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Megan [00:00:06] Hey, everyone, it's Megan Ramos here with my lovely co-host, Dr. Nadia Pateguana, and we're back for another Q&A episode this week. Nadia, how are you doing?

Nadia [00:00:17] I'm doing all right, Megan. Hope you're doing well. I know a lot's going on this past month. Hope we've all recovered. [laughter]

Megan [00:00:25] It has been crazy. You know, always getting back into the groove after the holidays, with flu season and COVID season and all kinds of craziness going on. But it's also been really good crazy for The Fasting Method. We just changed platforms. So at The Fasting Method we have our coaching program and we have our Community program and they've never lived on the same platform - until now. We did, sort of, the big merger, a migration, and our app is so much more cool. I'm really so proud of what we've done, and I am super excited that the coaching program lives in the app as well now. It's just going to make it so much easier for people to connect with our coaches on the go, take their meetings from anywhere. And we relaunched our coaching program with some awesome new packages, including maintenance packages. So I'm really excited.

[00:01:28] But before we get started, I want to let everyone know today is the first day of Fasting February over at The Fasting Method Community. So if you're a Community member, you get access to Fasting February. If you're a coaching client, you get access to the Community, which gives you access to Fasting February. Fasting February is the five week program that we're doing, where weekly Group Challenges help you build your fasting muscle up so you can start doing some of these longer fasts. And longer fasts for you might be 24 hours or they might be four days. So whatever your goal is.

[00:02:05] And we're having a special bonus lesson video with each week's challenge on how to eat. And we're going to be talking about all of the great things that you really actually get to add into your diet. Because we're always so focused on what you're removing from your diet, but there's actually a lot of great foods that you can start eating when you eat a real, whole-food diet. So Coach Larry is going to be doing a bonus lesson every week of the challenge and a bonus cooking demo every Tuesday. So you'll get your evening lesson on Monday, followed by a cooking demo where you can cook along with coach Larry, Tuesday evenings.

[00:02:43] So it's going to be a great challenge. Consistency with fasting is going to be the focus, and we're going to be building that fasting muscle. So head over to thefastingmethod.com.

[00:02:54] Now I've just talked a lot, but we've got some really great questions, so I'm going to stop talking. I'm going to throw it over to Nadia to answer the first question.

Nadia [00:03:03] All right, so here's question one for this week - how to break the habit of eating when fasting, especially when working at home near the fridge and while the rest of the family is eating as normal.

[00:03:16] Well, this question is near and dear to my heart, as this seems to have been all of last year for me. First of all, I always work from home, right? I have for, I don't know, four

years now since we moved to Portugal, since I left the clinics in Toronto. So I always work from home, so I'm always near food. And then all of last year and still this year and the first month of this year, my kids have been home most of the time. And so either myself or somebody else in our house is always cooking three meals a day. So there's food everywhere, there's smells and food and---and so that is my reality, it's the reality for many of you. And I don't, I'm not by any means saying it's not challenging. It is because the thought of food, the sound of food, the smell of food, the sight of food. All of these things, of course, raise your insulin, which in turn raises your appetite and your desire to eat.

[00:04:10] What I did for myself many, many, many years ago, I'm sure Megan has many things to add to this and even some science, for you science geeks. But what I did for myself, which I think really was the key to my success many, many years ago, was create this eating strategy, which I call 'plating'. And so plating is not making your plate look pretty, it's not plating your jewelry with gold or silver. Plating, as I call it, is a mindful eating technique. I think it's extremely important. And I've read up a bit more about this, I've learned a lot about this from Coach Terri, about mindful eating and how that makes a huge difference. I've heard Megan discuss it many times.

[00:04:52] But many, many years ago I realized that my biggest problem was that I grazed. I snacked, I grazed, I ate as I went, I wasn't mindful. I didn't even, and really, I never wanted a full meal. That was my biggest problem, even growing up, is I just wanted to snack and graze all the time, and that's kind of like you guys. So I kind of created this and then I wrote a blog post about it many years ago for our Community called 'Plating and Mindful Eating'. And it's a strategy that, with practice and with habit because we are animals of habit and things get easier the more that we do it, now I don't even think about it. So what this is and what I mean is, I sit down and I eat in this seated position, wherever I choose to call it my 'eating place' that particular moment and day. It's usually at a dinner table. I'm very particular about this, usually with my family, but I do eat outside of their times, many, many times and that's OK. And I'll tell you a little bit about what I do when they eat and I fast. But when I eat, I have brought everything that I want to eat around me. And sometimes I'll get up numerous times before I start eating because I thought of something. But the minute that I start eating, I eat, I eat mindfully. I put my phone away, my TV is turned off. I don't eat in my car, I don't eat at my desk, I don't eat while I'm watching TV. I don't eat from a cupboard. I don't eat from a package. I don't eat from the fridge.

