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

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Opening reflections on staying level

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

Just like the stock market's not going to go up forever and it's not going to 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, makes a big difference.

I still miss a lot of people back East, but it's taken 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 don't need loads of depression. I just want to stay level, you know, and this helps me do it. This helps me do it.

Welcome to the Think Well, Age Well podcast. I am your host, Dr. Heather Sandison. 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. 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 a 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.

Podcast introduction and episode overview

Most importantly, you're going to hear something that we don't hear often enough in this space. You're going to 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, the coach, the physician, and about returning, again and 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 you 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, to 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. Ellie, 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.

So it's always been somewhere in our minds. 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 P. Tau. and I'm an APOE 3.3 and I knew that that decreased my risk because I'm not a 3.4 or a 4.4. My sister is a 3.4. The p-tau is something that, well, I have to explore this.

I have to figure this out. So I got on my computer and started researching and I 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. And 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, not having his friends.

And when he told his primary care physician about three years ago, I'm forgetting things. I'm displacing things. All he wanted to do, the primary care physician, was write a prescription for Aricep.

I said, no, that's not the direction we're going to take right now. This is Bredesen Protocol. I read the books. Your book was just being published. I had pre-registered to get it when it came out.

I bought him his own copy so he can underline and take notes. I have my own copy. 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.

Ellieu2019s backstory and Peteru2019s diagnosis

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 the blood testing and all that, 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 to 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 recode, 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. And if you break that down to 12 months, you know, you could, um, 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's worth it to us to spend what we need to spend to have this journey.

Yeah. Yeah. I think the math for a lot of people can be challenging, right? For some people, it's just not. accessible, but thank goodness there are the books, there are the resources that are online that are 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 account 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 cost of having to get nurses to come into the home or to get caregivers is so 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.

So thank you for sharing that. I just have to say in that 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 made it worthwhile because you're right, everything is so expensive. And if we can delay an onset, were willing to spend the money. 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.

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 results 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 more.

Is this using brain HQ? Yeah, the brain HQ. Yeah, the neurological exercises. Right, and it's shown, it's no longer a challenge. It just shows my potential.

And I'm bipolar, so, and I'm on medication, but the frustration level was very high. I had a lot of difficulty. I did everything I could to avoid it. And what I've realized through this entire process is that's what it is.

It's 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 the work. 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 coach, Sandy has been wonderful. She actually has been a guide as to where, where I should go and what I should be doing and what 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'm doing each day. I have on my calendar when I go to the gym, when I do my BHQs, when I go to physical therapy, 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 did I bring? And it's the same thing with this. The money that you talk about, yeah, it is an expense, but what value do I get for that expense?

And I am not gonna sit by and let it just, you know, process without some sort of a battle.

Costs, testing, and the value of prevention

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, right?

You're going to get the most ROI, the most return on that investment. I think out of all of the potential things that you could do, the testing, the supplements, meeting with doctors, buying the books, I think the most important investment that you make on this process, in this process, on this program is with the health coach because that is where the rubber meets the road, right?

This is where 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 how 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 of lay it all out, help them with small action steps, kind of 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 be successful and then build upon that.

We help with brainstorming, come up with ideas for how to handle challenges, and then celebrate successes and keep them motivated to keep going. And 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, and 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, willing to experiment.

If one thing doesn't work, they'll try something else. So 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 with. Sometimes they're 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.

I've enjoyed it. 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 a 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 some 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 got to 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. And then she can do the vegetable and the salad. She's like, I'm comfortable doing that. but I want to 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, you know, to allow that to happen.

BrainHQ results and the role of coaching

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 to bed a little bit earlier so that when he comes to bed, it doesn't wake Ellie up.

But just kind of specific examples to them, but just, but that's where, you know, a coach can help because it's, you're just, you're constantly trying new things and experimenting until you get the, 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 caretaker, 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 have 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 lot of questions all day long, whether it's help me on my computer, or when are we going, or who are we seeing, or whatever.

So that is something that we've kind of established, and it's 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 seniors 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.

I took a support site. I'm in a care partner class. I'm with a social worker to help me navigate 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, your book, Um, make things even simpler to tell you the truth.

You lay it out so simply in your companion work sheets and workbooks. And that really has been very helpful. Also, sometimes they say, Oh, I gotta 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 to exercise more, I have to eat better, I have to 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 they exercise and they just do everything naturally and We need the structure.

