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Megan [00:00:06] Hi, everyone, it is Megan Ramos, and I'm here with my incredible co-host, Dr. Nadia Pateguana. Nadia, how are you doing today?

Nadia [00:00:14] Hi Megan, doing well. Hi, everyone.

Megan [00:00:17] We have our very first Hot Topic episode. And today's topic is on Recovering From the Holidays because we know our American friends are just going through the very first of the end-of-the-year holidays - American Thanksgiving - and Nadia and I, well, we just went through Thanksgiving. So Thanksgiving in Canada is always the second Monday of October and, even though I am now living in the US, we still celebrated Canadian Thanksgiving. And I'm married to an American so we've actually celebrated both holidays for the last seven years, which is great - I get double turkey festivities! But, there is a recovery period. So Nadia, I'm going to throw it over to you to get us started with today's Hot Topic.

Nadia [00:01:12] Well, thank you, thank you, Megan. So this is one that's of course near and dear to all of us. And a little while ago, you and I and coach Terry, who is, of course, one of our team players, and of course, it's her, you know, her field is she's a behavioral psychologist, and so we learn a ton from her and she helps our clients out a ton. But you know, we started talking about how the holidays that, for Canadians, start in the middle of October. And then of course after that, we've got Halloween and then after that, you've got the American Thanksgiving, and then all of the December holidays for basically everyone all over the world, right? Regardless of your ethnic background. So, you know, it's kind of one of these things that it seems like they're all separate, but somehow it seems that, for whatever reason, when one of them starts for us, we start to lose a bit of control. We feel like we do because we either give ourselves permission to just go crazy, but then it doesn't just end up being that one day, right? For some reason, it's like, "Well, Christmas is just around the corner," or, "Hanukkah is just around the corner," or, "Halloween." You know, for Canadians, it's like, "Well, it's, if Canadian Thanksgiving is middle of October, then Halloween is just a couple of weeks away. I'll start after, you know, I'll start on Monday or I'll start after that holiday." And so this is the sort of rabbit hole that we find ourselves in and a lot of our clients find themselves in. And then they're, you know, they're looking for help.

[00:02:39] How do we deal with these holidays? How do we not let one turn into another and just sort of never-ending feasts? And so actually, Megan, you wrote quite a few blog posts quite a few years ago, actually, on how to deal with holidays: sort of how to eat and what to eat during holidays, right?

[00:02:59] I mean, I would like to break this down if that's OK with you, Megan, into a few different sort of pieces: how to prepare for the holidays, first of all - mentally and physically. And then how to eat and what to eat during holidays for, you know, for best sort of success. Then I think another important component is, OK, let's say things went pretty well, or maybe things didn't go so well, how do you recover from this, right? What if you find yourself just grazing and craving and just cannot stop, even though the holiday, this particular holiday, is done? You know, how do you get yourself, quote-unquote "back on track" before the next holiday, right? So how to recover from that holiday. I often talk quite a bit about having a really good 'holding pattern', so I'd like to talk a little bit about that with you. And then, you know, what kind of fast can you or should you do after the holidays? And can people fast after having sort of a blowout day, if that's what happens to you, right?

And so these are sort of the Hot Topics I'd like to talk about. So there's a lot of things that happen during holidays, right? We were just talking about this earlier today, right Megan?

Megan [00:04:10] Yeah.

Nadia [00:04:10] I mean, we have guests, sometimes stress.

Megan [00:04:14] We just, so for full disclosure for our listeners, we are actually recording this podcast on Thanksgiving Monday in Canada. But most of us, a lot of Canadians actually, celebrate on Thanksgiving Sunday, so Nadia and I have each had our big feasts. But it's holidays, my husband and I had a crazy airport disaster that would have made for a great reality TV show when it came to getting my father-in-law to the airport. We had friends over and my husband just thought it was perfectly OK to keep inviting more friends over last minute! And of course, I'm running out to the store trying to buy extra food because suddenly all these people are coming with no notice. So there's always these comedic things that happen and, of course, we are exhausted because of the airport craziness in the morning. So holidays are always holidays - they're full of lots of love and laughter, but they definitely have their hair-ripping moments and stories that you can tell for days on end.

[00:05:18] So my biggest thing when it comes to holiday times, is exactly what Nadia said. In Canada, a lot of people struggle right after Canadian Thanksgiving; they think it's all downhill like it all goes down the toilet because then there's Halloween. Then there are quite a few Canadians who do celebrate US Thanksgiving, and it's become a bit of a holiday too in Canada, with Black Friday events and whatnot. And then there's all the December holidays, so a lot of people just sort of surrender. And then, for our American friends, it starts on Halloween and then Thanksgiving for them, and then all the December holidays. And when you really look at it on paper, there's maybe 5 to 10 days of actual eating events, you know, and maybe that's a lot. I'm just thinking about my husband's family and my family - there's two different families on my side of the family. So we get a lot of these duplicate meals usually. So maybe a 5 to 10, but that's 5 to 10 days over the next, you know, this 60 to 90 days, depending on whether you're in the US or Canada, for holidays.

