole thing is a. And when I first tackled it, I took on everything. And it was very frustrating. And where a coach came in handy was, why don't you do this?

Why don''t you schedule this, as a patient who has this. I'm leaping all the way to I am in a home. You know, but that's the way my brain works. And I'm sure other people feel the same way.

I don't think about the process, But now that I have seen some progress, it's encouraging. As a patient, Ellie's right. Once I had a challenge and I see that i'm progressing, I want more of it.

You know, so it's a mindset as well. It really is. And believe me, again, whoever listens to this or sees this, there were many times where I said, I can't do this.

I just can do it. it It's impossible. You. My back, my back problems. Um, you know, on medication, all this other kind of stuff. I'm in a 12 step program, which is extremely helpful for the socialization.

And I let people in the room know that I had this diagnosis. Probably a half a dozen people came up to me after the meeting to ask about it. Um. You know.

The BHQ, Sandy made it so clear for me. And now when I take it, I understand I can choose what I want to take or, you know, have your own list and they tell you what you can take.

So I switch back and forth. Okay. I thought I had to do every single one over and over again.

Practical lifestyle changes: food, exercise, and sleep

So, and I've talked about this with Dr. Merrill, you know, I think as a patient, it seems so overwhelming when I come and here's Ellie researching, my sister-in-law researching.

And again, could never have done this without them. You know I have, read all the books because of Ellie. You know, I've read them all, you know? And even when I feel, we talked about my score and the improvement, even then, i still have my doubts.

I still say, uh-oh, if I take it again, what if i'm back, and not all where I want to be? It's just a process. You know, every quarterback in football doesn't throw for a touchdown.

Doesn't happen, you know. So I think it's really a team effort. The, the psychologists that I see through the program, um, I went for, uh, an MRI and I spoke to the psychiatrist.

She had me doing simple things. I was shaking. My hand was. Shaking. So afraid she took my hands and said to me, Peter, it's not your inability. Just relax, just relax.

You know, as a. It's scary. It is scary and it's things like this. I've listened to your discussion with Dr. Merrill, I forget the other one, it was a psychiatrist.

Yeah, Dr Hadea. But people need to understand you have to do these things. We took a long drive to Palm Springs, we listened the whole thing in our car.

If anything, if anything I want to say to anybody, don't give up. Keep going. Talk to people. Ask. Because again, you know, all of you don' know Sandy said it earlier.

If I, when she's seen me cry, she seen us argue. You know. if I don"t go in and be honest with her, who am I cheating? So. That's, that's the main thing I want to get across to anybody who listens or sees this is that you just can't give up.

You can. And I don't know if it's going to work, but I keep doing it. There's a few really, I think, important themes that you have both brought up, and one is this process.

And so how do we stay engaged in the process? And you both had a a things that mentioned. Well, one, is the team effort, right? You've got this great support team who keeps you engaged.

You meet with Sandy, you get new ideas. So it's taking this really overwhelming process and cutting it up into bite-sized pieces. Okay, what I'm going to get done this week is this.

I am going make that appointment, I will get to the gym, and I'll get my 12-step program. We're going do these specific, measurable things so that we can celebrate the success next week.

And then the other piece was that continual engagement in the inspiration, basically, in like the content, reminding yourself, reading the books, the next books.

Hearing it from another person in a slightly different way. And thank you, Ellie, I just want to acknowledge your acknowledgement of my work. I'm so glad that you found it valuable.

When I was approached to write a book, why did I have nothing more to say on top of what Dr. Bredesen's already said at all? But I think it's a different voice.

It's new stories. And that's part of why this podcast is out here too, right? Is when we hear it from another person, we, hear over and over again that there's something we can do and that creates the hope and gives us faith and a little motivation to bite off that next little chunk.

We need a lot of that because we have to get up over the hill of there is nothing we And I'm so scared that I've been paralysis, I mean, to end up in the home, right?

