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Megan [00:00:06] Before we get started with today's episode, I would like to quickly read you our podcast disclaimer.

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[00:01:13] All right. And now we'll get started with today's episode.

[00:01:19] Hi everyone. It's Megan Ramos here with another episode of The Fasting Method podcast. Today, I'm joined by my lovely co-host, Dr. Terri Lance, and we are going to be discussing holidays. So how to talk to your family and friends about the way you eat during the holiday season. Good morning, Terri. How are you doing today?

Terri [00:01:42] I'm good, Megan. Good to be here. Good to get to talk about this because I know it's the topic on everyone's mind right now.

Megan [00:01:50] I feel like so many people in our Community, previously, they always looked forward to the holidays and now there's a lot of dread going into the holidays. And I think what we're going to try to empower people with today is knowledge for them to take action and really learn how to enjoy those holidays again.

[00:02:08] I know I went through that same learning curve myself. There were a couple of October-through-January seasons where I really struggled and didn't look forward to it, but once you learn some strategies, you can really go into them, you know, with a lot of excitement again. So, everybody, we want to bring that excitement back to you today.

Terri [00:02:29] That's right. I think the first part I'm hearing people already starting to talk about is they're planning for the holidays. Who's going to be meeting? Where are they traveling to the family's house? Who's going to be cooking or are they eating out or what's going to be in the meal? And I think this is an important part where the conversation really begins - to be able to talk about what foods people want available and advocating for yourself so that you have some food that works well for you. Not just, you know, which foods can I skip that everyone else is eating, but do I have foods there that make this holiday fulfilling for me?

Megan [00:03:08] Previously, I was in Toronto and for a long time my household was kind of like Switzerland amongst some family drama, so I was the one that hosted everything. Every major holiday was held at my house and I could control what was being served, and that felt really great. And then I moved to California. We've got no family here and last year we didn't have visitors because of COVID. People weren't traveling from Canada, the

border was closed, and we didn't want my in-laws traveling across the country and risking getting sick at the time.

[00:03:46] So we had the opportunity to go to friends' homes for the holidays. My holidays have been such under my micro-management for so long that it's really caused quite a bit of panic, but I reached out and I said, "Hey, what can I bring?" And the family that we were mostly joining said, "We have loved your Brussels sprouts," which are one of my favorite foods in the world. That's why they've eaten them so much because they're something that I love to cook and I love to eat. So I was able to bring those for Thanksgiving and Christmas last year and I could really lean into them. I made a ton so I knew I could really indulge in them if there weren't many other options.

[00:04:31] But, Terri, I'm actually starting to feel like some of our Community here. What are strategies that you recommend to people that don't have this control and are nervous about having these conversations with their friends or their family who they're going to be joining for the holidays?

Terri [00:04:50] I think a couple of things to really start that out, to think about the more you simplify it and the less tense you are about it, the less tension that can be activated in the other people. So if maybe you ask, "Well, you know what are we planning to have for the meal?" And maybe the other person lists a few items and you say, "Okay, I'm also thinking of this," and that you just add your items in there, rather than saying things like, "Oh, I can't eat that." "Oh, I don't eat that." "That doesn't work for me." Let them have their dishes, if that's what's really important to them, and you start suggesting some things you want to have also. And maybe you do a little negotiating, "Oh, we don't need two of those. How about if I make that and then you can make the other thing?"

[00:05:34] I (similar to what you did when you went to a friend's house a few years ago) went to some friends' home for Thanksgiving. I knew the protein source was going to be pretty safe. I knew that was going to cross all types of eating, for me at least, so I decided I was going to take some food. I took a little bit of an appetizer - something I knew I could eat as people started getting into the munchies that I don't eat. I brought a side dish and I brought a dessert because, to me, that's one of those days where I do allow myself a dessert, but I have some parameters around what that looks like. So I knew I was safe on *all* levels with that meal. I had something to munch on as we were getting ready, I had the meal (the protein), I had a side, and I had dessert.

[00:06:22] So planning, offering to bring things, or if you're traveling and going to be staying with people, offer you'll pick up those groceries, you'll make these dishes. So offering to contribute often takes off some of the guilt or obligation feeling that people have that they should just eat what someone else has made.

Megan [00:06:45] I read about individuals that feel frantic about it and I say to them, "You know, remember a time that you've hosted a holiday? You're kind of ready to rip out your hair, right?" You always think you're going to have more time, but then life happens and it's always rush, rush, rush and, usually, the person hosting is experiencing quite a bit of stress.

