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Megan [00:00:06] Hi, everyone. It's Megan Ramos and I'm here today for another episode of The Fasting Method podcast with my lovely co-host, Dr. Nadia Pateguana. Nadia, how are you doing today?

Nadia [00:00:17] Doing good, Megan. How about you?

Megan [00:00:19] Good. I am tired. [laughs] I need the summer to come. I need a vacation. I just got back from a few days off, but we are going on a road trip in July to Oregon just to check out where my husband went to grad school. I've never been. We have been so inspired living on the West Coast, like being more outdoors, so checking out some new parks and stuff, things I could never really quite do in the Toronto area. So I just... now I'm counting down the days. I so love what we do. I so love all the people we work with, but I think I just need a few days with my phone out of service and being in the park and connecting with nature and sleeping. I need to sleep.

Nadia [00:01:05] Yeah, well, this is, this is it. Last year, I took August off, if you remember. Was it last year or was it two years ago? I don't even remember. I think it was two years ago. And that was like my month of self-care. And I am doing that again this year. I think it was two years ago, yeah. And it's funny because, you know, Europeans, they take five weeks off a year. [laughs] We don't even know what that is. [laughter] In a row, by the way. It's not like, you know, some countries it's four weeks, other countries it's five or six. We North Americans are just crazy workaholics and that is not great. So we need to remind people that we need time for self-care, no matter what... You know, maybe the fact that you love your job actually sometimes makes you just work a little too much. I know I was, you know, my masterclass just finished, and I was, on Sunday, I was reading messages, it was the last day, reading messages, answering messages, and whatnot. And my husband came in and he was like, "Oh God," because he heard me watching videos [laughter] and he's like, "You are a workaholic." And I'm like, "Oh, leave me alone." [laughter]

Megan [00:02:08] Yeah, we need to slow things down. We've got such a disease epidemic in the United States. And something that we talk about at The Fasting Method, that maybe we're better at talking about than even doing ourselves, is that stress really undoes everything great that you do with your diet and with fasting. And I think both you and I have had certain things thrown our way in the last couple of years that really emphasize that because, you know, we'll both be so great with our diet and our TRE and fasting when we need to pull in some of those longer fasts, but we've really been sort of kicked in the rear end with stress.

[00:02:44] And to your point, so there is this medical guru, chief medical officer, of this bazillion-dollar company based in Europe, and I emailed him once in June about something. I had spoken at a conference that he had helped coordinate, and we were chatting about a particular project. I responded to an email he had sent, but I responded to it after the weekend because I had been traveling for work that weekend. And then I got an auto-reply saying, "Hi, you've emailed me but I am on vacation for three weeks and there is no way I'm going back and responding to all of these emails. So please email me again in three weeks because I'm just going to archive my inbox, essentially. Like, I'm not even going to try. Like, I am going to go on vacation. I'm not going to stress myself out about coming to work. And if it's important enough, you'll remember to email me in three weeks. And oh, here's an emergency contact, you know, just in case it is critical, but I'm not going

to respond to you. I'm not going to read this. I'm going to delete this." And I was like, wow, can you imagine anyone... [laughter]

Nadia [00:03:53] ...In North America ever doing that? You can't even get a plumber in Portugal in the entire month of August. Okay? Forget it. [laughter] And then it's like collectively the whole country takes the month off. Like, they don't even believe in... And things close, right? Things close, nobody complains, it's completely normal. It's closed. Everything's closed. August is no-work month for everyone, which is nuts.

Megan [00:04:18] Yeah, I was actually recording a podcast interview (I was a guest on someone else's podcast) and we were talking about all of the benefits of continuous glucose monitors (or CGM for short) and, you know, why we love them, in general. And I said, "You know, not only does it help shape behavior change when it comes to seeing what foods spike your glucose levels, or how you eat those foods..." and I used the example of, you know, grabbing a handful of berries on their own versus having those berries with some fat and some protein and perhaps some additional fiber. Because when you eat them on their own, you see a spike. When you eat them with those other foods, there's no change. There's barely any change. And now I never will grab a handful of berries on their own and it's really shaped my behavior change.