[00:06:15] This is something that I-- these are rules. And I believe that we have rules for everything in life. We have rules of how we drive, how we talk to people, how we work. We also can and should have rules about eating. And I created, nobody created this for me, it's not an enforcement, there's no deprivation. It's something I created for myself and it works beautifully. So I bring everything that I want to eat around me. When I start, especially---if I'm walking around and there's something that I see that I think I want---and this has happened, today I even talked about this in a group, that I picked up and I won't mention what it was, but a specific chocolate bar that I was addicted to when I was having a bad day, I bought it and I put it in my purse because I was going to take it home and put it around my plate.

[00:06:52] That's what I call 'plating' - is whatever I decided that I'm going to eat, I don't eat it in that moment, I eat it when I am in my seated position in my eating place. And that's what I call 'plating'. I put it all either on my plate, around my plate, and I begin to eat mindfully and I eat until I'm satisfied, until I've eaten the things that I want to eat. Mind you, I also have, and Megan I know has a similar strategy that we share with people, or I

probably got it from her when we were talking about quality eating specially, is that I eat in a certain order. I first eat the real food. I first eat my animal protein, I eat my vegetables, my healthy fats first. If there's something there that I still want to eat, that's not real food or that's not one of these categories, I may eat it, especially if it's a special occasion, but at the end of the whole thing. And once I walk away, once I'm cleaning up, once I'm clearing the table, once I'm cleaning up my kids' plates, I do not eat. I'm no longer in my eating position.

[00:07:51] So sorry for the long description, but it works and it's worked for me. And the more you do it, the more practice. Now I don't crave, even when I'm cooking. I mean, I might taste something for salt, but I just, I don't eat that way anymore. I never, even when I open the fridge and I see things or, I just don't eat that way, so I don't crave that stuff. And if I ever really do feel like I want this, again, I take it and I put it on or around my plate, even if it's hours before my meal.

[00:08:17] And last, I said I was going to tell you guys what I do when my kids are eating and I'm not. In my house this is totally normal because I do eat earlier than them most of the time. I like my two early meals or I'm fasting. They're used to it because if I'm not fasting, Daddy's fasting; it's not something that confuses them. They don't really care if we're eating or not. I'm sometimes there with them. Most of the time, I would say. Except, you know, I have a weird work schedule. But if I sit there with them, I'll have my tea or I'll have my coffee or decaf coffee, depending on what time of the day. They don't care. I'm good because I've eaten. And if I haven't eaten, I'm making a choice to fast. And that's just a whole other conversation.

[00:08:53] What are you going to say about that? That was a mouthful. [laughter] Megan?

Megan [00:08:57] I think you got it [laughs], got it all in there. I started working at home part-time back in, I think, 2019 and then full time January 2020. We actually went totally online without a clinic two months before the world went into lockdown, and I definitely struggled. I follow so many of the strategies Nadia did.

[00:09:24] One thing I found that really worked for me was just to schedule in eating in my Google Calendar. So my whole life was just totally dictated by Google Calendar. I don't know what I would do if it went down. I'd probably be in trouble if it disappeared. But I actually scheduled in eating and it really makes a difference because you look at the calendar and you see it, you know, when it's happening. And if there is a day where I was intending to fast, like say through lunch, I would schedule in a walk or I would plan out the activity that I was going to do instead on those days that I would often eat.