[00:06:30] There's still a lot of days where there aren't holidays, so you gotta make the most of that. You can't just say, "To hell with it," or, "I'll start on January 2nd." That's not how it works. Diabetes does not wait. Metabolic syndrome does not wait. It does not wait to January 1st. You've gotta make the most of the in-between. It's hectic, it's stressful, you know, I think they say they're most car accidents in the year around Christmas time and shopping malls and whatnot because people are stressed out. But you gotta show up for your fasts in between these events. Just because you have 10 days over a 60-day span that you can't eat, or you can't fast because there's eating, doesn't mean you can't get in some fasting the other 50 days. So you gotta plan strategically and you gotta readjust your mindset. This is critical. This is what's going to make you or break you every holiday season.

[00:07:31] If you're someone who's always done, say three 36s, three 42s, two 66s, two 48s, a 72. All those are great fasts like you've, you've heard Nadia and I talk about how awesome they are on all kinds of different platforms. They're awesome, awesome, fasts and they get lots of results. But just because you can't get those in during these, say, 50-day spans where you don't have these holiday events, doesn't mean that you shouldn't fast. So a 48 might be overwhelming or there might be too much stress to do that, but it

doesn't mean that you can't do three 24s. It doesn't mean that you can't do three 18 fasts or do you do 18-hour fasts every single day. Like, there's always something that you can do. It doesn't mean that you need to snack. It means that you can have proper meals and say do 14 to 16 hours of fasting, but it doesn't mean that you can snack.

[00:08:25] So you've gotta keep up the consistency. It's better to take inches forwards during this time than to take steps backwards. And this is the thing that people really struggle to wrap their mind around. If I can't do a 48, then I'm failing; a 24's failure. A 24 is not failure; a 24 is going to keep you moving forwards and keep you moving healthier into the New Year. So we've got to adjust our mindset about what is success during this particular time of year so we can keep moving forward. So sorry, that was the end of my rant Nadia! Throw it back to you.

Nadia [00:09:03] Well, you read my mind, Megan, actually, because I think that, number 1, I want to be totally honest and human right? And share my experiences. But I think there are some strategies and I'm a solution-driven person, as you are. And so we're here to give people some real, practical tips so that they can also, you know, survive these holidays because it's not like they're easy for us, either. So let me, a couple of things, number 1, you just touched upon my idea of a holding pattern, and so I really want to share that with you guys. But there's a whole lot of stuff that happens over a holiday weekend that raises your insulin a ton, right? So we end up feeding this insulin beast not just because of what we eat, but a whole lot of other things involved. And so come, you know, Monday or Tuesday, in the case of, you know, after Thanksgiving Monday, for us Canadians, come Tuesday you really do want to get back on track, but sometimes it's so hard. You know, why is it so hard even if you haven't eaten horribly bad? It's so hard. So we also want some really great strategies about how to get yourself back on and, like Megan said, that definitely may not involve a full, overnight fast because that insulin beast is huge, that insulin is so high. It's so hard (at least for me), it's so hard to fast after a holiday weekend. So what do I do instead?

[00:10:22] So, let me tell you a little bit about what happens for me. So we start out, Megan and I, because we're both Canadian, even though we live, she lives in the US, I live in Portugal. I celebrate Thanksgiving - it is my absolute favorite holiday. Maybe, maybe I like my kids' birthdays a little bit better and maybe Christmas a little bit. But guess what? My baby's birthday falls on Thanksgiving weekend for Canadians. My second child was born Thanksgiving Week, so every single year since then (it's been eight years) we have celebrated her birthday on Canadian Thanksgiving. And so that happened yet again this time around, with a few extra bonuses. So now that we live in Portugal, we have a lot more cousins around because I have a lot of family here. And even though my mother is in Canada, she came for a surprise visit. So she arrives on Friday, daughter's birthday is Saturday, and so now a kid's birthday party turned into a full-day event at my house with all my 50 cousins.

[00:11:23] So what's the one thing people often tell us about, Megan? And so I'm going to ask you this because I know you've talked about it and you have a great solution. You know, it's a party day, right? So the party started at 10 am for us, if you can believe it, at a kids' playground and then everyone came over to my house and probably left really, really late - I don't even remember, but around 11:00 or maybe even later. And so here's the thing, a lot of people feel like because there's food everywhere (and because my mother was here, there was just a ton of cooking - a lot more than I would usually make) and so people often struggle with their eating windows, you know? It's an eating day so, for me, whether it's a good day or a bad day, a party day or not, I keep to my eating windows. I

start to eat and then I stop, and then, if I'm having two meals that day, a few hours, you know, a significant gap between meals (5 to 7 hours is what I usually recommend) and then I have another meal. And again, start to finish - I use a mindful eating strategy that I've talked about and written about called 'plating', meaning I don't just start eating and sort of pick things up as I go in and eat them as I go, from a platter, from the fridge, from a cupboard, from a package. No, I put everything on a plate and only what I sit, I start to eat and when I finish, I walk away. I do this all the time, even during holidays, right? And so we're going to talk a little bit with Megan about that is how you eat, right? Plating is how I recommend that you eat even during holidays, but we're also going to talk a little bit about what to eat and what things you should eat, maybe before others.