[00:05:03] But one of the other things that's been so powerful for me in the last couple of years and, I mean, Covid's inflicted all different types of stressors upon all of us. I'm not excluded from that, but seeing how the stress has impacted my glucose levels and, you know, now I do make that effort to meditate. Now I will step back, or roll back, from my desk and I'll do breathing exercises or go for a walk. And these are things that I've known for decades that I should be doing and just never did. But when I actually saw that reaction in my glucose levels to stress, and I'm like, "Wow, I couldn't eat better, I couldn't follow TRE better, I couldn't fast when I need to fast better. So this is so critical." And so for behavior change, CGMs are so powerful and, hopefully, in North America they'll just become more affordable and more accessible for that factor. But yeah, so everybody who's listening this ended up being a random introduction on stress. [laughter]

Nadia [00:06:03] Hot Topic. [laughter] We changed our minds. Not Q&A anymore. [laughter]

Megan [00:06:08] We'll have to come back and do a stress episode, especially coming out of the summertime, as people start... You know, a lot of people will take the end of August, take a few days here, take a few days there to get the kids ready for school or to just have a teeny, tiny break. Not like they do in Portugal, where you're from, but maybe a teeny, tiny break. And then I feel like everybody goes into that Tuesday after Labor Day a million miles per hour when we really haven't taken time off. So later this summer, we'll do a Hot Topic. We'll get a great expert and do a Hot Topic on stress.

[00:06:42] But, to Nadia's point, it is a Q&A episode, which is also one of our favorite episode types. So we definitely want to get to it because today we answer your questions about fasting and nutrition. So Nadia has got four really great questions from listeners today, and listeners can email them in to podcast@thefastingmethod.com, so Nadia and I can get to them on one of these episodes. But Nadia, do you want to kick us off with the first question today?

Nadia [00:07:09] I absolutely do. I feel like you almost guessed because one of the questions I'd like you to address in a little while is on stress hormones. So we will come

back to that because I'm sure we got people, you know, geared up. They're like, "Yeah, I want to talk more about this." Well, we will in just a bit, but let me start things off with the first question.

[00:07:27] "I know you have mentioned chia seeds in water as a way to gently break your fast. So I was wondering if I could use chia seeds as a training wheel during a fast because they give a feeling of fullness."

[00:07:40] Well, you are absolutely correct. I do recommend, and Megan, and our team, and Community, we've learned over time that chia seeds and water might be a great way to help you break your fast, especially if you're needing a little bit of help bulking up those stools. If you're getting looser stools, when you first start to break your fast for the first little while, you might find that you have some digestive concerns and that might include some loose stools. I was definitely one of these people, so I learned earlier on in my journey, with the help of, of course, Megan and other people who would experience this, that chia seeds in water (so making a chia-seed pudding, quote-unquote) was really helpful for me. So not only did I do this to break a fast, so about a half-hour before I had my first meal after breaking a fast, I ended up doing this throughout my fast because I was one of these people that had loose stools during fasts as well, not just when I broke my fast. And it didn't last forever. It's not something that I feel any longer, but at the beginning... And this makes a lot of physiological sense to me because, as my insulin started to drop each and every time that I fasted, I went into release mode. And release mode, for me, also translates into having looser stools. I am a woman, and like many women that experience loose stools, the first day of my period, that's very common for a lot of women. So again, chia seeds in water was a symptomatic sort of relief for me, both the half-hour before breaking my fast in two or three times a day to help me with the loose stools.

[00:09:14] I also learned that the chia seeds in water help me with reflux, which is something that I had previously and was also, not caused by but, triggered at the beginning of my journey when I started fasting. Also very common. And I don't get that anymore. I don't get reflux when I fast anymore, but I did. So chia seeds and water was really helpful to me.