[00:10:03] And just like Nadia said, the table or the counter, you need to have a designated eating area. And to me, that's made a world of difference. And there are some strategies that I've used over the years too, to help with that because like say we've allowed ourselves to eat on the couch while watching TV or a movie, or we've allowed ourselves to eat in the car, I will actually get like everything super deep cleaned. I'll get my car detailed, I'll get my sofa upholstery steamed or I'll take the covers off and wash them. And for me, it's clean. It's pristine. It's such a great deterrent for me if you're wanting to eat there. So those are strategies that I've used to really guide myself to the kitchen table and the dining table and that's where the eating happens for us. But it actually took me doing that. The couch needs to get steamed anyways, we have dogs [laughs], so it needs to. And even doing that, like scheduling it every couple of months, every few months because we have

dogs and they get on the furniture, that's huge. Like that always is just further motivation just to not eat that piece of meat, not eat that nut, not eat anything on those pieces of furniture. And then that really just helps me throughout the workday because the kitchen is the only eating room in the house.

[00:11:25] All right. Well, there's a bit more of a food theme to today's questions, and I'll hop on question number two here - is ketosis needed for fasting? Is eating lots of fat needed for fasting?

[00:11:38] So let's define what ketosis is. Ketosis means that we're in a fat-burning state rather than a sugar-burning state, physiologically. So we can be in a fat-burning state, either from eating dietary fats or burning off our own body fat. Now a question that Nadia, myself, our whole team at The Fasting Method's asked almost every single day is, "Do I need to be on a diet that keeps me in a fat-burning state, so that makes it easier when I'm fasting to transition into a body fat-burning state?" So there's a diet out there; it's called the ketogenic diet, and it's a very-low-carbohydrate diet that's got a moderate amount of protein, but it's very high in naturally occurring fats. Or it should be.

[00:12:29] Now I want to say this, with the popularity that's come out with the ketogenic diet, people have tried to make a lot of money off of it by creating all these fake foods with these not healthy, naturally occurring fats, and they label them 'keto' foods and you can find them at supermarkets, at Costco, you know, they're everywhere now. When we're talking about a ketogenic diet, anytime at The Fasting Method, for many of us, we're talking about real, whole foods. And these fats that we're talking about come from avocados, salmon, cod, grass-fed beef, raw butter - real, fatty, natural foods. So in general, at The Fasting Method, you know, we're fans of the ketogenic diet for individuals who have type 2 diabetes, who are really sick with metabolic syndrome, who have a lot of weight to lose. We find it to be a complementary diet for those with metabolic impairment, along with intermittent fasting.

[00:13:30] Now, with that being said, different variations of a low-carb diet that are not necessarily as strict as a ketogenic diet also work very well complementary to fasting, so long as you're eating real, whole foods and you're avoiding processed and refined fats and sugars. So someone who might be on a low-carb diet that's not necessarily keto, they might have a little bit of tubers. So a tiny bit of starchy vegetables or a little bit of berries with their meals. And that's totally cool, too, so long as they're with their meals or eating them with fat, fiber and protein and they're being consistent with their fasting.

[00:14:11] Now, do you need to be in a state of fat burning from your diet prior to being in a fasted state? I will say that, if you can do it, it can make the transition to fasting a bit more smooth. Absolutely. So if your body's already gotten used to fueling off of dietary fat, it will help your system acclimate to fueling off of body fat better. But is there still a curve for someone who is starting fasting? Absolutely. Is there still the risk for some side effects when someone starts fasting? Absolutely. It's still all there. It might be minimized, you might avoid some things, but overall you should find it mildly easier.

[00:15:00] Now, Jason and I, when we had our clinic in Toronto, there were a lot of patients that couldn't do any variation of a low-carb diet for really kind of crazy reasons that were all very valid reasons, but there are certain circumstances where people just don't have the accessibility. Or we have had patients who lived in households with several other family members and finances were tough and they had to eat what the family was eating. We've

had patients who had personal support workers that would do the grocery shopping and cooking for them, and they were on very limited budgets. So the foods were what they were in certain circumstances. And these patients, they all fasted just fine. They had maybe a slightly more difficult time onboarding with the fasting, had to be a little bit more diligent with electrolytes, but they did just fine. And usually after about a month, the fasting was as easy for the people that were not on a ketogenic diet, so they weren't fat burning prior to starting their fast, than those who were. So after the first month, everybody kind of leveled out.