[00:12:56] But this idea of eating windows and this idea of a holding pattern, so even on days that you can't do a long fast, there are still some tips and tricks and sort of a really good holding pattern. So Megan, I've heard you say this many times - we often recommend that an appropriate eating window (for most days) is somewhere between 30 to 60 minutes. So you start, you eat, you enjoy your food, you choose the appropriate foods for that particular meal or day, and then you stop - within 30 to 60 minutes. That's very reasonable for me, especially because I plate: meaning I put everything on my plate, even more than I may want to eat, but I put everything that I want to eat around me or around my plate. I sit, I eat in a sitting position somewhere appropriate: I don't eat at my desk, I don't eat in my car, I don't eat in front of the TV. These are all, you know, strategies that I've created for myself because I needed to. And then I start and I stop. But on holidays, sometimes that eating window gets stretched a bit, don't you think, Megan?

Megan [00:13:55] Yeah, absolutely, and I can sympathize with all of our listeners out here. I am in San Francisco now. My hometown's Toronto and pandemic's made it weird for holiday travel. But there's going to be a point and a time again when I'm going home for some of these holidays and my mother, bless her heart, she's uh, I'm actually, my background's mostly Italian. I know I don't look it, my last name's Ramos. But I come from a mostly Italian background. So, like many backgrounds, we nurture through food, we celebrate with food, and I think Italians do it in a very big way. So my mother might not necessarily be Italian, but she grew up with my father's household that was, had a lot of strong-willed Italian women in it. So that's where she learned. So we typically would show up at my mom's around 10:00, 11:00 in the morning for, say, something like Christmas Day, and then it goes to around 10:00 or 11:00 at night. And all this woman, she, all she does is put out food, all day long. So from 10 am, soon as we walk in the door, there's a huge spread. My very first holiday that I had completed successfully that was low carb - I was doing a ketogenic, a very-low-carbohydrate, diet at the time, and we... I was actually temporarily living with my mother for two weeks around Christmas time with my husband (we were in between moving) and I gained four pounds! And I didn't eat one processed sugar, I didn't eat one processed fat, and I stuck to keto carb counts at that time and I gained four pounds. And the reason is: snacking, grazing, all of that. Every time you put food in your mouth, it does raise your insulin and, if you're eating for 10-hours-straight a day, that ends up being a hell of a lot of insulin that's produced. And then the more you eat, the more you want to eat. So it felt like hell getting back into fasting to drop those four pounds. So I said, "Enough's enough. I can't have holidays like this."

[00:16:04] So we talk about these eating windows. Nadia mentioned, you know, a well-structured eating window for someone who's fairly fat-adapted and who's been doing this lifestyle is 30 to 60 minutes. Like, it should not take you longer than 30 to 60 minutes to eat your meal, unless you're out at a wedding or it's a special night out with friends or family. But your typical meal, you know, Monday through Friday at least, at home, should be, you

should be able to consume it within an hour. And for people who are newer to this lifestyle, we'll coach them on starting at 90 minutes because, if you're like me, I used to eat every hour to two hours that I was awake and I did that for 20 some odd years. So to cut down is a process, it was a gradual process. So we'll usually start people with these 90-minute eating windows, 2 to 3 of them a day, and then that eating window usually shrinks down. So on holidays when you show up, and so when I would show up at my mother's on subsequent holidays, I would set a 90-minute timer. So I would wait till I started to feel a little bit tempted by the food that was out and, of course, seeing the right foods and I would set a timer. And this is so easy because we've got smartwatches, we've got smartphones. I mean, our smartphones are attached to us these days! So all you do is set a timer on your smart device for 90 minutes. And in that 90 minutes, I can enjoy the meats, the vegetables, the nuts, whatever it was that I was going to fancy. But when that timer went off, I cut it off. I was not going to allow myself to eat for hours.