We need the information. We need listening to the webinars. We need reading the Apollo current town halls. That's what it is. And I'm still doing my research, listening 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 steps. And even Sandy might even know, but Dr.

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

Coach Sandy. Coach Sandy. I love seeing my coach Sandy. Coach Sandy says this and coach Sandy says that. Well, yes, whatever coach Sandy says. There you go.

Challenges. I think I want, 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, It was like a death sentence.

It was like a death sentence. Terrifying. Whoever listens to this or sees this, they have to understand it's a process. This whole thing is a process.

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 do that?

Why don't you schedule this? Why don't you schedule that? As a patient who has this, I'm leaping all the way to I'm 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 have 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.

Care partnership, diet, and daily routines

I just can't do it. It's impossible. You know, my back, I have back problems. uh, you know, on medication, all this other kind of stuff. I'm in a 12 step program, you know, uh, 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, I, 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, you 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. 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, I could never have done this without them. You know, I've read all the books because of Ellie. You know, I've read them all, you know, um, and, and even when I feel, you know, we talked about my, my score and, you know, the improvement, even then I still have my doubts.

I still say, uh-oh, if I take it again, what if I've, what if I'm back, you know, and not all, you know, where, 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. I was 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's scary. And it's things like this. I've listened to you. I listened to your discussion with Dr.

Merrill. I forget the other one. It was a psychiatrist. Dr. Hedaya. Yeah, Dr. Hedaya. But people need to understand you have to do these things. We took a long drive to Palm Springs.

We listened to the whole thing in our car. The, 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't know Sandy said it earlier.

If I went in, she's seen me cry. She's 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't. 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 few things that you 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'm going to make that appointment. I'm going to get to the gym. I'm going to get to my 12 step program.

I'm going to do these specific measurable things so that we can celebrate the success next week. And then the other piece was like that, that continual engagement in the inspiration, basically, in the content, reminding yourself, reading the books, reading 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. And I think when I was approached to write a book, I thought, 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 a, 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 that gives us faith and that gives us a little motivation to bite off that next little chunk.

And we need a lot of that because we have to get up over the hill of there's nothing we can do. And I'm so scared that I'm in paralysis. I'm going to end up in the home.

Right. And so, Sandi, I'm wondering if this comes up for you in your coaching practice and how you support people when, you know, when life happens and when they feel discouraged or when they are arguing with their partner.

Maybe they don't create a horror 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're on a roll and you get sick.

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

Um, I, I like that I sort of use a checklist for each of the seven lifestyle changes of, 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're trying to achieve. And then that's sort of what guides you back in. It's like, oh, if I got off track, you can't let that be disaster, right?

It's just like, okay, that happened. Let's get back in. And start going through what it would look like if you were doing a hundred percent every single 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 to 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 things. Ellie loves to do 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 to do multiple things.

Sandy, you keep referring to the Bredesen 7. What was it that helped you make that shift from, all right, I hope there's 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.

Mindset, setbacks, and staying engaged

You know, everybody's always on so much medication. I just don't even like to take an aspirin, but I'm on medication for, you know, thyroid, Lipitor. 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. He

does have some heart things, all these things, but I just felt I didn't want to 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 choice. 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. I don't want to go down that 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 continue to find something that's going to bring pleasure and get all that stuff out of your brain.

So I took Transcendental Meditation 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 go through that 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 am an executor. I have like intrinsic motivation to do things because my philosophy in life in general is that you do what you have to do.

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'm eating better.

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, you know? And 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 know, you just, you just do it. But last night I had my family over for dinner.

It is our holiday. And, and I had like some ice cream for the grandkids and I. took a spoonful or two and I said, Oh my God, that's too sweet. I can't even 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. So what brings you joy at this day, Jelly?

Well, first of all, my grandchildren, that's for sure. That's why we moved here. I also do like helping people. And sometime Peter says, I help 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, my coach, my doctor, and others connected with the program, yourself.

You know, I would never eat that way. You know, I would always cheat. As a matter of fact, I make Ellie laugh. 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. I had a Greek salad

and I love the red onion. You know, so it's thing, it's, it's little things.

My program that I go to, I go five, six days a week. It is such a support. I just played golf with a group, a group of guys. We had fundraiser. I went to a baseball with a group of guys, you know, part of my problem was, you know, 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, new cleaners, new restaurants, new everything.

It makes me ill now to think of all of it. But for someone who was going through this, It's just so exasperating. It was so exasperating, but I was lucky.