[00:07:07] So I think what you've said that's really great, and for people to listen to, like, it's not just helping yourself, you're helping the family and friends that you're going to be there with by saying, "Hey, I know the holidays get hectic, how can I help?"

[00:07:23] And that's how I approached it last year with our friends. "I know it's crazy. I know you guys just had a family visiting. You're traveling. How can I help? What can I bring?" And they were so grateful for the help. We're actually hosting Thanksgiving this year, my in-laws are traveling, and it's going to be a busy week and even I'm feeling a little overwhelmed. So we have some local friends coming and there are certain things that I know that they could perhaps bring, like charcuterie and that type of stuff. So I was grateful for them to ask because I know that will be a particularly hectic week with the visitors coming in. It's not a regular you just see your family and they go back to their home. They're traveling across the country and there's a week of activities going on. So people appreciate that.

[00:08:11] Something you said that I think so many people in our Community, too, get into which does not necessarily help them in trying to explain this with family (or not that it doesn't help them, but it can create tension and confusion, not understanding) is when they say, "No, no, no," to certain foods or, "I don't eat this, I don't eat that."

[00:08:36] Something else that I find can cause a lot of conflict is if you label things. I tell people, you know, when you're talking to those who just don't understand about what it is that you're doing, whether it's your doctor, your specialists, your aunt, your mother, you don't need to go into great details and throw all these labels on things. Just explain what you're doing. "Hey, I've cut out junk food. I'm not eating fast food. I'm trying to watch my sugar intake." You know, these are things that you can talk about that are eliminating.

[00:09:13] One thing that I do is say, "Yeah, I eat tons of cooked leafy greens and vegetables." And I'll start listing off the vegetables that I'll have. And, "I eat grass-fed beef and fish and lamb and good quality pork. I love eggs, I love avocados, I love real butter." And you start listing all of these great things that you *can* have. And sure, you're essentially describing a version of a Paleo diet on a more moderate to low-carb spectrum, depending on where your diet sits, but you're not putting a label on it that can make people uncomfortable and cause some conflict.

[00:09:52] So I love that you said, you know, we don't have to go through this list of, you know, what we're *not* having, but we can really focus on all of the great things that we *do* have. I'll encourage people to talk to their doctors about this. You know, don't label it, just say what you're doing from a nutritional standpoint. You're eating lots of olive oil. You're eating, you know, good quality eggs. You're eating avocados. You're doing these great things. And every time they take that approach, they come back and they say their doctor praised them for their diet rather than gave them grief for doing something like a ketogenic diet.

Terri [00:10:26] That's right. Almost any time someone chooses one of the labels, it automatically brings up some red flags from someone. And so sticking to the healthy way of describing it, the more you sound positive about it. If you say things like, "Hmm, yeah, this year, I don't get to eat that," and, "Yeah, I don't really enjoy food anymore." Of course, your friends and family are going to be concerned. They're going to convince you that it's okay, "Go ahead, splurge," versus, "Oh, my gosh, I brought these Brussels sprouts because this is my favorite recipe. I eat these a couple of times a week, they're so good." Let them hear how much you enjoy eating food that you now do differently so that they don't hear it as restrictive or negative, and also so they don't feel judged by it.

[00:11:17] I have caught myself a number of times. I'm learning slowly, but not to say things like, "Oh, I don't eat that. That's bad for you." [laughter] Now, that's not going to be a

great way to win friends and influence people! So I might just say, "Oh, that looks gorgeous. Oh my gosh, I don't do well with that so I'm going to pass, but you enjoy it." Give them something positive even though you've passed on it, rather than telling them how bad that ingredient is, or what that's going to do to their cholesterol level or their insulin level, or something. It's probably not the time that they're going to be open to hearing that.

Megan [00:11:54] That brings up a really good point. Every holiday season, we have somebody who really tries not to open the can of worms with their family members or their friends, and they'll say, "Okay, have my pumpkin pie." "Oh, you know, I'm really full from the dinner that we just had and I don't want to do that." You know, "My doctor wants me to watch my blood sugar levels and I just ate a lot." You know, not trying to necessarily say negative things, but then they deal with these individuals in their family that will try to make them feel bad. And we know that this comes more from a place of insecurity in the friend or family member, but every year I hear people come back and say, you know, "I wouldn't eat the pie," or, "I wouldn't eat this dessert," you know, "I drew a line in the sand for what I was willing to have and they said I was ruining their holidays."