[00:17:43] So what does this do? This controls how much food you're eating, how often you're eating, and it also enables you to eat. So you'll see so many people, they show up with the mentality that they're going to just continue to fast till that dinner is served. No, you're not! You're going to be surrounded by food; it's going to be tempting, and then you're going to get into that social friction with your friends or family. And for some people, that's fine. I'm one that was never shy to, you know, sort of tell my family, "I need to do what I need to do for me," but it just can sometimes be complicated for other individuals. So people see you eating, they see you enjoying and partaking, then there's no weirdness (or potential weirdness) if you're worried about how your relatives or friends are going to feel about you fasting. So you've got this controlled time where you're eating. So for me, when I go to a holiday meal, I'll have a 90-minute window where I'll let myself have any of the appetizers or any of the spreads that is out first. And then I've got my actual meal and, because it's a holiday meal, there's no way you're consuming it in 30 minutes, not with, you know, 10, 18 people around the table. So you end up, you know, having this lengthy sort of 90-minute period where you're eating your food. And I encourage other people to do this, you know, because we have these devices, you know set one or two of these eating windows, depending on how long you're going to be at these events and let yourself have the meat, let yourself have the cheese, the vegetables, whatever it is that's there, but just cap it. So embrace it, enjoy it, you know, eat with the people that you love. That's what we do as communities: for human history, we've come together with our communities and eat. But you don't need to eat for 10 to 12 hours; you can partake periodically. So on your holiday meal, you want to create these periodic periods of time: these windows of time that you are eating on the day. And then that way you're not missing out, nobody's feeling weird about you trying to fast, and you're actually able to control it. And by controlling it, it's going to make fasting the next day, or a few days later when you're ready to get back into it, a hundred times easier than if you were to have grace, even on low-carb or ketogenic foods.

Nadia [00:20:00] Absolutely. And I, I often talk about this point being my first pillar, my number 1 pillar in my 5 pillars to metabolic health, or to lowering insulin, or to losing weight. TRE - time restricted eating - I often joke is, well, it's not a joke, it's the reality. It is the epitome of intermittent fasting. I think it is the Beyoncé of the show. It is the main event. It is *the thing*. And I talk about that, and wanted to talk about that with Megan, even before we talk about what to eat, is sort of how to eat, even on holidays. So again, creating a proper eating window for the appropriate day, for the appropriate event, and then eating your food within that time, whatever foods you choose to eat. And we'll talk a little bit about sort of these decisions, the mindset of it, and the things that we've learned from Terri quite a bit, and over the years working with our clients.

[00:20:54] But let's talk a little bit about what to eat, right? Because we don't want to graze, we don't want to snack all day. And it sounds easier said than done right? Because I mean, even if you set that timer, what if you were just, you know, the more you eat the hungrier you get, and the more you want to eat and you can't stop yourself from eating. You know, what are some strategies to help with that, right? So one thing I've always, I learned from reading, well, at least I was happy to read this in one of the resources that Megan wrote a long time ago in our old blogs. And they're still available - if you go to thefastingmethod.com/blog, you can get to the archive blog posts and search "holidays" and "recovering from holidays" or just put in the keyword "holidays" and you'll see a ton of resources on this. And one thing that Megan wrote a few years ago was about what to eat during holidays. How do you make it easier for yourself to follow this TRE and to eat and to walk away feeling satiated? Megan just talked about sort of like, you get there and there's food all over the place. And of course, the minute that you see food, smell, food, think of food, you start to get hungry. And that's OK, it's totally OK to build up an appetite. It's totally OK to start, you know, getting your self ready to eat. As I said, I don't like to (because it doesn't work for me), I don't like to start walking around and just kind of picking at things as I go. There's a lot of strategies for this.

[00:22:22] You know, one very known strategy is called 'delay don't deny'. Of course, I'm not going to fast and I'm not going to not eat for a very, very long time. But I also don't start eating right away the minute that I get in the house or the minute that people arrive at my house. I don't just start stuffing my face with food, because that's just going to open up that window. And then I won't be able to close it in a timely fashion, and I probably won't be able to close it at all. Because then you have absolutely no mind over what you're eating - you're just eating mindlessly. And that just creates this grazing, right? So I don't start eating right away. That's a must for me.

[00:22:59] But then, what do you eat, and what should you eat first, and how do you make sure that you are satiated so that you don't eat a ton of the stuff that you don't want to eat? So Megan, I'm going to sort of paraphrase or quote you here on this, but one thing is for sure the appetizers in the table, you know, if you've got it all sort of separate, the foods that we call appetizers. Actually, Jason also wrote an article on this a long, long time ago - sort of what the appetizers are. You know, they're supposed to open up your appetite; it's not like you go to a restaurant, you order an appetizer, and all of a sudden you're full and you don't want to eat your main meal. That's not what happens. All the appetizers do, particularly because of the type of foods they are, is they raise your insulin a ton and they get you ready to eat, right? They open up, sort of, your appetite and they open up, they start your, sort of, whole eating and digestive process. So one thing is to be very cautious of those particular foods.