[00:09:36] As a fasting aid, again, it's a great fasting aid or training wheel if you have loose stools, if you have acid reflux, but it also does help, especially people that feel really uncomfortable with an empty stomach. And you know if you're one of these people, some people love the feeling of hunger because it makes them feel like they're going into fat-burning mode, right? So there's a psychological thing that comes with it, especially because if you've experienced it and if you know that hunger comes in waves, it comes and goes very quickly, actually, in a few minutes. And distraction is very helpful in overcoming this. After that, when the hunger wave goes away, you have this surge of energy. And if you understand the physiology, you know, you're like, "Woo hoo! I went into fat-burning mode." So I used to have this patient that used to say this all the time. She loved the feeling of hunger because she was like, "All right, I'm going to go and burn some fat." And so, again, you might be one of those people, but you might be one of those people that actually hates that feeling of hunger. It makes you feel very uncomfortable, you know, that sort of empty tummy sort of feeling.

[00:10:40] So you're right that chia seeds in water might be really helpful because not only will it help with the reflux and with the loose stools, but it will give you that sensation of fullness. And it's also a great fasting aid because it has an insignificant insulin response, right? It's right at the base of my food pyramid. So in comparison to any other food, it has a

very insignificant sort of insulin response. So it's a great fasting aid for that reason. Any thoughts, Megan?

Megan [00:11:08] I mean, you covered so much of the basis with that. One other application of the chia seeds too... We were just talking about this morning, it came up in a chat with one of our coaches. One of her coaching clients has to take some gnarly painkillers every day. I mean, the goal is we'll lose weight, we'll reduce inflammation, and, hopefully, a lot of the pain will dissipate. But in the meantime, you don't want to be living in misery. I recently threw out my back and that pain was really awful, and I'm just so fortunate it went away. So, you know, I'm just trying to sympathize here. And so of course she can't take that medication on her fasting days on an empty stomach. So what does she do? And taking something like chia seeds - a couple of tablespoons in a glass of water, or a couple of tablespoons with a few drops of water in more of a pudding-like context - taking that and then taking those medications can enable you to take those medications in a safe way. So, of course, are you using training wheels? Yeah. But like Nadia said, it is a pretty safe thing to take. It's not going to damage the integrity of the fast.

[00:12:17] Likewise, too, you know, we have a team member who herself needed to take antibiotics for something unfortunate. Antibiotics are such a blessing and a curse. You know, they're a blessing if you truly need them. I mean, they can save lives. They're a curse if they're overprescribed and people don't take them properly. They destroy our gut microbiomes and they have complications. But in her case, you know, she really needed it and she needed to do the bulk of the course, so for sure, but she had just set herself up mentally to do a certain protocol and a routine. And I said, "Okay, you know, this is one of a couple of ways where you can take those antibiotics so it's not going to make your tummy upset or be damaging, is to add a couple of tablespoons of chia seeds or psyllium husk to your water, or make a pudding out of the chia seeds. You could have, you know, a chunk of broccoli or you could have some leafy greens and even put chia seeds on top of that as a means to get them in. It might be slightly modified in fasting, but it still really upholds the integrity of the fast, and it enables you to fast and to be consistent with your fasting. And that's really what it comes down to.

[00:13:28] So sometimes the fast does need to be sort of slightly adjusted. Sometimes you really need to have those training wheels to get through the fasts, for various reasons, and you should absolutely use them because consistency is key.

Nadia [00:13:41] All right. Do you want to take the second question there, Megan.

Megan [00:13:43] Sure. The next question says, "I do 18/6 fasts daily and a 48-hour fast each week. It took much effort to get my gut health stabilized. I have completed a couple of five-day fasts in the past, but now I'm worried about what a five-day fast does to the good guys in my gut. With no fiber coming in, how do they survive? I don't want to compromise my good gut flora, but I like the benefits of autophagy and stem cell regeneration. Please advise."

[00:14:16] So, in general, if you can do a longer fast, you probably should, periodically. With our metabolic clients who are capable, or members who are capable of doing one, you know, we'll say maybe like every couple of months. I do one seasonally - from three to five, sometimes seven days. Jason does one a year. So if you can do a longer, a bit of a longer fast, periodically, you should. There are not too many crazy benefits of going beyond a week, although some people will try periodically, but you get a lot of bang for your buck in a three to seven-day stretch as it is.