[00:12:51] Last year we had a whole bunch of people where family baking was an issue (and maybe that's another discussion that we can have during this podcast) and they were left out of these family events because their families knew that they didn't partake in certain food practices. So what do you say to those members in the fasting space Community where they deal with some of these negative personalities?

Terri [00:13:20] It's one of those complicated things and I think it depends a lot on your personal style and your relationship with these people. How confrontational do you want to be? How much do you want to kind of accommodate and smooth things out? I might say something like, "Oh, Aunt Sue, that is so sweet of you that you made this and you really want me to enjoy it. I want to let you know I wouldn't be able to actually enjoy it based on what I know for me and my health, but I'm so happy to be here with you and getting to experience this holiday with you. I don't need to eat it to have fun." Helping her to see your holiday isn't ruined because you're eating this way and highlight the positive of being there together. It's not you eating her pumpkin pie that's going to make or break her holiday. And then the harder reality about that is if that really is what's going to break her holiday, that's for her to work on, not for you to sacrifice yourself for.

Megan [00:14:25] I always feel so bad hearing some of the stories that we hear every year. It sounds like there's a lot of people out there that are struggling with how they're feeling about themselves and their health and their relationship with food. And they can really, you know, perhaps they don't know what to do and then they see someone doing something and they don't understand it and it can sometimes cause a negative reaction. I really encourage people... They get so excited about fasting and seeing real results and learning the powers of not snacking, you know, even being more critical than doing alternate-daily fasting, for example, or eating a certain way, and they just want to share, share, share. In the holidays that can often cause a lot of conflict. I always tell people, you know, you don't want to get yourself in that situation when there's just so many people out there that are in a negative headspace about their own health. And then it's just best to keep leading by example, you know? Describe what you're doing without labeling it. And then once they, when they ask you, when they come to you (a holiday or not), then open up and share. But otherwise, you know, don't dedicate your Thanksgiving and your Christmas and New Year's to educating people on fasting and eating. I've never seen it go well. Not once.

Terri [00:15:52] I mean, really, imagine it. If you were in the other person's shoes and you've just piled up your plate with every carb-rich food possible. You're eyeing the dessert. And here's someone saying that eating those foods is causing cardiovascular disease, is causing insulin, is causing inflammation, no wonder our nation is so sick. I can't feel good about my plate now, so I've got to distance from you instead. I've got to tell you you're wrong and I've got to get irritated with you versus let them do what they're going to do and you focus on you, taking good care of your body during that time. And then, like you said, if they're actually interested in learning more about it, there's another time when you could have that conversation.

Megan [00:16:38] I know we had Canadian Thanksgiving earlier, and there's a lot of people in our Community that celebrate it. And they really, really struggled, you know, with that sister-in-law who was just told they needed insulin, with that brother-in-law who showed up and said their A1C was 13 and, you know, they're just eating the regular, traditional Thanksgiving foods. In Canada and the US, it's all the same - football, sweet-potato casserole, pumpkin pie. It is the same in both countries. They just wanna like swoop in and lecture them and help them and show them the light. And I think so many of us have been put in the position where we're told we should be doing something and we don't understand it. We end up putting up barriers and not wanting to engage in these conversations, and it turns hostile.

[00:17:32] I have never taken that approach with my family. I've gone through this myself. You have to be ready for it. You have to be ready for the change. You have to be willing to make these changes and you have to be inspired, you know, to want to do so. You have to have a strong why as to why you're doing so. There's a few things that need to align, you know, for someone to want to make that change. So I think the best thing that all of you out there can do for your loved ones who are struggling is show up and lead by example. Show people that it is possible to eat a certain way and to get certain health results and sustain those healthy results, and they'll come back to you.

[00:18:14] So with my friends and with my family, I've never, ever preached at anybody, but now most of my family eats the way that I do. And it's just so funny. You know, when I first started this way of eating, my dad was ready to get power of attorney over me. He thought I had an eating disorder. Flash forwards three years later and the office manager in the clinic's coming to me with his referral from his doctor. He wants to be a patient in the clinic. Terri, you've worked with my aunt. [laughter] Like, I've had cousins help out over the years and they're just so, so into this, which has been great. And a lot of that is because they've been able to see me do it and sustain it and I've never pressured them. So they feel like I'm a resource that they can come to and they can ask. It's a safe space. And the same thing with girlfriends or my friend group. So many of them fast now and so many of them eat differently now or strive to eat differently. It can be difficult for some of them with little kids, but they're trying to. I've never talked to them about it. I never preached. And then we were at a bachelorette party and we went to an Italian restaurant, and someone suggested that I order first. So I did. 8 out of 12 ordered the exact same thing that I did [laughter] and I got bombarded with messages.