And so, Sandi, and wondering if this comes up for you and your, in your coaching practice and how you support people when, you know, when life happens and when they feel discouraged or when are arguing with their partner, maybe they don't, or as, as Peter and Ellie do.

Yeah. And I think that comment when life happens, because you know, that'll be what's happening is maybe everything you're feeling great, you are on a roll and you get sick, right?

Or a family member gets sick or, and kind of have to put everything on hold and pivot and deal with that. Then it's hard to bounce back in.

Care partner boundaries and navigating daily challenges

I like that I sort of use a checklist for each of the seven lifestyle changes of like, if you were living it perfectly, you would be doing each and every one of these things.

And then that kind of provides my check-in when I'm with clients. So I don't expect anybody to be doing a hundred percent of everything every single day, but that's where we're headed, right?

That's what we are trying to achieve. And then that is sort of what guides you back in. It's like, oh, if I got off track, you can't let that be disaster, it's just like okay, that happened, let's get back.

We're all human. Start going through what it would look like if you were doing 100% every day. So that helps and then you use that With them, again, the client really needs to make the decision of where to start or where reengage or whatever based on what they can do at any given time.

So certain things might not be available, you know, Peter talked about his back, Ellie's got a knee issue. So if those are flaring up, then that's not the time to do aggressive exercise.

That doesn't mean they can't do certain thing. Ellie loves to chair yoga. Awesome. You know? You keep moving. you keep that limb flowing, right? There's always something that can be done given what circumstance you're in that given day.

And then it sounds like another big shift for you, Peter and Ellie, was to go away from this idea that one thing is going to solve by problem, that there's one answer to this, and really starting to accept that, all right, we're going do multiple things.

Sandy, you keep referring to the Bredesen 7. What was it that helped you make that shift from, alright, I hope there is a magic pill, to, I'm engaged and ready to do this checklist, to take a more comprehensive approach?

Well, for me, it was to stay basically medication-free. You know, everybody's always on so much medication. I just don't even like to taking aspirin, but I am on medication for, you know thyroid, fibromyalgia, all this.

I just didn't want another pill for me or for Peter. He mentioned bipolar. That's a lot of medication right there. go down the, I guess it's the allopathic medicine pipeline.

I was looking for something a little bit more natural, alternative. You know, we didn't mention Peter just started with an acupuncturist. He's willing to do and try anything.

It's not even a choice at this point. I feel we don't have a choose. We need to do this if we are to stay in our beautiful condo that overlooks the Pacific Ocean like who knew.

You know, and not be in a home. Uh, I don't want to go down that road route. Sometimes it is on my mind and I

always remind myself to stay in today and you talk about a lot in your podcast and it's on.

My mind all the time is. Finding my joy for today. What am I going to do today to find my Joy? Because it's important to continue to have a purpose and to keep continue.

To find something that's going bring pleasure and get all that stuff out of your brain. So I took transcendental meditation when I 50 years ago. Very lucky because that really helps me every day.

Just being grateful. I go through that in the morning before I get out of bed and I got through then at night. It's just important to put one foot in front of the other.

And I've always been, I am a retired teacher. I am a planner, I'm an executor, and I have intrinsic motivation to do things because my philosophy in life in general is that you do what you have to.

You take what's on your plate and you make it work somehow. You figure it out. And I don't think we have a choice and I'm thrilled that Peter's eating better and that I am eating.

I wish I could lose a little more weight, but I have to ramp up the exercise for that. But we're not missing anything. Every now and then Sandy gave us permission to cheat.

you know, if we go away and we want to have, I don't even know what, a piece of bread or a croissant or, you just do it. But last night I had my family over for dinner.

It is our holiday. And I have like some ice cream for the grandkids and I took a spoonful or two and said, oh my God, that's too sweet. I can't eat it!

I'm so used to now. not eating sweets that when I eat it, it's like, I can't eat that. So I'm kind of lucky in that respect. Well, first of all, my grandchildren, that's for sure.

That's why we moved here.