[00:14:56] Now, the thing with fasting is that it really helps kill off a lot of the nasty gut bacteria and the data goes to show that it doesn't have too much of an impact on the good gut bacteria. So I hear all of you out there. I was an antibiotic-fed baby pretty much. And then in my early twenties, I had recurrent urinary tract infections. They ended up putting me on a six-month course of Macrobid, and I suffered for years with leaky gut issues, gut dysbiosis. I mean, our gut is our second brain, it produces so much of our happy, healthy neurotransmitters like serotonin. You don't really want to have a very sick, you wouldn't want a sick brain. You wouldn't want to have a sick gut bacteria or gut health, because that's a sick second brain of yours. You want to do what you can to keep it healthy. So, so many people will fast and they'll eat well to keep their their brain health in check, to prevent dementia and Alzheimer's. We want to do the same thing with our gut health. So I completely understand. I've been admitted to the hospital with chronic constipation; it's totally unbearable and you don't want to disrupt a good thing.

[00:16:05] But when you fast, actually there's these fasting microbes that get produced and they go into your gut and they help support the good gut bacteria, but they also help get rid of some of the bad bacteria. So will you lose some of those good guys in your gut? Yes, but you're really going to be killing off the bad guys. You're going to be doing a bit of a deep clean and a lot of the good guys are not going to be affected.

[00:16:30] Now, again, you don't want to be doing extended fasts all of the time. Yes, you will occasionally hear us talk about some repeated attempts at longer fasts in very unique circumstances. But in general, people don't benefit from doing a five-day fast every single week. We actually see that be really counterproductive towards their goals and lead to all kinds of other issues, including what Nadia and I coined in 2016 as the year of fasting burnout, because everybody was just trying to do a five-day fast as their base fast protocol. And we saw issues up the kazoo with that.

[00:17:10] So you've got to remember, intermittency is kind of key for everything. A lot of women out there will know that they need to change their skincare routine with the season, or they need to change up their shampoo every so often. And, you know, you've got to apply those same principles to diet and nutrition. A lot of men and women out there will know that you've got to change up your gym routine, your workout routine, in order to keep the body thriving. And it's the same same with this. So you don't want to be trying to do extended fasts all the time, but if you can do one, you probably should. And if anything, it's going to create a better environment for good bacteria to thrive. So a periodic one is a good investment for your gut health. Anything else, Nadia?

Nadia [00:17:52] I don't have too much to add, but I do think it's a great topic and I think that this person is spot on by being concerned about their gut flora, and just finding out more and more ways to keep that healthy. It's super important to make the connections between our gut health and just our overall health. I think you're the right person to answer this question, as a researcher. I agree, of course, because of our experience. A five-day fast on occasion is really, really powerful and that extra punch that we may need for our healing journey. I just don't agree with it done, you know, as often as some people are trying to do it. But, again, regardless of whether or not you're doing five-day fasts, I think it's really important to actually learn a little bit more about gut health. And so this is a great topic. Thanks for bringing it up.

[00:18:42] Let me get to the third question. "I've been doing ADF (alternate-day fasting) for six weeks. I fast typically 36 hours, only consuming plain water, salt, and 2 to 3 cups of

black coffee on my fasting days. I am 46, have had seven pregnancies. I assume I am very insulin resistant. I am not diabetic and have no major health issues that I know of. I would need to lose 50 pounds to get back to my wedding weight. In the six weeks of ADF, I have hardly lost any weight - only a couple of pounds. What am I doing wrong? Is there something I am missing? Typically, on my eating days, I eat three meals over 12 hours, lower-carb but not keto diet, and add two tablespoons of cream to my coffee. those mornings. I mostly do not snack. I find it very hard to fast for 42 hours. Would three 42s be more effective than ADF 36-hour fasts. Does it take a while for results if perimenopausal??

