Two Long-Term Vegans on Diet, Aging, and Living Well Past 65 Transcript

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Aging, Health, and Diet Changes

65 is an age where often people are less physically active and if you're not as physically active then we're not eating quite as much so we may not be getting the nutrients that we're having before. Um, 65 is also the age where some people are economically actually better off than they were before so they can splurge a little bit more than they were doing earlier. So you may not be doing exactly the same thing. But the other thing, let's face it, you know, time does take a toll. >> Mhm.

>> And so if a person had a little bit of a cholesterol issue, it might be uh, affecting them if they've had higher blood pressure, it might be affecting them too. When I say affecting them, it [music] can affect the heart, affect the arteries, affect the brain. And so some of those things, those effects are real.

That said, 65 is not old age. Let me be clear. It seems like old age when you're 18 but 65 is an age where people should be vigorous, sharp. If you could run a marathon when you're 45, you should easily be able to run one when you're 65 if not faster. Um, you are not old yet. >> The some of the toughest people to convince are those closest to you and it hurts the most because you know they don't have to go through that. My mom had a sister who had was identified with breast cancer, a lump. >> Yeah.

>> And said, "Well, go to go to see Dr. Sabatino. Go to see Dr. Scott. At least get a second opinion." But some people won't. That's okay. But it hurts when you do it and with your kids. With your kids. >> Yeah.

>> It kills you. >> Yeah. >> But you got to have the bigger perspective on life that there is more to life >> [music] >> than fruits and vegetables. >> Some people will say, "You're too old to change." And people don't want to change, you know, whatever. This is the biggest lie I got to tell you.

Convincing Family and Older Adults to Change

I was when my parents were alive, they lived in a senior center. >> Mhm. >> And uh, my mother had gone vegan because she'd had a high high cholesterol and she had went vegan and and I mean [music] it cured her. They move into this place, there's nothing healthy. So I I sat down with the management. I said, "You should really be serving vegan food, at least make them available." He said, "Old people don't want to change. They're set in their ways." So, that is not true. I gave a talk then. I gave a lecture.

Um and every hand went up when I said, "Would you like to have try vegan foods? Would you like them available?" Older people are on a sack of pills. Their doctor has given them worries and they're ready to change. We do a lot of studies with older people. They are eager to swap recipes and get on a healthier path. >> But if you if we started this interview and if you didn't ask me, you know, how I grew up or what I think of fruits and vegetables, I wouldn't say anything about it. Because I don't I I'm not a proselyte. I don't think that's how you do anything. I don't think it politically, religiously, or anything.

I'm very involved in my synagogue community. I'm president of our Jewish Federation and that. I don't proselytize. [music] I think you do it by example. And I've done that by example in my whole life. People could be quite rude about it in in growing up about. If you weren't doing this way, what's wrong with you? And that's never been the way. And and even in in my marriage to Wanda, we've been married 34 years. The first 20 years of those marriage of that marriage, she was mostly vegan. I would I think she would say kind of a junk food vegan and all that. Have some salmon once in a while.

Leading by Example in Marriage and Community

Have some, you know, those and and organic wine. I would buy the organic wine, you know, sulfite free and all that. But I I would never I think she would say that one of the secrets of our marriage is that I never judged. I mean,

it's not my place to tell her what religion she should be or how she should think. I love her because of her, not because she ate the same thing that I did. >> You're not going to live forever, but keep in mind what what is it that what is it that truncates life? I mean, it's cardiovascular disease. It's cancer. It's diabetes. It's Alzheimer's.

All of these things have a nutritional component. So, Dean Ornish showed back in 1990 that age was no barrier to the benefit of a healthy diet and lifestyle. He brought in people, plant-based diet, lace up your sneakers. And you know, you weren't running a marathon. It was a 30-minute brisk walk every day.

Uh stress >> [music] >> production. Do not smoke. And after a year, 82% of people saw their arteries reopening. Their chest pain was gone inside of 5-6 weeks. I mean, you don't need any other reason, you know, to change your diet to have that elephant get off your chest. >> Yeah.

>> Um >> [music] >> And so, the arteries are opening up again. And so, yes, you you're going to extend your life because the things that kill you aren't going to are less likely to happen. And you're not going to live forever, but it's it's fine. Um the other thing about it is I don't care how old you are. Your quality of life is what's on your mind every single day. So, if you can get rid of the things that are keeping you feeling bad, um that's great.

>> Yeah.

Diet, Heart Health, and Quality of Life

>> And that happens each day when people are are changing their diets. Their blood sugar can come down. They feel better. >> For me, um I grew up with or a salad every day. My lunch at school when I was in grade school was a was a peach cut in half with some cashew butter in the middle. And and trail mix before people knew what trail mix was. I had cashews and raisins in a little bag. And and and a fresh orange juice or something. >> [music] >> But that was normal for me. I looked forward to a salad every day. And the contrast of it is also true that when I was around, obviously, my elementary school schoolmates and middle school kids, they weren't eating anything like that. >> Mhm.

>> But that was okay. I I I didn't I didn't miss what I didn't know. >> That that chicken drumstick is is not your friend, either. It's got as much cholesterol as red meat. Let me say that again. Chicken has as much cholesterol as red meat. Or just just look on the look on the package. You will see it's got the same cholesterol content, if not even a little bit more. Cholesterol is in the lean portion of the meat.

>> Mhm. >> Now, the fat is not so good. The fat causes your body to make cholesterol, but the cholesterol itself in the meat is in the little cell membranes around the muscle cells themselves, and there's more cholesterol in the lean than in the fat. So, people will be saying "Wait a minute. I'm eating chicken breast, and I'm taking the skin off. Isn't that a good move?" Yes, that is a good move. And if you take the meat off and put it down your garbage disposal, that's better, too.

Um if you avoid the meat altogether, you're going to be fine.

Food as Fuel for a Bigger Life

>> I I guess what I think is that life is much bigger than um >> [music] >> fruits and vegetables. And I think that in in my long arc of of of observation of the movement is that those that are kind of an ism, the vegetarianism or the veganism or whatever it is that they kind of lose perspective. Cuz life is much bigger than fruits and vegetables. There is sports, there's music, there's art, there's relationships. >> All that sort of stuff. And yeah.

>> That's really the bigger picture, and the way I've always looked at it, I always like Joel Fuhrman's uh book. He's one of my closest friends. With the the book Eat [music] to Live, his first big big best time best seller and all that.

Point was, you don't It was a great If you think about the term you eat to live, you don't live to eat. >> Yeah. >> That's was the phrase. And I've always looked at the diet that I grew up on as just fuel for all the rest of life. I love my mangoes. I love my salad every day. I love my peas every day. But I love Broadway shows, and I love traveling

world and and and meeting people in different cultures and things like that.

That's That's the stuff of life. >> [music] >> She is