Living with uncertainty and staying engaged in the process

I also do like helping people. And sometime Peter says I helped too many people, I need to help myself more. But I got that from my mother and my sister.

There is supreme joy in smiling at someone, helping someone somewhere along the line, doing something for someone. Um, and then just, uh, You know, looking at the ocean, taking a walk, reading a good book, making a phone call or sending a text to a friend back East looking through photo albums, you know.

Those are the kinds of things that bring me joy. What about you, Peter? My joy is being more organized through all this process. Um, and. going through it and having the support of the people that I mentioned to you, my wife, coach, doctor, and others connected with the program, yourself.

I would never eat that way. You know, I'd always cheat. As a matter of fact, I never liked onions in fraternity. I had a raw onion. This is many years ago.

And ever since then, I won't come close to an onion for lunch today. Had a Greek salad and I love the red onion, you know, so it's thing it. It's little things.

My program that I go to, right. But I got five, six days a week. It is such a support. I just played golf with a group of guys. We had a fundraiser. And went to a baseball with the group guys, you know.

Part of my problem was, when we first got here, I lost all of that. So in between dealing with all of these issues with the program, I was at a complete loss.

New doctors, new dentists, you know, cleaners, restaurants, knew everything. It makes me ill now to think of all it. But for someone who was going through this, It's just so exasperating.

It was so. But I was lucky. I wasn't, you talk about gratitude. My gratitude is for this program for Sandy, for Dr. Merrill for Ellie, from my sister, You know, For the friends that I've made.

And like Ellie said, nothing's when I could be in the most foul mood. When I'm with those grandchildren, they're nine and six. Boom, everything goes away.

So like Ellie, I look for pleasure. What pleases me during the day? What do I enjoy? And I've always enjoyed being around other people, so when I go to a meeting, around people.

I think that protocol, oh, and one thing I don't want to forget to mention, what I learned was, it was difficult. For instance, with the BHQ, I couldn't figure it out.

I could figure out how to do it, where to go, what to to. You know, on the BHQ site, you can ask a question. about how to do something. Well, I connected with a woman named Melissa.

She took me through the whole thing, gave me hints about making a bigger screen on my computer, about using a mouse as opposed to the thing. Little things like that don't sound like much to average person, but to someone who's going through this, it just makes it so much smoother.

So I don' want to go on, I feel very blessed to be where I am today. Very blessed. I think it's important to note with the brain headquarters that Sandy did tell us of a, I, think that's a 12 week course coming up, one hour a week.

Starting in October, there's about 10 different topics for them to talk to us about is how to navigate those brain exercises. And we've watched a couple of the webinars.

We wish we knew about this a year ago. It would have been easier for Peter and he wouldn't be yelling and screaming at the computer. Which he does just like he doesn't the football games and the TV that is really, we're looking forward to that.

We definitely look forward that bring him joy. He loves now to sit down and do his brain exercises. So the resources, the fact that these resources are available that can help you navigate these pieces.

Again, taking just bite-sized chunks and learning one thing a week and adding another layer. Peter, you also mentioned that there was these three really instrumental people in your process.

Sandy, we should probably say Ellie first, if I'm fair. Ellie, Sandy, and Dr. Merrill. And would you describe, Peter, from your perspective, what role each of them played?

I think some of it's obvious, right? Ellie's your wife and Sandy's, your coach. But can you just talk through what pieces, What roles they played specifically that really helped you to implement this program?

Okay. Let me start with Ellie. We've been married 46 years. A lot of it has to do with your companion. And I say that for people to hear it, it's hard work for them.

It's not like you just prepare a meal and say, here it is. But it takes a team. I could not do this without a team. And the key there is Dr. Merrill. He's the first one I saw.

How Sandy supports clients and works with Dr. Merrill

You know, he told me that I had a mild cognitive impairment and he saw my reaction and eased my stress. Sandy's to me Sandy is my quarterback. She you know Do try this try that do this does it go down go?