[00:19:47] Okay, this is a topic near and dear to my heart because you sound like almost every woman that I work with. Okay? And I'm also in a very similar... I haven't had [laughs] seven children, but I am close to your age, also in perimenopause. And it is a time of change. So I talk about this all the time. On Mondays, I typically have a Women and Fasting Q&A series (almost every Monday except for some holidays) and one of the topics that I talk about is exactly this. Fasting for weight loss, fasting for menopausal women, and I talk about perimenopause and metabolic age and insulin resistance and all of that.

[00:20:28] It's probably true that over the years, right, and because pregnancy is a hyperinsulinemia state... And it's supposed to be a hyperinsulinemia state, right? You're growing a baby. If your balance, right, between (which is what we're trying to eventually establish) raising our insulin and dropping our insulin. If over the years you just kept adding, unknowingly, of course, more and more fuel to that fire, more and more insulin, right? And after your pregnancies, you didn't have the opportunity, for whatever reason, to sort of reset, and this does happen, right, especially because of, you know, all the things that we talk about every single week here. So what happens is that, of course, we believe and it seems, it appears, that insulin resistance and all the expressions of insulin resistance are these chronic, progressive illnesses. They get worse and worse with each pregnancy, with each year, and so on and so forth. When in fact, it's because we don't know how to lower that insulin, or we didn't know before and now we do, right?

[00:21:29] So, now you're talking because now you're saying, "Okay, fine, I am insulin resistant. I get it. I see it. It's related to my life," right? "My many years of raising insulin inadvertently and because of, you know, life and health and whatnot." So your insulin is high. Your objective and your goal is to lower that insulin, for probably many reasons, but one of them being that you want to lower your weight, right? So insulin high... As Dr. Fung would say, "If the problem is high insulin, the solution is to lower insulin." You're also spot on because you have likely heard and understood that we've experienced that the best method for continuous weight loss is this alternate-day fasting pattern. So you have an eating day followed by a fasting day and so on and so forth. That's all great, but at times we need to look at that and see, okay, what's working, what's not working, which is exactly what you're doing.

[00:22:26] I think your 36-hour fasts sound great. They're clearly working to balance out your insulin. In fact, you actually are giving us evidence of that because what you're doing right now, even though you're perimenopausal, is you're not gaining weight. So clearly you're raising your insulin and then you're dropping your insulin on your fasting days. That is great, if you were looking for a holding pattern, right, if you were looking to maintain and to stay where you're at.

[00:22:51] What many women, unfortunately, experience during perimenopause, because it's a time of serious change, we lose a lot of our hormonal advantages. What they notice, especially if they're insulin resistant, is that they gain tons of weight. That is not happening

to you. And I believe that's because your fasting days sound awesome, okay? You have fasting days of water, salt, two or three black coffees - amazing. So you're doing a great job lowering your insulin on your fasting days. I do think that what it sounds like, and I'll tell you a few hints here from what you've told us, is that on your eating days, you're probably raising your insulin a lot more often than you'd like. So although you're not raising it enough to make you gain weight, you're raising it enough to sort of counteract your fasting days, which again would be great if you're looking to maintain your weight. What you're looking to do, though, is not to maintain your weight, is to continue on your weight-loss journey.

[00:23:44] I do think that for some women, especially women around perimenopause or post-menopause, that it takes probably 4 to 6 weeks to heal that insulin resistance and even start losing weight. So please look at other measures as well, not just the scale, the number on the scale, but do some measurements. Maybe if you have a body composition scale, look at your body fat percentage. I mean, there are a lot of NSVs (non-scale victories) that we might be missing here, but it does sound to me that not only are you raising your insulin three times during that 12-hour period on your eating days, which might be okay for some, but you're also raising it probably inadvertently without realizing it. On those eating days, besides those three meals, you have that coffee with cream.