[00:16:15] And even myself, oh my gosh, like, I went from eating junk food 10 times a day to trying to eat it once a day, to once a week, to once every two weeks. And there was plenty of times in between that I failed. And I had to sort of reset with my once a week or once a month, you know, goals, whichever ones those were. And often, at the start of my journey, my weekends were what they were. It was tough. It was so much easier to not eat than to try to navigate my diet. I didn't realize how many deeply-rooted issues I had, like emotional issues where I depended on food to help me through those issues. Gosh, like it was just a really big journey with my diet. I would say it took me a good four years to getting my diet to where I wanted to be all of the time with a really healthy relationship towards foods. And even then, I still have to be mindful of it. I'll get into a rage, you know, on a bad day, and I'll want something like pizza, but now I can much easier say, "You're going to regret that. That's not helping you." And I can move past it and find solace in something else, like a bath, a walk, nature, or sometimes in bacon [laughs], or a nice steak. But the food's a process and I was still able to fast and lose tons of weight and reverse disease in six months while I was still working on the food.

[00:17:46] So what I'm trying to say to you is, if your diet is a journey and you're struggling with it, don't postpone fasting. Start today. Follow all of the same advice: drinking water, taking some electrolytes, salt, magnesium, and being active. All of the same things because you're still likely to experience those very similar symptoms if you're on a fat-burning diet. It's just maybe a little bit shorter lived. But just hang in there. Start today. Don't postpone it until the diet is perfect because, you know, you're going to have the same side effects and it's going to take the same amount of time to acclimate to fasting anyways. So keep working on the diet, hang in there and it will get better with time.

[00:18:32] And if you're someone who does eat a ketogenic diet and wants to start fasting, yeah, absolutely. Again, just be diligent with your sodium, your magnesium, and that will help ease the transition into doing more intensive fasting.

[00:18:45] Anything else, Nadia?

Nadia [00:18:47] I'm so glad you took this one, although I'm going to pass the third one on to you as well for you to start. I'll take the fourth one. But there's so many layers to this. I'm so glad that you took it, but I do have a few things to add. Very, very similar to you.

[00:19:01] I myself did not want to do a ketogenic diet, for probably similar reasons that many people don't when they look into it. But in my journey many, many years ago, so almost eight years ago now, I did switch to a ketogenic diet. And at the time it was a real-food ketogenic diet because once I started introducing all the fake keto things, I realized that it derailed me. But the reason why I did it, it was more of a healing journey. And I didn't know if I was going to do it long-term or not, it just was what I needed at that time. I did try other things, many things. I tried many diets. And at that point, I did need

some healing. I needed some help and some therapy because even though, back in the day, weight wasn't my main concern, and eventually after the two kids and the PCOS, my insulin resistance went up so high I had hypertension, and I was overweight, and pre-diabetic, higher blood sugars.

[00:19:50] And so I tried a few things. I tried the paleo diet, which was actually the one I wanted to do. It's a liberal, I guess, lower-carb-type diet, and I wanted that; it looked so much better. It had fruit and it had root vegetables and some people have dairy, some don't. And so I tried it, but what I found is that, at that particular state of health, at that level of insulin resistance, I was craving and grazing. And so fasting was out of the question. And I knew that my next step had to be some type of fasting, at least TRE (time restricted eating) and having full meals and no snacks because snacking was my big problem to begin with, as I mentioned earlier. You know, I never had a full meal in my life really until my 30s.

[00:20:31] And so I try the keto diet. It was so simple, repetitive, kind of like when we talk about fat fasting, that's how I did my keto diet. I kept it simple. I kept it repetitive. And what it did for me is it made me feel satiated and satisfied for the first time in my life, and I stopped craving, which is really my biggest issue. And so as long as I stayed keto, and by that I mean a low-insulin, real food, and I ate those foods, you know, pretty, quote-unquote, 'boring', but very rich, nourishing and satisfying foods. I loved it. I liked steak for the first time in my life. I liked fish for the first time in my life. I always liked salads, so that was never an issue for me. And I stopped eating the other things, at least for a while. Then I was able to fast. I wasn't able to fast before then. And this is one of the questions today. Things have changed quite a bit since then.

[00:21:23] But when Jason Fung and I wrote the PCOS plan, we made the decision to actually remove the ketogenic diet, the keto diet, and we explained the term keto, from our book. And it's for the exact same reasons that Megan mentioned, it's not that I am for or against a ketogenic diet, I do think it's quite helpful. I also think, like Megan said, that you can fast and can have great success, even if you're not following a ketogenic diet, so long as you're choosing real foods.