[00:23:56] Don't start with those that are most processed, highest in sugars and carbs and flours, and most insulinogenic, and inflammatory things, because all they're going to do is raise your insulin a ton to begin with, at the very beginning of the meal. And then you're just going to have a much harder time sort of closing that window. So choose your foods appropriately. You know what I do, for sure, even if I end up having some of those if I want to, if I decide that I'm going to eat them, I put them on the same plate sort of as my real, whole foods - the foods that I know that I'm going to feel more satiated with and the richest and most nourishing type of foods. So, for sure, if you eat animal products, I'd definitely start with the meats or fish first, add in (as Megan said) the leafy greens and the non-starchy type vegetables. So it's sort of how, you know, I go and how I plan most of my meals anyway, you know, I put my animal products, you know, my foods that are most

appropriate in their protein and fat content with my non-starchy sort of vegetables. And then, if I want, if I decide, and then there's room left, then you can have the more carbier things at the end. Don't start with the more carbier things and the more processed things at the beginning, because you're going to lose all control and you're going to lose all of the decision in the next phase of the meal. What do you think, Megan?

Megan [00:25:27] Yeah, absolutely. So one of the things that I had committed to is, on Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays that I celebrate, I was always going to have my mom's roasted potatoes. I was just going to make her use organic potatoes and a healthier fat than the canola oil that she had. And even yesterday, I had my mother's roasted potatoes, but I made them and I made them with duck fat. And I remember my first Thanksgiving, actually; I was so excited because I haven't had a bloody potato in like six months and I was like, "I'm going to have a potato." And because I was so excited, I put it on my plate and I went for it first. Well, what happened? It went into an empty stomach - my blood sugar shot up, my insulin shot up, and I was like a ravenous maniac for the rest of that dinner. I lost control, all inhibitions went out the window, I started to feel bad and then had one of those to-hell-with-it moments and just ended up eating what I felt like eating - felt awful. And I thought, you know, "What did I do wrong?" Well, I put those potatoes in on an empty stomach. I did the order of operations wrong.

[00:26:37] So when you fill up on the fat and the protein and the fiber, if you're having fiber (just as Nadia mentioned), all that stuff takes a really long time to digest. You don't get surges in any hormones, other than satiation hormones will go up which is a good thing, but it all takes a while to digest. So, if you eat those foods first and then add in the potato or the starch at the end, well, you're mostly full. So that first Thanksgiving, I ended up eating like ten potatoes, like it was absolutely outrageous. But the next Thanksgiving? Well, I couldn't even finish the little bit of potatoes I had put on my plate, because I was so damn full from all of the fat and the protein and the fiber that I had first.

[00:27:25] So you're controlling your appetite by doing it this way. You can. You can. And I want you to say this out loud - you *can* leave potatoes on your plate! You do have that ability, if you eat your food in the proper order.

[00:27:43] So, yesterday I ate all my turkey and we made this really great gravy with raw butter and raw cream and turkey drippings and nothing else. And I ate my Brussels sprouts with my pancetta. I filled up on all this good fat and protein and fiber, and then I could only eat half of the little bit of potatoes that I had on my plate. And then that starch? Well, it gets mixed in with all of that fat and fiber and protein. So you can't get a glucose surge, and you can't get an insulin spike. And, if you want to even tame it even more to control that insulin beast, you can put vinegar on it. So vinegar will even further slow down the digestion of it. So this is exactly what I did yesterday. So for someone who ten years ago if you told me I could leave something like potatoes on my plate, I would have laughed at you. No way did I have that control, but you can physically control it by eating your foods in the order that Nadia just described.

Nadia [00:28:46] Absolutely. And so Megan, it's, there's another topic here that, if it's OK with you, we can maybe leave it for another Hot Topic or maybe for one of the Q&As - I know it's definitely on the Q&As - which is alcohol, of course. Alcohol is a topic that always comes up when we talk about holidays, you know. Most of us do celebrate our holidays with some alcohol. And just like you were describing your reaction to after eating that potato and losing all control over what you ate next, a lot of people describe that that's exactly how they feel when they start drinking on an empty stomach, or even too early on

in their eating window - then they have really a hard time closing that eating window. So I think alcohol is definitely a hot topic; it's definitely something we should save for, you know, a proper discussion. It's definitely something that we'll address in Q&As often, I'm sure.

[00:29:40] But I think it's one of those things that, just like we were talking about the potatoes. I personally, if you are to drink, and maybe it's not just alcohol, maybe it's other sweetened drinks will maybe have a similar effect, but particularly alcohol for many, many people - is have it within your meal. You know, have the appropriate type (if you make that decision) within your meal, and at some point, I think when you've already started eating these more nourishing, satiating foods like the turkey, right, the meats and the non-starchier vegetables that have fiber (which also mitigates that insulin response) and as Megan said, vinegar, that's a third mitigating factor.

[00:30:22] One thing we, Megan, talked about, and I want to kind of put a name on it - it's this idea of eating naked carbs. So on an empty stomach, putting in something like potato or any other type of naked carb - so carbs on their own. You know, carbs do need to be eaten with foods that are going to mitigate that insulin response, otherwise you're going to have a surge of insulin and you're going to lose all control over what you eat, and how you eat, after that, OK? So I'm not going to talk anymore about alcohol in this particular episode, but I know we will talk about it a ton. I don't know if you want to add anything into that, Megan?