[00:24:29] My concern is not how much cream you're having, it's the fact that you're having that cream outside of those three meals. So you're raising your insulin at least a fourth time in your eating days. And you also tell us that, "I mostly don't snack," which probably means that there are days where there's a snack here and there. And there may be things that are raising your insulin inadvertently that you don't even realize. For example, if you're somebody who consumes flavored waters on your eating days or fasting days, then you're inadvertently raising insulin on those occasions outside of your meals as well. If you're somebody who chews gum, for example. So there are a few things. If you're somebody who puts sweeteners in your coffee or tea on your eating days, for example.

[00:25:14] So you may be raising your insulin, not just three and then that fourth time with your cream, but maybe even other times. And that, we have found, will not work for you to actually lose weight because what's happening is that even though you're doing a really great job at dropping that insulin on your fasting day, you're raising your insulin a bit too much, not because you're eating too much, but likely because you're eating too often on your eating days. So what you said here is, "I find it really hard to fast for 42 hours." What I think you mean to say is that you find it really hard to eat only two meals on your eating day. And I think you recognize that's probably going to be the best pattern.

[00:25:54] So, ideally, what you're looking for is this really nice pattern of two meals on your eating day and no meal on your fasting day for continuous weight loss. And that, I'm hearing you say, you're finding it hard to do so start with three, right? Start with three meals on your eating day. Try to bring not try, but bring that fourth insulin rise, which is the cream in your coffee, into your first meal, okay? You don't have to necessarily eliminate the cream. You know, you may have to readdress it at some point, but you don't have to necessarily remove it. You just have to bring it in to one of those three meals, maybe the first meal, so that you have three insulin rises during that eating day and not four or five or six, okay? That's going to be significant. Eventually, if the three become easy, you can move down to the two, right? The two meals, 5 to 7 hours apart.

[00:26:46] One really nice way to help with that transition is to address what you're eating. You're right that you don't have to eat a ketogenic diet, but maybe trying a fat fast as a

transition, as a bridge, to help you with your TRE (time-restricted eating), to help you move to three meals and eventually to two meals. That's something you can look into. And once you do that comfortably, I do find that people can have a more liberal low-carb diet and still be able to very, very easily do two meals or even one meal.

[00:27:18] I noticed this in my journey. I found that in order for me to move to two meals a day, I had to go keto. I tried paleo initially, but I just could not stop grazing and snacking. And initially I thought that was okay, right, because my focus was only on what I was eating, not how I was eating. But once I realized the role of insulin, I wanted to bring that down to two meals a day on my eating days. And I found that with a more liberal low-carb diet, it was hard, initially. But, eventually, it became easier and easier and now I can basically eat anything and I only want to eat twice a day. So really, really important that you address all of these things. What do you think about that, Megan?

Megan [00:28:01] Yeah, I don't really think I have anything to add to that, Nadia. I think that's a ton of great advice for this individual. We'd love to hear, you know, email us. If you've heard the answer and you've listened to what Nadia said and you've put it into practice, we'd love to hear how things are going with you.

[00:28:21] The next question is, "As someone recovering from post-traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD for a short, I have been taught skills and tricks to reduce cortisol and adrenaline. From a recent podcast, I learned that fasting increases these hormones - helpful for a fasting body, although I'm now concerned that it may create effects that counter what I'm trying to achieve to reduce the PTSD symptoms. Have you had patients with a similar concern? Is there perhaps a difference in duration, or other helpful hormones released at the same time, to differentiate it from perpetually-elevated stress hormones after PTSD?"

[00:29:03] All right. So let's get down to the nitty-gritty here when it comes to it. One of the benefits of fasting, and really sort of one of the biggest differentiators between fasting and calorie restriction diets, is that fasting does activate our sympathetic nervous system, which is that flight-or-fight nervous system. And when it activates this nervous system, it produces these counter-regulatory hormones, which this listener has noted a couple of. So we produce human growth hormone when we're fasting, which is phenomenal because as we get older, we really don't produce it very much, especially since we primarily will produce it during our sleep. And our sleep definitely becomes disturbed as we get older, and stress, and all of the crazy things life throws at us. So you get this human growth hormone and that helps protect our lean mass as well, which is important. And human growth hormone also helps us burn body fat.