[00:21:48] I mean, those that aren't choosing real foods and are fasting with processed diets, they're the white knucklers. They're just fighting a lot of symptoms that some of you might not be able to fight in order to fast. And some people can do it, and some people don't have or don't feel that dehydration, that severe drop from going from high insulin to low insulin. I feel it immediately. I get nauseous, I get sick. So it just does not work for me. So if it works for you, that's great. My recommendation is always going to be real food. If you're struggling with fasting, I do recommend that you look into the different dietary options and I hope that it helps. Even if you don't want to look at it as a long term thing, take things phase by phase. And that's what has happened with me, things have changed over time. I've done what I needed to do at various times.

[00:22:35] So the next question - I can read it for you, Megan. But you're the bacon girl, so I just feel like you should take this one. I'll add anything if need be at the end, I doubt it. But question number three is, "Does bacon break a fast and stop autophagy?"

Megan [00:22:52] [laughs] Oh this question, let me tell you...

Nadia [00:22:55] This question haunts you. You get this question a bajillion times.

Megan [00:22:59] All of the time. And the reason why is because it's not a black and white answer. On the surface level it is, but if you dig a little bit deeper, it isn't.

[00:23:10] And I just want to add, I'm a relatively new resident to the state of California. We did move in December 2020, but the world was locked down and it was kind of nuts. So we're just getting out there again and I've had bacon recently, that was 100% avocado fed. I've never seen that before, but it was super good. It was crazy expensive. It was like \$25 a pound! I really admire the farming practices - it's regenerative farming. It was so good. So my husband and I said, "On special occasions." And the bacon was phenomenal. I mean, it's like going to Spain, Barcelona and eating Iberico. Like, you just can't get that in North America. It is worth the flight to Spain. So like, this stuff was very good, but like for an anniversary, or birthday, or Christmas morning, we can splurge on it. But for our budget, it does not work out on a regular basis to have that, but on holidays we'll support the good farming practices. So on that note [laughs], this avocado-fed bacon exists. I just wanted to share that because I was just so blown away, but apparently it's more common in California, here in North America.

Nadia [00:24:32] Do you see what I mean [laughter] about Megan being the bacon girl? Like, there's no way I could answer this question. [laughter] To be honest, I hardly eat bacon unless I put it on a salad or something, which is unusual. In our Community, people love and are obsessed with bacon. So go on, Megan, please.

Megan [00:24:48] Yeah. [laughs] So I'm a big fan.

[00:24:51] So on the surface level, we're talking surface level right now. Bacon does break a fast and bacon definitely stops autophagy. Absolutely. There's no question about either of those scenarios. Here's when we get deeper, digging under the surface area here. I'm doing weird hand motions that only Nadia can see [laughs], but we're digging deeper here. There is a time and a place to use it as a crutch, if you need it.

[00:25:19] This is my definition of that. Say your target is 48 hours of fasting. You've been unable to stay consistent and every day you fall short at 23 hours. You can't make it past that 24-hour mark. It's just not happening for you. You don't want to have some coffee or some tea in the afternoon with some cream because of caffeine - totally understand that. You're not someone who would have, you know, a teaspoon of butter or coconut oil - that just doesn't sit with your palate. I get it; I'm a weird texture person, so I can understand why people just wouldn't want to have a spoonful of butter. And you're looking at the fasting training wheels and you're not quite sure what to do, but you keep falling every day at 23 hours. You're getting frustrated. Your doctor is getting frustrated. You're, you know, "What do I do? Do I keep trying this fast? Why am I struggling so much?" Well, it takes a while for the body to get really efficient at burning our own fat stores, and it is OK to provide ourselves with some crutches. Just like we would have that fattier tea or fattier coffee, it is OK to provide ourselves with a little bit of fat just to help aid the process.

[00:26:36] So this is my example. Your target's 48. Your coach says that's a good protocol. It works with your lifestyle. It's going to help you with your metabolic goals. You want to come off that insulin. You want to lose that 100 pounds, but you're still struggling at the start. If that one piece of bacon at the 23-hour mark, if you eat that one piece of bacon - we eat a piece of bacon in like a few minutes, it's not like it's something that you snack on one piece of bacon for hours. So at 23 hours, if you eat that piece of bacon and that