[00:19:38] So I really think the most powerful thing that you can do this time of year, or any time of year, is just truly lead by example and keep yourself as a safe space and a safe resource for when people do see how amazing you're doing. They'll come to you for a resource, but you don't have to turn your Thanksgiving into a conflict, battle zone situation trying to educate people.

Terri [00:20:01] That's right. And I think not giving in or sacrificing your own well-being to make someone else comfortable, even when it's done lovingly or if it's done kind of forcefully if someone's kind of pushing some food on you, eventually, if they don't back off a little bit, I might just say, you know, "Aunt Betsy, that looks so beautiful, but if I eat that, I'm going to be in the bathroom for a couple of hours. I don't want to spend my day like that." Aunt Betsy's not going to want that for you. She's going to say, "Oh, honey, don't... Oh, you're done. Go away!" [laughs]

[00:20:36] So really not taking ownership of making everyone else comfortable with what you're doing. There are ways to just set those boundaries without having to sacrifice yourself. I think a lot of us need to start practicing that because we are used to just focusing on pleasing everyone. "Well, I ate a second piece of pie because my other aunt recommended I try that one too." It's okay to have your boundaries and set your limits, and to be kind about it and be loving.

Megan [00:21:06] So Terri, when we were getting ready for today's podcast and just running through our talking points, you brought up something that I hadn't thought about, haven't thought about in a while. And I don't even know if in my own life I have a concrete strategy for this, I just seem to get rid of it as I'm given it. But you brought up the concept of receiving certain foods as gifts. What do you do about that?

Terri [00:21:33] I think this is a really important thing for people to feel prepared for because it does happen this time of year. People bake things, make things, you know, order you a delivery service from some kind of food thing that's maybe not something that fits your approach to eating anymore. And people really feel kind of torn. How do I show my gratitude without harming myself or sacrificing my values or my decision? And I think first to show your gratitude. Some people can accept it and talk about how lovely it is. "I'm going to save it. I'm so full right now, but I'm going to have some later," and then they get rid of it once they're no longer in front of that person. Some people say, "Look, I don't feel comfortable throwing away food." I know we talked a little bit about this with Halloween candy, but, you know, to think about, do you want to donate it somewhere? Do you want to drop it off somewhere and let someone else enjoy it? That's fine if that helps you not feel bad about it. But I always remind people if something is not healthy for you, it's going to end up being kind of junk or trash either way, even though it was made with love. So you can either throw it in the trash or give it away, or you can eat it and it's going to become trash on your body. So, you know, just kind of thinking about that. Are you more willing to put it in the garbage can or are you willing to wear it on your body and in your cardiovascular system? I think the important thing is, just like if someone gave you a really ugly sweater, you would say, "Oh, my gosh, how did you know?" [laughter] Wow, that is so cool. Thank you." And then you would bury it or get rid of it as soon as you can, but you would accept it graciously.

[00:23:31] And I think, for many of us, the accepting it graciously isn't the most challenging part of this. The 'what do I do with it to get rid of it?' is the hard part. So allowing yourself to get more comfortable with throwing away food that doesn't fit your way of eating or that is excessive for you. Learning to get comfortable with throwing it away. Getting rid of it. If you can donate it or share it with a neighbor or give it to someone else who may enjoy it.

[00:24:00] Now, some of us may say, "Oh, I don't feel comfortable doing that. If I know that it's harmful for me, why would I give it to my neighbor?" Great. Then you're probably one step closer to being able to throw it in the can. But accept it. You know, be gracious to the person who took the effort to make it or to get it for you.

[00:24:19] And then the other thing I always recommend, as you get more clear on this for yourself in the future, let people know ahead of time so they don't make you something. So that, let's say, you know one of your relatives or friends does a big cookie exchange and then they share all their cookies with all of the people they're close to. To let them know, "Hey, I know last year you gave me all of those cookies and they were really good. This year I'm really not eating cookies like that so I just wanted to let you know ahead of time that you can share those with someone else. And, you know, that'll be the easiest way for both you and I. I really appreciated them last year, but I just wanted to let you know I'm not eating those now." Again, wouldn't you want to know that? I'd feel bad dropping off cookies to someone who doesn't eat cookies. I would rather know and then I can give them to someone else.