I was, you talk about gratitude. My gratitude is for this program for Sandy, for Dr. Merrill, for Ellie, for my sister, you know, for the friends that I've made.

And like Ellie said, nothing's when I, 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? I've always enjoyed being around other people, so when I go to a meeting, I'm around other people, you know.

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

I couldn't figure out how to do it, where to go, what to do. 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 the whole 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 the average person But to someone who's going through this it just makes it so much smoother so that's I don't want to go on but it's just 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 it'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.

Joy, gratitude, and support team roles

Which he does just like he does at the football games and the TV. That is really, we're looking forward to that. We're definitely looking forward to that.

And that's going to bring him joy. He loves now to sit down and do his brain exercises. So the resources, oh, 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. We've had our ups and downs. Okay. Um, a lot of it has to do with your companion, you know, and I say that for people to hear it.

It's hard work for them. It's hard work. 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. You know, he told me that I had a mild cognitive impairment and he saw my reaction and he eased my stress.

Sandy, to me, Sandy is my quarterback. She, you know, do try this, try that, do this, go down, go down, go deep, make a right-hand turn and you'll catch the ball, you know.

Go out here, I'm going to 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 have to.

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 the care and concern that she has with both of us, you know, you'd be lost.

Okay. Uh, yeah, I'd be lost. Yeah. 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. And, um, you know, 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.

You know, and every now and then, you know, I can email her at any time. Right. 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 with that 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 through 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 did 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, Sandy, and Dr. Merrill. Sandy, how do you interface with Dr.

Merrill? What is your relationship there? How do you communicate best, both so that patients can know either what they can expect, what they can 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've done with Elaine Peter is just send him notes and then we email with questions or ideas.

And then I also could do 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 kind of given the cognitive ability and the role of the care partner, I would say determines that.

I think 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 know, 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 don't you ask the doctor if that supplement 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 of issues. And then if the doctor needs anything explained, you know, back to the client, then the doctor 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. Yeah. I hope you're from your lips to God's ears, but yeah. Yes. I mean, it's, it's a process and I'm, I just realized it's just a part of, it's just a part of my life now.

It's just a part of my life. I also want to just say quickly. Cause you know, I'm sometimes brought in, you know, I don't know these clients when they were younger, right.

And when they were quote unquote normal or before their cognitive impairment and as a, as a coach. And I remember Peter and I had a specific meeting where he got teary eyed, I got teary eyed because he was feeling down, you know, about the diagnosis and things that he couldn't do.

And yet I was having so much enjoyment from the relationship and from the time that I spent with them. And so 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 and I'm guessing that your family and your friends are the same way. So it's, you know, it's important that people do remember they still do have a great deal of value.

They obviously have love to give for their relationships. And it's, you know, there's, there's hope, even if you don't get back to a hundred percent cognitive ability.

Right. So I still experience. Wonderful life. Yeah. Left, yeah. So well said. Sandy, I'm curious at you first.

What to do when starting out and finding help

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 a partner, or you know you maybe have risk but you haven't started noticing changes, what do you recommend they do to get started?

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

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

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

Are you doing some type of, you know, mindfulness practice, which can be anything? You know, Peter likes to listen to Native American flutes. He didn't realize he could lie down and listen to Native American flutes and that counts as mindfulness.

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

Sleeping is really important to maybe, you know, 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's 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, you know, certainly switching to less toxic products, maybe getting tested for toxins and then doing everything you can to support your own detox pathways, which is you know, making sure you're eliminating lots of water, lots of fiber.

Um, just kind of, so those are, that's sort of in a nutshell, I think how I would stuck with people, just kind of general healthy living. And are you currently taking new clients?

And where can people find out more about working with you? Uh, 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 the find a coach.

I think it's that. Find a coach, right. Yeah. Find a coach through the apollohealth.com. Peter and Ellie, I'm curious what you would say to yourselves five years ago, knowing what you know now.

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

And that's a tough question. I don't know. I'm just moving forward however I feel 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 of others, somehow I am fulfilling some kind of need in myself, you know, 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 feel blessed in a way that I've been able to find this journey. Again, it's hard to say. It's hard to say because, you know, being the patient, some days are good and some days are bad.

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

Advice to their past selves and closing thoughts

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

Um, I still miss, miss a lot of people back East, but it's taking 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 don't need loads of depression. I just want to stay level, you know, and this helps me do it. 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. Thank you Dr. Sanderson, we appreciate it. Thank you Sandy and I can't wait to see you again.

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