permits you to do an additional 25 hours of fasting flawlessly and you reach your 48-hour mark, then you should absolutely freaking have that piece of bacon, because the return on investment there is huge. Sure, you might temporarily stop your fast, you're temporarily stopping autophagy, but you're pretty deep into that state anyways. Your body's going to fuel off that bacon for a bit, but shortly after fueling it, it's going to reenter in the fasted state and that's going to propel you to do an entire day's worth of fasting. Is it worth it? 100%. Just like it would be having a bit of fat in your tea or coffee to extend the lifespan. And there are people who have different---like, obviously, as Nadia's pointed out, I am a bacon connoisseur, but there's other things - you could have a slice of avocado, you could have a few olives, a fatty thing. One of our community mentors the other day, she had one cold chicken wing [laughs], but she got in an additional two days of fasting. It just helped her get by. It's usually around the 24-hour mark when people struggle, but she made it to 72 hours of fasting. That one chicken wing enabled her to not make-it-or-break-it, like she made it, and she did 48 hours of fasting.

[00:28:33] So you've really got to think of this as a crutch, and you've got to really think, "What is the benefit here? Am I getting a significant amount of fasting if I can have it?" And if you're getting another 12 hours, or longer, of fasting, then I say, absolutely, have that piece of bacon, have that few olives. If you're getting less than six hours of additional fasting, I'd probably say it's not worthwhile. Cut the fasts, have a full meal and stick to a consistent pattern. But if you're getting 12 hours, or more, of fasting, then have it.

[00:29:04] Now kudos to anyone out there who can have one piece of bacon and then continue to fast. That is not me. I can easily eat a pound of bacon. I'm like five-foot tall and [laughs] like 120 pounds, but I know many people out there that have that self-control. So you need to know you. When I've done extended fasts, there's definitely been times where I've gone for a tablespoon or a teaspoon of coconut oil. I know I'm not going to go back to that. I can definitely cap it at a teaspoon or so. And that will help me extend the life of my fast sometimes by three days, or four days, or whatnot. Whatever my goal is, I know I couldn't use bacon for that. So if it's going to be something that's way too tempting for you, then don't use it. Look for another fat source, so you have it to help you get through that window.

[00:29:53] Nadia, what could you add to that?

Nadia [00:29:55] I actually have something to add, funny enough. [laughter] That was exactly it, the last part. I always, you know, I seem to be very black and white, all or nothing, in my, the way I say things, but really it is whatever is going to work for you. But usually, things like bacon, for most people, because it's tasty, you have to figure out for yourself - is it going to be an aid, meaning you're going to have a small amount and then it's going to help you fast longer, or a hindrance? Like cream, that most people just cannot have a tiny amount. They nurse it for hours on end, they always want more because it raises your insulin a lot. Bacon has all of this combination of salty and fat, and it's just, and so if, again, if you can have just a bit and move on, then it's not any different than what I, you know, what we recommend - a fat fast, a bridge to helping you.

[00:30:44] And so, you know, is it breaking a fast, like Megan said? Yeah, it is. But so does a fat fast, and yet a lot of people have great success fat fasting for a couple of days and then they can do a super long fast. So maybe, if you try the bacon and it's not a great fasting aid for you because you end up eating a lot of it, try the next step, which is fat fast for a meal, a day, two days, which is a selection of foods that are a fast-mimicking diet. So

you're eating, but you're still helping your body lower that insulin enough to get to that low-insulin, fat-burning mode so that you can then fast longer. So it isn't all or nothing. It isn't just one thing. Figure this out for yourself. Maybe a piece of bacon is the thing that you need to fast longer. But if that one piece of bacon turns into a meal, then consider a fat fast. That's my two cents.

[00:31:36] That was awesome. [laughter]

[00:31:37] Thanks. So now I can move on to the fourth question, which I thought was awesome - which fasting protocol does Megan and Nadia follow to remain healthy and lean?

[00:31:49] Well, I thought this was going to be an easy one to answer, if you would ask me those two years ago because I was one of those textbook kind of people when it came to my journey, once I figured this out. I figured out the diet that I needed to follow, which, as I explained to you before, was the ketogenic diet. Then I figured out that intermittent fasting was the way to go. First, I became obsessed with TRE - full meals, no snacks. Once I mastered that, I learned how to do alternate-day fasting for reversal of my concerns and weight loss, and that was beautiful. Then I taught myself how to do three-day fasts, which I now call the Holy Grail, and I did those on occasion. Then eventually, I was able to do a five-day fast, which I did every three months, and I continued to do that all the way until, of course, I reached my goal. I reached my goal pretty quickly to be totally honest with you guys. This is going to sound crazy, but in three to four months, everything was down to where I wanted it to be. It was that quick. And it is that quick for a lot of people that are very, very consistent, even though I always say, and now I can say this personally, nobody's journey is ever linear. It might seem linear and very, very quick, if you're very, very consistent.