[00:25:14] So when you get to that place where you can advocate and let someone know, "I'm not eating that, but I really appreciate the effort."

Megan [00:25:23] I didn't do that. Our first year doing the fasting clinic, patients were so appreciative of everything. So we started June 6th, 2012, in the clinic. And that first Christmas time I got gifted [laughs] so many cookies, cakes, chocolates from these patients. I just did not expect it. And then of course, you know, a dozen, two dozen bottles of wine. I don't really drink at all. I don't even remember the last time I had a glass of wine to be quite honest, at this point. So it was just... I was kind of overwhelmed. I was not expecting it, but I showed them a lot of gratitude because I know they were truly appreciative, but they were on autopilot, right? You know, they've got fifty people they're looking to show appreciation to at the holidays and this is just always what they've done. So going into the next holiday season, we had sort of things you can be mindful of and being mindful of gift giving. Do you want to give these foods to people who are in your family and who are trying to manage their diabetes or trying to, you know, prevent diabetes, or struggling with weight? I think a lot of the times we think that we're the only person giving them this treat. You hear people say, "Oh, it's the holidays, you can have *a* treat." Okay, but they're getting these treats from like fifty people. So that just ends up being a whole pot. So what are other things that you can gift them? Like a nice bottle of olive oil or olive oil and balsamic vinegar. Like, there are other things that you can give people. So we got together a group of patients and we had this town hall in the clinic, and we talked about other things that you can do. And I said, "So many of you come to me after the holidays concerned about these people in your family, wishing that they would come to the clinic and learn about fasting. Help them out." And then that year I got gifted like fifty bottles of olive oil [laughter] going into Christmas.

[00:27:32] But I think people want to give you something that you're going to use. So, you know, "Hey, my doctor has got me on a special diet and, you know, I'm not going to be eating any of this stuff this year." And sometimes people are going to do it anyway. I have one aunt who is a phenomenal, phenomenal baker, and she goes around and she drops off her goodies. We tend to not see her on holidays because there's just a lot of family obligations for everyone, but we know she's got her Santa Claus day and she goes around. And she knows we don't do this stuff and we don't eat this stuff, but she knows that hers are going to be better than anything else we get at this point. So we at least, we're mentally prepared for that and we just know that that is stuff that's going to go in the waste. And we let her know and she's like, "Take what you want and give away what you don't want." And I said, "Well, we waste this stuff. We throw it out." And she's like, "Well, you know, don't do that. Give it to people." And it's just you don't want to cause a fight within a family. So my husband and I, when we were in Toronto, we made a pact, "Okay,

we have one each because they're really small and then we just have to junk the rest in the composter." And that's just what we have to do because it's just not worthwhile getting into a big debate with her about.

[00:28:51] So you can accept things kindly. You know, people are stuck in their ways at certain points in their life and don't understand, and that's okay, but then you need to have a game plan on your end as to what you're going to do about that so you just don't feel endless guilt about it. You've got to come to terms with how you're going to eliminate it.

[00:29:12] And it's so funny. When we did the Halloween podcast, I think it was the first time I ever gave some semi-different advice. So I'm so used to being in Canada with public health care and not really thinking too dramatically deeply about the side effects of just giving away something, like giving away those cookies to a neighbor. And now that I'm in the US and you're just aware of the atrocious costs of health care and feeling so grateful to have a good healthcare plan through my husband, but realize not many people are in that boat. So even donating this food to certain places. Like, these people can't afford to be sick. They really can't. They don't have the luxury of diabetes. You know, they don't have treatment options for it. They can't afford anything. Insulin's over \$1,000 a month in this country. It's just wild. And they're sure as heck not going to be able to necessarily have the means to look at different resources that are outside of the traditional box. So giving it away is not helpful. So what we always try to do is give what we want to be gifted to individuals and hope that that spreads like fire and they realize that, hey, there are these other things that they can gift people.

Terri [00:30:31] I think that's a great reminder, too, especially in light of everything that goes on this time of year with health concerns and flu season. We still obviously have a virus that is affecting a lot of people and knowing that eating some of those really problematic foods compromises our ability to navigate that. Do I want to do that to my loved ones or my neighbors or my friends? And so, you know, putting that dessert in the garbage can, let the flu attack my garbage can, but I'm not going to let it attack me or my family or my neighbors. So it's a great reminder.