Megan [00:30:56] Sure, just something quickly. So in my social circle back home, people understood that I fasted but not having a glass of wine was something that was very uncomfortable for them. I don't know if it's just my demographic or my, my group of friends, but I've shared this with our TFM Community and they say the same thing. It's just almost more uncomfortable for them to turn down that wine. So pre-pandemic, I would say that I did have a few glasses of wine a week at these social get-togethers. And then came COVID. And then I didn't have a drink for like 18 months, and I've just decided now I don't really need it and we've moved and social circles have changed a little bit as well, so starting out differently here. But what I did before was, I would alternate everything with a glass of water and, if I was having something like a white wine or a rosé wine, I would actually add ice cubes to it - so really help you stay hydrated. But if I had a glass of red wine, I would have a glass of water after it and I would go back and forth, if I was having two or three glasses of wine say on Christmas Day or Thanksgiving Day, just to make sure that I was staying adequately hydrated. And that does help a bit with the recovery. Now, I was never really big into it, but I did enjoy a glass of wine.

[00:32:23] But when it came to spirits, you know, having something like whiskey on its own is a much better choice than having a vodka with, or rum, with a really sweet mixer, sour mixer, because there's a lot of sugar actually in sour mixers. So using seltzer water and using a wedge of lemon, or sorry, a wedge of lime juice just to help give it some flavor. So you want to be careful what you're mixing things with as well if you are having the spirits, but you really want to add in water and, like Nadia said, it's best even if you can contain it to your eating window as well. So say you're showing up for a Thanksgiving, or Christmas, whenever the holiday is, if you're opening up one 90 minute window where you're going to engage in some of the appetizers or hors d'oeuvres, you know, sure - have your glass of wine there, or have your whiskey there, or whatever you're drink of choice is. And then again at the dinner hour, and then in between just drink water. And that's typically how I navigated it till I just decided I'd rather forego this stuff.

Nadia [00:33:31] It's really important that you mention that about the mixed drinks. In Portugal, and I think in many parts of the world, it's really hip to drink gin and tonics right now. And tonic water does not taste sweet at all, but it's got just as much sugar as all the other soft drinks. So just be aware of that when making your choices.

[00:33:49] OK, so we've talked quite a bit about how to eat, and what to eat, during holidays. There's a lot of wonderful, amazing resources that you can search for further info on this. But really important just to summarize that: on good days and bad days, on holidays and every other day, we really do put a lot of focus on how you eat, TRE, right, having proper sort of eating windows.

[00:34:14] And so earlier in this episode, I mentioned that there's a lot of things during the holiday (the day itself) that raises your insulin a ton, that feeds the insulin beast. And it's not just what you eat, but sometimes, you know, there's that added bit of stress of the holiday itself, of being around people - sometimes even people that are near and dear to you. You can have, you know, a lot of cortisol produced (a lot of stress hormones being produced) just from the holiday itself. And cortisol and stress does raise your insulin significantly, and diabetics will tell you this - the next day, their blood sugars are higher, even if they didn't eat one thing out of the norm, or even didn't have a large eating window - just the stress itself. So just be aware of that. We need to also do an episode on cortisol-lowering techniques and how important those are for metabolic health, I think. And the other thing is, you know, your sleep might be disturbed just because you've eaten later or you've had people over later; so again, just not sleeping.

[00:35:24] So the combination of all of these factors, really does raise your insulin a ton. It's not one reason why the next day is so hard for you to get back on track, it's many reasons. There are many factors between all of these things combined that make the next day feel just really hard. So you wake up in the morning and you might be craving sugar right from the get-go, even if you didn't have any sugar the day before. Just the fact that you're a bit more stressed or didn't sleep well enough, you might already be craving all the things that you wish you weren't. The thought of fasting seems just really, really hard, and for many of us, it is. I'll tell you right now that there are many people within our community, and my husband is definitely one of these people, that his recovery plan is to fast. He fasts right after every weekend, every trip, every holiday, and he can do an extended fast. You know, if he decides to do a five-day fast, a three-day fast, whatever - that's his recovery plan every time. He finds that not having to choose what to eat and just fasting is the easiest thing for him, even if he needs to white knuckle it, OK? So that's always an option for some people. Their recovery plan is to just fast. You're definitely going to lower that insulin a ton (and very, very quickly), and you're going to feel probably better within a couple of days, and you're going to get rid of your cravings, right? Lowering insulin and fasting really does lower and starve that insulin beast, OK? For me, and for a lot of us, it's really hard to fast the next day: your insulin is super high, you're craving, as I said, all the wrong things. And so fasting is not a good recovery plan for me.