[00:33:00] But life always gets in the way. So my maintenance was also seemingly very linear. I figured out that, as Coach Terri says, I just had to learn how to, you know, dial in and what does she say? What's her...? I just had a session with her yesterday. She says, "You have to turn your dials." You know, fast a little bit more if you need to and fast a little less when you don't need to. And I figured that out for maintenance. And my maintenance journey was like six years of smooth---I had the best body composition - 21% body fat at 40 or 41. I had the best blood sugars, the best---and I was always posting about this, bragging about it all over social media and showing pictures. And so it seemed to be very linear. Then life got in the way, and I had a whole bunch of stuff happen, not going to bore you, but, you know, besides lockdown and COVID, believe it or not, we had a whole lot of other serious health issues in my house - myself, my husband, it was just chaotic. And then I realized that nobody's journey is linear, not even mine. And so maintenance turned into a 10-day stay at the hospital on I.V. for 10 days, on dextrose. I came out of the hospital with 10 extra pounds, and then I just kept piling it on because the insulin beast had taken over. And then my husband was in the hospital. And I just couldn't stop this. And he was away for seven weeks. And I couldn't, I couldn't, I was aware of what was going on, but it wasn't something I was able to stop at the time. And that was OK because that was part of my learning journey. And then over the course of the last, and I've been very open about this, I am now in my recovery and I'm happy to have this opportunity to have it happen to me personally so that I can share with people.

[00:34:40] And so, for me, what was important was to get my food in order again. I've got to go back to real food, OK? And I did, and I have, and I'm still working on it. And then

TRE, luckily, and plating, is something that I hang on to very, very strongly. But TRE and plating can only do so much when you're having three ice creams, right? And once you've had a serious health concern and medication that's spiked your insulin, you need some healing and recovery. And recovery means getting into some alternate-day fasts again and my holy grail of 72 hours. And once I'm where I need to be and, funny enough, I'm on my way. And I remember, Megan, you said this in a podcast not too long ago that when you and Angel got married, you had all these great expectations and then life got in the way. But then that gave you the opportunity. The next three months, when you went on your recovery plan, you ended up at the best possible health place. And that's where I expect myself to be. I actually expect to be even healthier and even better this time around. And smarter and hopefully have more to share with people and more empathy as well. So eventually, when I'm back to where I want to be, I expect that I will do what I used to do, which is my TRE, one meal or two meals a day, with my holy grail of 72-hours every once in a while because I like it and I think it's very healing - great for autophagy and everything else. So that's my journey.

[00:36:02] How about you, Megan?

Megan [00:36:04] Well, when I started fasting, my first two weeks were 18-hours. Then I did four weeks of three 24s. And after that initial six weeks, I tried doing three 42s and it did and didn't work for me, so I decided to give myself the flexibility of doing two 42s and a 24. And if I could do three 42s, I would. And if I ended up having a really crazy week, I would do three 24s. But those were sort of my parameters. My goal was to do two 42s and a 24. If I was sick, if I was tired, if the world was stressful, like, I just---I remember one week a family member being airlifted to a hospital, like that type of stress - that was a 24 week. There was no pressure to do 42s. But my goal, you know, 80% of the time was to do a 42 on Monday and Wednesday and a 24 on Friday. And having that flexibility on Friday to have that social meal, especially at that particular stage of my life, was just so important. And if I didn't have social plans on the Friday and I felt good, I would do a 42. And again during those crazy weeks, I'd do three 24s. And I did that for about six months, and over the course of that six-month period, I probably had maybe three or four weeks of three 24s. And likewise, I had about four weeks or so of three 42s and the majority were two 42s and a 24. Then I thought, like, I was golden.