Megan [00:31:10] There's one thing, and we won't get into it beyond this statement, but if there's one thing about COVID that the universe knows for certain (every doctor, every healthcare practitioner, every research study) is the correlation, the relationship, between higher blood sugar levels and negative outcomes. So, you know, people who struggle with long COVID - high blood sugar levels. People who end up in the ICU - high blood sugar levels, metabolic syndrome. People who recover in three days and say, "Oh, well, that was three days off of work watching movies," - high blood sugar levels. And this has been repeatedly, repeatedly shown in the last three years of this whole thing. So for me, it's the one certainty about all of the crazy information out there. It's the one thing that we know. So yeah, you know, we're seeing different numbers for even the regular flu and COVID going into this holiday season. And we know there's a lot of people out there that are struggling after lockdown, still not being able to get out of some unhealthy lockdown habits that they have and are having compromised health. It's so not uncommon now to hear about someone who started 2020 with an A1C of like 5.6 and now has an A1C of 13 just a couple of years later, which is really kind of wild because, for someone who's been in the diabetes area for quite some time now, we see A1Cs of 13 all the time. But to go from something like 5.6 to 13 in a span of just a couple of years is just so crazy. It doesn't happen that fast, but we're seeing it happen that fast a lot more and more coming out of this COVID thing. So there's a lot of high-risk individuals out there and we don't want to make this season more unsafe for them.

Terri [00:33:06] That's right.

Megan [00:33:07] So I think our takeaways for this section of the podcast is, you know, really, we don't have to cause confrontation. We can try to be helpful. What can we bring to help you out? Do you mind if I bring this appetizer, this side dish, this particular dessert that you're choosing to have on the holidays that you might be making with better sweeteners or ingredients for you? You can describe what it is that you're doing. Talk about all the great things that you **are** eating rather than focusing on what you're **not** doing and really just continue to lead by example and remain a safe place for people to come to you and ask you. And you can accept things graciously, but it is okay to discard it. You need to have a plan anticipating, you know, what might be coming in.

[00:34:02] Now, I think in terms of some practical strategies for managing these holiday meals that we have coming up, there are a few things. Something people always ask me, Terri, and I'd love to hear your thoughts on this, is whether they should fat fast or do an extended fast going into a holiday.

[00:34:20] So Thanksgiving falls on a Thursday. There are a lot of people still working the first few days of the week. Some are, some aren't. Most kids are out of school. It's a bit of a weird week, but people, you know, are still home or in the midst of traveling for the weekend. So every year I get asked, "Do I fat fast during this time or do I do an extended fast during this time?" And I always say, "Well, it depends largely on your stress levels." You know, if you're finding yourself to be very, very stressed with organizing travel or getting ready to welcome visitors, it's best to just lean into that fat fast. So that way you've got foods readily available because the stress is going to drive your appetite very high. It's kind of like trying to run up an escalator that's going down, I find, when you're trying to fast during these periods of acute stress. So, you know, if you go into it saying, "I'm going to do a four-day fast into Thanksgiving," you're not going to have any safe foods around and you're going to end up in the fast-food line-up, drive-thru, ordering Uber Eats, just grabbing something quick at home that you might not want to eat, things you might not recognize as your foods. So it's just better to fat fast if the stress is high.

[00:35:39] What do you usually say to people who are asking about this going into a holiday?

Terri [00:35:44] I like that approach. And then the other thought I had is so many of us, if we haven't really gotten really skilled with our time-restricted eating, only eating meals, not bingeing or overeating when we break a fast, I can't think of anything worse than going into a Thanksgiving or another holiday meal from a three-day fast or a four-day or five-day fast because so many of us are going to just be so excited to be eating again and see no limits. We're not going to feel well. It's going to backfire. You know, it's really going to kind of mitigate so many of the benefits of the fasting we did.

[00:36:26] I would say for some people, if their stress level is pretty low going into it, maybe you could do a 42 at the beginning of the week, have a day (at least a day) in between of two solid meals (fat-fasting meals would be great), and then go into the holiday. I would not recommend to hardly anyone to go into a holiday meal completely fasted for longer than that overnight. I would actually, generally, for many people have them eat something even earlier that day because many of us if we're on hour 20 or 22 or 26 and then we eat, we overcompensate for that time that we haven't been eating.

Megan [00:37:09] That's always what I do. I don't know if I have personally ever done any extended fasting going into a holiday. I just think it has the potential to be so disastrous, so I'd rather control it with good foods and time-restricted eating.