Down go deep make up make it make a right-hand turn and you'll catch the ball, you Know go out sure you hear I'm gonna hand you the Ball you run this way or you Run that way If anybody's listening you have to have these three Ingredients you happen You know, um, it's too, at least for me, It's, too difficult for, me to do it any other way.

You, know if Ellie wasn't interested or, you know would guide me. Um, if Sandy didn't take care and concern that she has with both of us, You'd be lost.

Okay. Yeah, I'd be lost. And I want to add with Sandy, she does send us follow-up notes, detailed notes with links to websites or try this, try that, reminds us this.

That's really helpful to have it written down on a piece of paper. Her training is obviously reflected in her intelligence also, I have to say, very bright woman who can see what we need, what our needs are, you know?

And just always wants to be so helpful and supportive, and every now and then I can email her at any time and ask her a question and get an answer back.

I mean, that's amazing. That's amazing with healthcare today. You know, you don't get that. I'll give you a perfect example. When I was doing the BHQs, I didn't know whether I should stay with one area, like target practice or whatever they call it, and just stay without until I try and complete it or whether i can jump around and Sandy responded, we did the short list for you.

You can either take their suggestion or pick what you want. Now that's a simple answer and it doesn't sound complicated. But when you're going through this thing, it's like going to a corn maze.

I don't know which way to turn. Yeah, you will want to spend the time and do it wrong. Right. And I did that in the beginning and I do everything to avoid them.

So it sounds like you have a phenomenal health coach here, Sandy. I want our audience to also understand, I mean, you really have this ideal team, Peter, between Ellie, Sandi, and Dr.

Merrill. Sandie, how do you interface with Dr Merill? What is your relationship there and how you communicate best, both so that patients kind of know either what they can expect, what could they ask for, or also for healthcare providers who are out there listening they have sort of a model to base their communication strategies and their support team on.

Yeah. So it partly is going to be up to the doctor. And Dr. Merrill, I've been in person with a different client in an appointment with them. What I have done with Elaine Peter is just send him notes and then we email with questions or ideas.

Then I also could be on a teleconference depending on what their telemedicine platform is, but that really has to be up to the patient and the doctor.

I wouldn't say that it's necessary per se, especially given the cognitive ability and then the role of the care partner, I would say determines that. It's very helpful for the client Because I might be seeing things with other clients or what I'm hearing in training.

And as a coach, you can't, there's, I don't prescribe or diagnose or any of those things, but I can say. why don't you ask your doctor about such and such?

Like if I learn in my training that there's a particular supplement and they're not taking the supplement, then I could say, why do you asked the doctor if that something that might be appropriate for you?

So it's just kind of having, you know, like an extra advocate that can be there to bring up those kind issues. And then if the needs anything explained, back to the client, and the can ask me to do that.

It's like when you're teaching and your child needs extra support, you hire a tutor who has more knowledge and information. That's Sandy for us. Yeah.

How amazing. It sounds like that just this perfect recipe for success for Peter. I hope you from your lips to God's ears, but yeah. Yes, I mean, it's a process and I just realized it is just a part of my life now.

I also want to just say quickly, because I'm sometimes brought in… I don't know these clients when they were younger, right? And when were quote unquote normal or before their cognitive impairment.

As a coach, and I remember Peter and had a specific meeting where he got teary-eyed, I got tearied because he was feeling down about the diagnosis and things that he couldn't do.

And yet I was having so much enjoyment from the relationship and from time that I spent with them. I was there kind of to explain to him, I didn't know you before, but I really like who you are now.

And I enjoy every moment that I'm with you. I am guessing that your family and your friends are the same way. It's important that people do remember they still do have a great deal of value.

Hope, gratitude, and advice to their past selves

They obviously have love to give for their relationships. there's hope even if you don't get back to 100% cognitive ability, right? So well said. Wonderful life.