[00:37:39] But I didn't at that point, embarrassingly enough, really understand about body comp. I liked the number I was on the scale, but I didn't feel awesome. And then I went for my first DEXA body composition scan and I was still borderline obese, even though I, the number on the scale was super awesome. But that explained why I didn't feel so well. By that point this whole sort of alternate daily stuff with fasting wasn't really working with my lifestyle. My life had changed, circumstances had changed. So I started a 72 every Sunday night, broke it Wednesday. After I broke my fast, I would do my grocery shopping. And I loved it because I knew what my social calendar was going to be Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday, so I could just buy enough food, I only had to go grocery shopping once. And I would often continue to do a 24 on Friday. And that brought me to my optimal body composition.

[00:38:35] And then from there on out, there was a lot of 16 or 24-hour fasts, Monday through Friday, for maintenance. And if I could have lunch, I would, just to keep the variation up. So if my work schedule was such that I had some downtime in the middle of the day, I would have lunch and I would have dinner. So those days I would do 16, 18 hours of fasting. And if I had a crazy workday, I wouldn't try to move the earth and the stars

and the moon. I would do a 24-hour fast. So some weeks there is a lot of 24-hours, some weeks there is a lot of 16, 18, and a lot of weeks it was mostly a mix. And then the weekends definitely vary. Sometimes they would be one meal, two meals or three meals, but we never really let eating dictate our weekends, either. So, you know, if we had a really busy weekend, then it was just OMAD. If it was not so much of a busy weekend, maybe more of a holiday weekend, we would do sort of three structured meals or two structured meals. And just that variation, I think, was so important to maintain.

[00:39:46] So I did that for the better part of four or five years until I got really, really sick in Toronto from mold toxicity before we moved to San Francisco. And once I got sick from mold toxicity, I started to do a longer fast again just especially to give my liver a chance to heal from all of the detox that I was trying to do from the environment that I was in that was so toxic. So I got back into doing some longer fasts and have fortunately recovered from my mold illness. That was about 100 times more debilitating than my metabolic illness from before. I actually didn't know if I was going to live to make it through 2020 with the mold illness, but lots of fasting, I think, really, really helped. So I went pretty heavy on it again and as a result ended up eating more dietary fat, just to kind of help off balance all of the fasting I was doing.

[00:40:42] And now I am in family planning mode. So there was this---it's hard to be in my position when people are always asking me what I'm doing for fasting and eating, and trying to keep family planning a bit of a secret. And also those of you who follow me on social media know I've been married now for several years and you're with me when I celebrate my birthdays and the time is ticking. So it's kind of hard to hide it, so I've just decided to be honest about it. So I'm doing a variation of 14 to 24 hours of fasting, depending on where I am in my cycle. Right now, you know, I'm really at a decent place with my body composition. So during the first two weeks of my cycle, you know, I'll do more 24s Monday through Friday, or more frequently OMAD days, unless I can squeeze in that lunch. Weekends are usually two meals around here. And then the second half of my cycle, after ovulation, I'm doing more 14-hour, 16-hour fasting, and that's working well for me.

[00:41:48] And since I'm happy with my body composition, this approach is really maintaining my body composition, and it's allowing me to really focus on micronutrients and getting in a diverse variety and plentiful micronutrients, which is one of the most important things you can do for preconception planning. So I'm eating things too that I don't normally eat, like salmon roe almost every day. But I'm really focusing on my nutrition, probably now more than I have at all over the last decade. But really trying not to snack, to stick to my eating windows, getting in some shorter fasts - they're super important. And during those first two weeks of the cycle, just getting in some of those 24s has been pretty helpful, just keeping all of the hormones in check. So that's my plan now. It's working really, really well for me. I don't get the facial puffiness, even though I'm eating a bit more. I don't get the bloat. A lot of good nutrition is going on, so I'm happy and I've maintained really well over the last several months.

Nadia [00:42:54] Thanks for sharing all that, Megan. That's really, really good info, especially for our young, reproductive women out there that probably have a lot of questions about this topic. So to be continued, maybe in another session?

Megan [00:43:05] Absolutely. I mean, you're a baby whisperer, so we've got to do a Hot Topic on this. [laughter].

[00:43:13] Well, thanks, everyone, for joining us for today's Q&A episode. If you have questions and would like for Nadia and I to answer them during one of these episodes, please email us at podcast@thefastingmethod.com.

[00:43:26] To learn more about what we're doing, head over to thefastingmethod.com. Check out Fasting February. We'd love to see you in the Community, and we will be back next week with another episode. So thank you, everybody, and happy fasting.

Nadia [00:43:41] Bye, everyone. This was a ton of fun. Take care.