[00:37:24] Every now and then someone pulls a rabbit out of the hat, right, and is able to do something with ease, but, more often than not, I see it being a bit disastrous and try to avoid it, especially on that day. So Thanksgiving, for example, is Thursday here in the United States. You have a Thanksgiving dinner. Never, ever, ever, ever, ever show up to a holiday meal unless you've got 100% control of the foods and you know exactly what is going to be there. Never show up on an empty stomach. You know, you're going to have lots of foods that are enticing or sentimental. Or traditions that you're trying to reshape your holiday traditions, but you're still in that sticky place where you haven't quite figured that out yet. It's just disastrous to go in, you know, when the appetite is running a bit high. The appetite is not very suppressed 18 hours, 20 hours, 24 hours, you know, 30 hours, sometimes even into a fast. It's going to make those foods a lot more tempting.

[00:38:31] So I always look at things like fat and protein and fiber as body armor to protect you from those sugars or starches that are very easy to overindulge in. And I will always, always, even when I'm cooking at home for a holiday... So as I mentioned previously, we hosted a ton for the holidays. That leads to the potential of snacking and grazing, even on good foods all day, but that's a lot of insulin at the end of the day. So we always wake up, we have a really great fatty breakfast. You know, eggs and you can have salmon, you can have vegetables - just really loading up on the fat and the fiber and the protein feeling really satiated. And then you can cook for hours without snacking or grazing. It's amazing because you're satiated. Or when you are presented with something that's really tempting, it's not so tempting anymore. You're already physically satiated so you're not struggling with that and it just makes a huge, huge difference. So always eat going into a holiday meal. A 20 or 24-hour fast is not enough to suppress your appetite to make it easy to stay away from certain foods.

Terri [00:39:47] I also think another really important topic related to this is I always try to emphasize to people to not use fasting as a way to compensate for their eating and to not use eating to compensate for fasting. And so oftentimes if people think, "Oh, okay, I'm going to get a three-day fast in so that..." And you almost can hear the next words, like, "So that it's okay, whatever I eat on that day." That's not how you want to set up your relationship with fasting and eating. You want them to compliment each other, not try to wipe one out that's really problematic for you by doing the other. You want to really keep them balanced. So getting good meals planned that week, I think, is really important.

Megan [00:40:35] Yeah, it makes a big difference. And then when you're at that holiday... So hopefully, you know, you've been able to prepare a few things that you like or you're aware that there's going to be a few things throughout the day that are safe foods for you to have, ones that you can eat and that will definitely help you reach satiation. So people often show up to their family member's house early.

[00:41:00] The one holiday we always did outside of our house was Christmas Day and we would show up to my mother's around ten in the morning. We would do the family Christmas thing with the presents and there's literally food out all day. And dinner was at five or six and it can be a period of nonstop eating. And of course, I'm able to bring food. She's also very aware of my diet and there's stuff, plenty of stuff, too much stuff, available for my husband and I and the others who might be there that eat our way. But what I do is some time-restricted eating on those days. So you might end up eating sort of in three

eating windows, or meal times, throughout the day. So we would wake up at our house on Christmas morning, have our fatty breakfasts. Then when we get to her place, you know, we can set a timer for like 60 or 90 minutes and I can indulge in the meat and the vegetables and my husband might indulge in some of the cheese. We'd have a few nuts. We'd have that, but then the timer goes off. And then the next timer gets started when it's actually time to sit at the table.

[00:42:11] So people look at hors d'oeuvres and appetizers and they think of them as you just snack on them, you graze on them, but you can actually, at the end of the day, if you set a certain time period on it, you can turn it into a meal and you can turn it into a meal window. I know both Terri and I actually hate the phrase 'eating windows', but you can make this mini meal at your relative's house out of the hors d'oeuvres and the appetizers, and you can set that timer, so you're not sitting there twiddling your thumbs, fighting with yourself internally, having the whole angel and devil conversation about whether or not you should have some meat or have a few sticks of carrots and broccoli that are out. And then you're not engaging in all of this kind of awkward conversation, perhaps, about why you're not doing that. You don't need to suffer in misery, right? You've eaten your fatty meal. A lot of the sugars and starches should look a lot less tempting. You can set that timer. We've all got these gizmos nowadays - smartphones, watches. Look at the time. Set a timer for 60 minutes, 90 minutes. Allow yourself to have these things. Think of it as a lunch meal. That day you're just eating three meals. You can look at it that way and that's okay to have three meals, you know, it's just not eating all day long is what we want to avoid. We want to minimize the number of times we are spiking our insulin, which is why Terri and I hate the large concept of 'eating windows', right? Like if you look at a 16-hour fast, people say that gives you an eight-hour eating window. Nobody wants to spike their insulin for 8 hours straight. We want to minimize it. But throughout that day, if you have three windows of 60 minutes (or 60 or 90 minutes because they're holiday meals and they might take a little bit longer), that's okay, but you're not just having this one massive, continuous day of eating. That's what we want to avoid. So you can have these appetizers and hors d'oeuvres, but we do want to put some boundaries and parameters on it.