[00:37:06] I do at this point do a combination of fasting and what's called 'fat fasting' to recover. And again, Megan, a long, long time ago wrote a great blog post called 'What is a Fat Fast and When Should You Do It?' And so I think a fat fast is something that definitely deserves a little bit of an honorable mention today. It's something that I've used, and many of our clients have used, time and time again as a recovery plan. So I would like to just start off, what is a fat fast? You could actually have a fat fast many different times of the year, not just after holidays. Maybe you do a fat fast in order to prepare for an extended fast. Or, you know, maybe you do a fat fast in order to start this whole journey, you know,

you don't know, you know, you're new to this, you know, how do you start? Maybe that's how you start. So maybe a fat fast is great not only for restarting, but it's also great for starting. And I do think it's a great bridge to doing an extended fast if you want to prepare for an extended fast. But what is a fat fast? Megan, I think you're the expert here. You definitely would be the best person to describe what a fat fast actually is.

Megan [00:38:18] Yeah, absolutely. I'm actually doing a fat fast now, so I'm very much like Nadia in the sense that going into a holiday and coming out of the holiday, it's stressful and I'd rather not suffer. So I control my appetite, my hunger, my cravings, by fasting. So fat fasting is where you pick either three or four fatty foods, if you need something really simple, or three or four fatty meals. So a meal would be, say, one big fatty salad with the same ingredients. There could be eleven ingredients and it doesn't matter, but you eat that same meal over and over and over again.

[00:39:01] So with fat fasting, you're looking to select a small number of foods (or meals) that you're going to eat in repetition over and over and over and over again. Why? The fat and the protein in the fat-fasting foods, that helps hormonally control your appetite. It helps you get back control of your hormones, so you get to be the dictator again; you get to say when and when you're not hungry and what you're craving. And the monotony of eating the same thing over and over again, well, that also helps as well hormonally turn off your appetite. Even think back, everybody, to your favorite childhood meal - it doesn't matter how healthy or how unhealthy it was - your favorite meal. A mindless pizza. I'll throw it out there - I love pizza! I could only eat so much pizza. And so if you've ever gone through a time, like I did in university with exams, and you're studying, you're studying 12 to 18 hours a day for days on end. Well, there are times where I lived off of pizza. But at the end of exams, oh my gosh, I wanted to eat anything else - the cardboard box the pizza came in - anything else other than that pizza! Because you can only eat the same thing over and over again till your appetite is turned off. So it doesn't matter what it is.

[00:40:29] So with fat fasting, we're looking to embrace that effect of monotony, and what it has on our appetite, but instead of feeding it, you know, a standard North American food and old carby comfort foods like pizza, feed it actually really good stuff. So what do I do? So if it is a hectic period of time, I might just pick three or four foods that I can eat over and over again. They're quick and easy, and I can cook and put in the refrigerator. So something like bacon, right? I'll cook up two pounds of bacon on one or two large cookie trays in the oven, and then I'll eat it and then it's always in the freezer. So any time that I'm hungry or experiencing a craving, I will go and eat bacon, or something like hard-boiled eggs, or chicken wings. It can really be any foods that you can tolerate that are higher in fat and are more carb-free or, if you're having fibrous foods, very low carb. So just a few of these foods or, if you're someone that does need a little bit more body, OK, that's fine, make that big salad with the eleven ingredients or make that, you know, big stir fry with those eleven ingredients. Just eat the same meal over and over and over again. And what you need to do is you need to eat anytime you feel hungry or you feel a craving.

[00:41:46] On day one of a fat fast you might feel like you're eating fifteen times, and that's OK. Let it happen naturally. Do not try to control it; let it happen naturally. Because what happens is on day 2, you're eating half as much, and day 3 you're eating a quarter, and day 4 you're actually fasting on your own accord. So this typically happens over the course of a week - you end up naturally fasting without trying to force a fast or to get into trouble, you know, by fasting before you're actually feeling physically ready to fast. So you want to strive for monotony and foods that are higher in fat. So, you know, I can't actually tolerate super fatty animal food, so something like pork belly doesn't work for me, but if it works for

you, do it. But bacon works for me, and if you don't like bacon, then have salmon. You can really pick any of these fatty foods. And if you're plant-based, sure, you can have fibrous vegetables, but use the good fats: use the olive oil, use the avocados, use the avocado oil, use the coconut fats. So you can really do this with any diet that you have. You just want to pick a few foods, or a few meals, and eat them over and over again and let your appetite turn off.

[00:43:04] There's two things where people screw up with their fat fast each and every time.

[00:43:08] 1: they don't have enough monotony in the diet - you need to make it monotonous.

[00:43:14] Number 2: you try to control the fat fast, like I am just going to do a fat fast for two days and I'll be in complete control of my appetite after this Thanksgiving Weekend that went wild. No, that's not how it works. You can't dictate it. But if you do it properly, within the span of a week you'll naturally be fasting again. So what happens is after that two days, a lot of people, they're out of their food and they're trying to push a fast and then they're not quite ready to fast yet, but they don't have the food around. And that sets them up for potentially getting into some trouble downloading one of those apps, ordering food that they're later going to regret or not as high-quality food.