[00:30:01] But we also get the production of noradrenaline. Noradrenaline helps us maintain our resting metabolic rate when we're fasting and it helps us liberate body fat. So by liberating the body fat, we're able to really protect our resting metabolic rate. And big credit there goes to noradrenaline.

[00:30:18] Now, cortisol is produced when you are fasting, so gluconeogenesis can occur in the liver. Cortisol is kind of the activating factor that enables that to be possible. And when we are fasting, we do want gluconeogenesis to occur. So what that is, is amino acids, excess amino acids, being converted to glucose. Very little glucose is produced because when we're in a fasted state, very little glucose is needed for fuel. But our body will provide us with glucose for the very few parts of our body, a few parts of our brain that do require glucose when food is unavailable. So our body's got the magic to make that

happen and cortisol is a big driving factor enabling that to happen. So you want some cortisol being produced when you're in a fasted state.

[00:31:08] But what's the deal with this? It doesn't sound stressful and, sure, if you're someone out there with not a strong physiological or biological background, this can sound like maybe this is a lot of stress on the body, but it's not. Fasting is actually a minimal stressor on the body if done at the right time and in the right sort of scenario. So the scenario's, you know, you're not malnourished, you don't have tons of nutrient deficiencies, you don't have any body fat, you're not struggling with conditions like anorexia or bulimia.

[00:31:43] So typically, under more normal circumstances, fasting is a mild stressor on the body. And you can think of it like this. Say you're going to the gym and you're trying to develop muscle mass. You know, if you're doing bicep curls with one-pound dumbbells, that you're not stressing your muscles out at all. And we know we need to stress our muscles out in order for our muscles to grow, but there's a balance there that you have to strike. So having one-pound dumbbells isn't going to help you grow your bicep muscles. But when you're new to the gym, trying to do bicep curls with 100-pound dumbbells is likely going to be near impossible and injure you if you even try, if you're even capable of trying. So that's too much stress.

[00:32:27] But maybe you start with like 10 or 15-pound dumbbells and you can do maybe like 5 to 10 reps at 10 or 15 pounds before you get tired. It's stressful, you're getting tired, you know, at between 5 to 10 reps, but you're not injuring yourself, right? You can shake it off after a little bit of a break and you can go do another set or two, or go on with your daily activities and you might feel a little bit of muscle soreness, but you know that that's good stress.

[00:32:55] So we call a small amount of good stress, like those 15 or 10-pound dumbbells on our muscles, we call that hormesis in physiology. So a little bit of stress actually helps us grow, be resilient, and thrive as a species. If we're not exposed to any stress, we're going to wallow away. It is just as detrimental as being exposed to too much stress. So we need this mild stressor to help us thrive, and that really is what fasting does.

[00:33:26] But you've got to look at the bigger picture of the individual. So, someone who's experiencing so much stress, it's like they've spent years lifting those 100-pound dumbbells when they could barely lift 10-pound dumbbells and it's really damaged their system. Is fasting good for them or is it not good for them? And this really needs to be looked at on a case-by-case basis.

[00:33:50] And then also something that I look for when I'm working with an individual is sort of where are they in that stress journey? Like, is this a new stress? Is it very acute? Has it totally ripped the rug out from under them and they've got, you know, ten balls juggling in the air and they're not quite sure how they're going to land? That's not a good time to do fasting, fasting. It's a good time to do TRE. It's a good time to do something like fat fasting. It's not a good time to try to do a week of two 48s or three 42s.

[00:34:22] You know, life can be stressful. There can be certain things. You might be the caregiver to someone. When that person becomes unwell and you become a caregiver to them, it's like having ten balls being thrown in the air where you don't know where they're going to land, but, eventually, you're going to get into a routine. And sure, being that person's caregiver might be stressful. You've got into a routine, you've acclimated, the

initial period of trauma has somewhat settled. And at that point, you know, fasting is not going to be massively stressful for that system.