Terri [00:44:16] Absolutely.

Megan [00:44:18] Now, when it comes to plating and eating foods, this is a story I share, my own embarrassing story. So many years now, I've heard people say the same thing, but I'll share it from my perspective [laughs] just so nobody else gets embarrassed. So my first holiday, I made all of the wrong mistakes. I showed up for Canadian Thanksgiving at my mom's house and I had told myself, "You're going to have her roast potatoes today." I was giving myself permission to have those. And because I was so bloody excited to have her potatoes, I ate them first. I felt like a child who was letting myself have candy, you know, [laughs] for breakfast or for dinner, I was going to have that. But what happened? Well, I showed up to that meal trying to do a 24-hour fast, so already not necessarily in a state of appetite suppression. I was hungry, my tummy was empty, my system was empty, and then I ate starch. So immediately - glucose spike. Immediately - insulin surge and hunger hormone, ghrelin, spikes. I'm ravenous. I ate an almost embarrassing amount of food. I couldn't stop. I couldn't reach satiation. I thought I had gone out of control and I needed to be institutionalized. It was awful.

[00:45:43] And then, eventually, I recovered and the scientist part of me kicked in and said, "Think about how you ate and how you set your hormones up for failure that day by the order of foods that you ate." So Canadian Thanksgiving's early October, then Christmas rolled around. She makes the same meals. My family's very boring [laughs] so we had the

same turkey and potatoes. So I said, "Okay, this time you're going to eat your turkey, you're going to eat your vegetables, and then you can eat the potatoes." Well, by the time I got to the potatoes, I was so full I only ate about a quarter of what I had put on my plate and they didn't make up very much on my plate to begin with.

[00:46:26] So we're just looking at a couple of months down the road. I was eating them like a fiend. People were commenting on it and thinking that there was something wrong with me two months earlier. Two months later, I was leaving food on my plate.

[00:46:41] So when you fill up on the fat and the fiber and the protein, you're starting off slow digestion. You're allowing for strong satiation signaling to occur. You're not spiking insulin that's blocking satiation signaling from occurring in the first place. So, you know, you're full. And then you get to that starch - it can't be digested rapidly. You're not seeing the sugar spikes, you're not seeing the insulin surges, you're not seeing an increase in hunger hormones, you're not seeing a decrease in satiation. So it's really amazing how when you save that for last on your plate, it can totally change your entire meal, your entire holiday experience, and how you feel the next day.

Terri [00:47:24] And make you feel so much more sane. Like, look how well you handled that meal. Where, from what you described, you felt kind of out of control at that other meal. And most of us coming here, we don't like feeling so out of control with our food. But until we learn that there are mechanisms that make us feel so out of control, we don't know what to do about it. And I think that's a great example. You still got to enjoy them, but you did it in a way that set you up for success.

Megan [00:47:54] Yeah, absolutely. I think we all get into that sort of little-kid spirit, right? When we decide, "Okay, I'm going to allow myself to have X, Y or Z starch or sugar at this particular holiday." And we show up and we're just so excited to have it, you know, it's like we want to rip off the packaging off of that big Christmas gift that we have. It's the gift that we're giving to ourselves in certain ways. And this does change as your relationship with food changes. But at the start of one's journey, it does feel like you're giving yourself a bit of a present and, hopefully, that will evolve. But at the start, you just want to get right into it and it leads to sort of detriment. So you've got to say, "Okay, I am going to give myself permission to have some of this stuff, but I'm going to eat this other stuff first. I'm going to fill up on that." And then, yeah, you stay in the driver's seat and you really start to change your relationship with food at that point.

Terri [00:48:52] Very good.

Megan [00:48:53] Well, everybody, thank you so much for joining us today. We know the holidays can be challenging, but we hope that you do enjoy your holiday season.

[00:49:04] We've got a few more episodes before the end of the year. We know holidays aren't easy for everybody either, so we're going to be chatting about that in upcoming episodes, but thanks for joining us today, and we'll see you next time.

[00:49:17] Bye for now.

Terri [00:49:18] Take good care, everybody.