Yeah. So, well-said. Sandy, I'm curious that you first, for patients who might be in a scenario closer to where Peter and Ellie were five years ago, four years, ago where you're starting to notice changes in the partner or you know you maybe have risk but you haven't started noticing changes, What do you recommend they do to get started?

Good question. So that kind of goes back to my checklist. For sure, you want to know if you're metabolically healthy. That's kind important for pretty much every disease out there.

Is your blood sugar under control? Is you fasting insulin at a low enough level? you know, you're responding when your insulin is released and that's bringing your blood sugar down.

So that just general metabolic health. Are you getting the recommended amount of exercise, which is 150 minutes of moderate intensity exercise? Are doing resistance training three to four days a week?

Or are you doing some type of, mindfulness practice, You know, Peter likes to listen to Native American flutes. He didn't realize he could lie down and listen a Native America fluts and that counts as mindfulness.

It doesn't, you know it doesn' have to be meditation. it can be whatever works for you, whatever brings you peace, whenever calms your nervous system down.

Sleeping is really important to maybe, do an at home sleep test, wear an aura ring or apple watch or whatever. Make sure you're getting adequate sleep.

And then that's, so that kind of like at the beginning stages and then, you know, then you would determine if you want to start doing brain training, taking certain supplements.

We didn't talk really too much about detox. That was a part of Peter and Ellie's journey, but, uh, You know certainly switching to less toxic products, maybe getting tested for toxins and doing everything you can to support your own.

detox pathways, which is, you know, making sure you're eliminating lots of water, lots a fiber. Just kind of, so those are, that's sort of in a nutshell.

I think how I would stuck with people, just kind a general healthy living. And are you currently taking new clients?

And where can people find out more about working with you?

So sandigleason.com is my website and it's Sandy with an I. Um, and I'm also through the Apollo site. If people become clients, you can find me through their, um, You know, through.

Find a coach, I think is fantastic. Yeah, find a Coach through TheApolloHealth.com. Peter and Ellie, i'm curious what you would say to yourselves five years ago, knowing what, what do you know now?

You go. Oh, that's a tough one. I'm not surprised with my journey. Um, I just feel like I have like some kind of higher power that guides me on a road and on the path to do good, to feel good.

And, um, That's tough question. the need to do for, like I said with others, I do have a problem with putting others first and not taking care of me, but I think when I take care others somehow I am fulfilling some kind of need in myself to feel better.

Now, if I was in Peter's position, It would be tough because I don't know that Peter would know where to start, but I'm also lucky to have an amazing sister who guides me and helps me along this path because of all her research and knowledge that she has.

And Peter, what about you? You are the one who got the diagnosis of MCI. If you were talking to yourself, knowing what you know now, thinking of you back in Dr.

Merrill's office, getting that diagnosis and feeling so overwhelmed and so terrified of ending up in a care home, What would you tell yourself? I think, as Ali said, I feel where I am today, a lot of gratitude.

I'm blessed in a way that I've been able to find this journey. Again, it's hard to say, because being the patient, some days are good and some are bad.

But I tell myself that not every day is going to be a good day and not everyday is gonna be bad day.

Closing thoughts and podcast sign-off

Just like the stock market is not going to go up forever and it's not gonna go down forever, you know? So, I think being close to the children, we have one son, my son and his family, our grandchildren, makes a big difference, it makes big a difference.

I still miss a lot of people back East, but it has taken me about three or four years to find a level. And I think that's true too, that I want to just stay level.

I don't need loads of excitement, I need lots of depression. And this helps me do it. Amazing. Well, thank you all so much for being here. Sandy, Peter, Ellie, it's been such a delight having you.

Thank you for sharing your insights and your wisdom and most importantly, your experience of watching Peter's cognition improve despite the odds and despite what too many people are told that you can't do anything for cognitive impairment as you age.

You guys are an inspiration and an absolute delight. Thank you so much. We appreciate it. And thank you, Sandy. I can't wait to see you again. Thank you so much for listening to the Think Well, Age Well podcast.

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