[00:34:54] So you've got to look at it. You know, is this a new issue, a new trauma? Am I working through some really chaotic things right now? Then let's fast, let's focus on nutrition, let's focus on TRE, all of that stuff. Or is this more sort of chronic stuff? And, you know, do I have it kind of under control and I'm still working on modalities to help? I can probably get in some fasting there.

[00:35:20] So it just sort of depends, too, on the state of the stressor. So if you are really struggling with a lot of symptoms of PTSD... And I'll tell you, I have got issues with PTSD as well, but I'm not in that really sort of acute phase of having panic attacks, or anxiety attacks, or not sleeping for days. I'm not really being triggered by a lot anymore on a day-to-day basis. I have gotten my system to a fairly regulated place. I fast, you know, and I do my TRE. I do what I need to do and I'm fine. But if you are being triggered, if you are still struggling with more frequent anxiety or panic attacks, then maybe it's time for you just to focus on TRE, good eating habits, maybe doing some fat fasting, cycling it in.

[00:36:12] Or keeping the fasts shorter. You know, there's tons of great literature out there that show great health benefits, even doing 14-hour fasts. So they might not melt away the pounds, they might not dump the insulin that you're taking. Dr. Dawn Lemanne - we lost her from the Bay Area. She was in Berkeley, she's now in Oregon State. And the presentations she's given at Low Carb Breckenridge and Low Carb Denver. You know, she'll do 36, 42, 48, 72-hour fasts with her cancer patients (she's an oncologist), but she'll even say even just doing 14 hours, especially for women, can be so preventative against certain metabolic cancers like metabolic-related breast cancer, for example. So even doing some short fasts can help with some disease prevention and even doing, you know, 16 and 18-hour fasts when you feel up to it, can have disease-prevention, disease-fighting benefits.

[00:37:10] So, you know, you've got to take a look at each situation a little bit differently. And you can always try to do a bit of fasting. Start off slow, introduce it and just sort of see how your body responds. A sign that it's not responding too well is, you know, really sort of crashing between 3 and 5 o'clock in the afternoon. Exhausted, need to go to bed, need to lay down, want to eat anything. Something sweet that is usually not something you crave, you would eat that. You're just so desperate to eat, so desperate to eat carbs or to eat sugar at that time of day. This may be a sign that your body is under a bit of stress and you should be focusing on TRE.

[00:37:50] Now, we do work a lot in our Community about that also being an issue of some salt loss, electrolyte loss. We'll talk about early-morning salting and trying to reduce that afternoon hunger, and some stress management. But you could always give it a try. Start off slowly, you know -16, 18, 24s. See how you do and then cut out the fasting if it just proves to be too much for your system. Focus on TRE with maybe some fat fasting.

[00:38:18] Nadia, anything you want to add to that?

Nadia [00:38:21] Well, only that it's official. I think we need a Hot Topic on stress hormones and fasting. [laughter] So let's just make a note of that. I don't have, I almost feel like you somehow managed to almost have a whole Hot Topic episode in that answer, so thank you. But no, I don't have anything to add. I think this is a very good question. I think it's something that people deal with all the time. It's definitely, there's some confusion

around this topic. Can you fast if you're somebody who's type A? Can you fast if you're somebody who has, you know, any cortisol concerns? How do you even know if you have cortisol concerns? Does coffee create a cortisol response in me, etc., etc.? There are so many of these types of questions. I definitely think we need a Hot Topic.

Megan [00:39:04] [laughs] Yeah, we're definitely going to have to have a Hot Topic episode on stress. I think that's a big takeaway for Nadia and I [laughs] during this episode. But Nadia, thank you and thank you to everybody who emailed us in these great questions, we so appreciate it.

[00:39:21] Again, if you want to reach out to us and have us answer your questions, send them in to podcast@thefastingmethod.com

[00:39:29] You can always find Nadia and I over at thefastingmethod.com as well.

Nadia [00:39:31] Bye, everyone.

Megan [00:39:35] Bye, and happy fasting.