[00:43:56] So that's really sort of the gist of a fat fast. I typically use fat fasts going into a holiday. Like this weekend was hectic: we had my father-in-law visiting, my husband had a crazy work schedule and a lot of it was on me, our furnace broke. Ugh, like, it just rains when it pours! And then, of course, we're having this holiday, and my husband just kept inviting everybody we know to it. So it was a fat-fasting week. And coming off of yesterday feeling a little bit rough today, well, it's gonna be a fat-fasting week this week. And that's how you use the fat fasting - to either prepare to get into a holiday, or to recover. Or like Nadia said too, there are people, like her husband and actually like my husband, who just jump into an extended fast. They kind of white knuckle it for the first day or two, and they feel just fine. And there are some people who have lower stress before a holiday. They're not hosting people from out of town or preparing a meal for twelve individuals coming over. Life is pretty easygoing and they'll do an extended fast going into a holiday, and that's perfectly OK too. But you've got to negotiate with your stress level here. If stress is low, then jump into and out of fasting, especially extended fasts if you're up for it. If stress is high, then this is a good time to introduce fat fasting. And we all know the holidays, again, are just filled with all this stress.

Nadia [00:45:24] Absolutely. So I, like Megan, I'm a big, big fan of fat fasting and I am also fat fasting today. Of course I am, because I've had a busy and, you know, insulin-raising type of weekend. The other thing that people often struggle with, of course, is this idea that one day turns into many days sometimes, even though you didn't plan it, right? But hopefully, by addressing, I think, these three main things is: how you eat, what you eat, and then how to recover from it. So that you're very quickly, and without white-knuckling it if you don't want to, getting yourself back on track and without allowing, sort of, your first October holiday to turn into this quite a few weeks or months of feeling completely out of control.

[00:46:10] So, lots of time in between holidays for you to implement these strategies like fat fasting, as a recovery plan so that you can make ways until the next holiday comes. And then, of course, not stressing too much about the next one. You will have these

strategies with you and feel a little bit more in control of how you eat, what you eat, and how to recover from it again. Right, Megan?

Megan [00:46:34] Yeah, absolutely. I mean, there is a learning curve to navigating the holidays. But you get one or two under your belt, and take these tips and tricks, and you'll start implementing the strategies, and you'll realize the holiday season is actually something you can really look forward to, get excited about, and enjoy, you know? It's, we always talk about changing it up. Everyone, whether it's Jason at a conference stage and people asking the question, or myself or Nadia in the Community, or any of our team members in our Fasting Method Community, people want to know how to optimize their results or how to get out of a plateau - one of these two scenarios. And it's change it up, absolutely change it up. So this weekend - ooh wee - we enjoyed, I enjoyed my dinner last night. I change it up and today I'm changing it up with fat fasting, and in another day or two, I'm going to be going back to my regular, scheduled program and I'm going to be changing it up again. And all of this, sometimes the key to actually optimizing, whether it's breaking a plateau or optimizing your fat loss, or just optimizing your maintenance solution like I'm doing, is to actually just change it up and embrace periods of more eating. So you've got to reframe it. These holidays, they're wonderful. You've got to learn these tips and tricks, you know, save the carbs for last if you're going to have them. You know, Nadia talked about not eating the carbs naked. I mean, you can be naked, but the carbs should not be naked when you're eating it! You want to dress the carbs up with fat, and protein, and fiber, and things like vinegar, when you can - those are all protective factors.

[00:48:17] So once you navigate these skills and you're feeling more comfortable, I bet you too are going to really embrace these holidays as a great way to change things up. So sometimes the answer isn't always 'fasting more', sometimes it can be eating more, but you just need to do so thoughtfully and mindfully. And we hope that these strategies we've shared today are going to help you do that.

Nadia [00:48:39] I'm reminded of our motto - progress, not perfection - right Megan? And sometimes it's the stress of thinking that, you know, you're going to crash and burn, that actually just raises your insulin a ton. And so I've got three steps to success here is: first of all decide what you want to do, organize yourself, and then just do it, OK? You'll be just fine. And again, as Megan said, get a couple of these holidays out of the way. Even if things don't go according to plan, if you have a good strategy to recover, then you will be just fine. And soon enough, at least you won't stress about, you know, crashing and burning. All right, Megan, I think this was a good one. What do you think?

Megan [00:49:19] Yeah, hopefully, we've given you all some great tools. Please let us know in the comments and, if you like this podcast, want to hear more of our strategies going into the rest of holiday season and then, of course, tackling things for success in the New Year, make sure you like and subscribe to this podcast. Thank you, everybody, for joining us today, and we'll catch you next time. Happy fasting, and happy eating during the holiday events too.

Nadia [00:49:49] Bye guys. Happy holidays to everyone.