

Michael Nelson

Welcome back to the flex diet podcast. I'm your host, Dr. Mike T. Nelson. On here we talk all about things to increase hypertrophy performance, and better body composition, all without destroying your health. Today a very special guests, Ashley event Houghton.

And she has a brand new book out called carnivore ish. If unless you've been living under a rock like I do sometimes, carnivore diet is still pretty popular. But what I really liked about her book is she's got a lot of really great recipes here. And it's not extremely dogmatic. So we talk a lot about in the podcast, dogmatic areas extremeness in fitness, from Keto, to intermittent fasting and everything else in between.

And what I always enjoyed about our conversations here is that while she has an opinion, which we generally agree on most topics, she is also open to other opinions and not saying that you have to only do carnivore, that's the only thing and the vegetables are out to kill you and all the other kinds of crazy nonsense out there. And again, that would be applied for people who are healthy. I think there's a time and a place to do a carnivore type diet or more of an elimination diet. If you're not reacting well to vegetables, yeah, there is a time and a place to do that.

However, I don't think it's going to be the best state if you are a healthy individual. So talk a little bit about normal physiology versus different types of pathologies. What does it take to get significantly leaner, all your identity is wrapped up into training, a lot of times myself included, little side tangents about ayahuasca trip I did in Costa Rica went down there again this year. And yeah, just had another really great ranging conversation.

She also has another book out called It Takes Guts, which came out a couple of years ago, it was about eating all the parts of the animal. You can also listen to our podcast we did with that one earlier, I'll put a link down to it here. So thank you so much, again, for actually being on the program. This one is brought to you by the flex the diet certification.

So if you want to learn more about everything from protein, to micro nutrition to fasting, keto basic exercise, sleep, and much more, go to flexdiet.com. It is currently not open and won't be open for several more months, but you can get onto the waitlist. So as soon as it's open, you will be notified. That also puts you on the daily newsletter where I have all sorts of more free information for you. You'll be able to get on the waitlist and the newsletter for all the great information. So enjoy this chat here with Ashley, how are you doing?

Ashleigh VanHouton

Good, good. No complaint? Well, I mean, I have some complaints. Generally, generally, you know, learning how to move on with a with a 10-month-old and it's very exciting. And yeah, let's go.

Michael Nelson

Yeah, I stalked you on Instagram and saw pictures of the little one. He's very cute.

Ashleigh VanHouton

Thank you. Yeah, he's, it's funny because my husband likes to rock climb. He's a climber. And he's like, you know, joking. Like, let's encourage the kid to obviously be into the things that we're into. And we bought this thing. I don't know if you've ever heard of it. It's called a Pickler? Triangle.

It's basically it's sort of like a baby jungle gym. But it's like a wooden structure that's kind of like shaped like a triangle. And it's like, monkey bars do climb up and down. And I mean, it's like, looks like a deathtrap for somebody that's like the age of my kid. But he he's already on it, because he's either climbing into drawers, or he's climbing on this thing. So he really really likes to get up and move and climb already. So I know I'm in for a busy 18 years, but yeah.

Michael Nelson

Let him climb in a controlled environment versus God knows whatever else. Exactly. Yeah. Cool. But yeah, we can chat about you got another book coming out. You said Correct. I have a book out it should be on its way to you. It's Oh, I see in the background now. Right.

Ashleigh VanHouton

Yes, yeah, I've got both them yet. So it should be on It's way to you. It might

Michael Nelson

be in our mail. So thank you. Yeah, yeah. And, we just picked one through our doorstops.

Ashleigh VanHouton

it makes a good doorstop.

Michael Nelson

Yeah, no, it was nothing against your book. It's just, you know, you get random stuff that shows up at your door all the time. You're like, what? I don't even remember this?

Ashleigh VanHouton

Yes, yes, of course. But yeah, I mean, that's kind of one of the we can talk about this. I don't know if we're, if this is like, that's already recording. So yeah, I mean, one of the interesting challenges that I've had with this book, which is only my second book, it's not like I'm a pro by any means.

But with the first one, which we chatted about, it takes guts, which is all about organ meats. I was like, Okay, this is a niche subject, I recognize that this is going to be like polarizing for people and that some people are going to love it. Most people are going to be like, I will never touch this, whatever. I knew what I was getting into. When I wrote that first book. The second one I felt like was a much more mainstream, easy to kind of get your head around topic.

And I've been really surprised. I shouldn't be. But I've been really surprised at the lack of any kind of mainstream willingness to touch it. Maybe because of the title of the book, I don't know. But it's been a little bit disheartening. How difficult it is to get across a message that is about personalized nutrition and physiology and common sense instead of like clickbait, diet trends, and just how little journalism wants

to touch common sense and they want to touch clickbait. It's just been a little bit surprising, honestly, for some Yeah. Who's been in this world for a while I just, yeah. So anyway,

Michael Nelson

welcome to my life. I haven't joked I'm like, it'd be so much easier if I just said keto is the answer to everything. Right. So instead, like, I'm just ripping on keto, it's like I get sort of hate mail from people that are like, How dare you talk about carbohydrates all the time, keto is the answer.

And then when I do come up with a whole product, I have through the Kerrigan Institute about why a ketogenic diet for concussion post traumatic brain injury, like to clinicians, this might be a really good idea. They're kind of like, well, we don't really talk too much about nutrition other than, you know, supplements. And so all the feedback of the program was great for the people who went through it.

But there's this weird thing where nobody wants to talk about context and having an actual conversation they want well, what is the answer? Like? Well, just tell me the answer. Right? And I'm sure this has happened to you or at conferences, people will come up to you and be like, oh, what should I do carnivore, like to me, they'll be like, Well, what should I do keto. And most of the time, what they want to say is, I'm already doing keto can please tell me that this is the best idea, or I'm already doing carnivore, please tell me this is the answer.

Ashleigh VanHouton

Yeah, yeah. And and, you know, like you said, you were saying context. I mean, it's really also the something I've been talking about more and more on podcasts and things is like, the idea that really hyper restrictive diets, or like workout plans, or all of these things, they're actually like, easier to follow than people think like everyone thinks, carnivore, strict carnivore, like who could do that that's so restrictive, that's so crazy.

But the way human brains work, we're actually really good at following very strict rules. Once we kind of get our heads around, we have a goal and we want to achieve it. And if we're told, like, this is what you can do, this is what you can't do black and white people are actually very good at that, at least, you know, for a finite amount of time.

But to say like, let's sit down and have a conversation about how we can balance what your goals are, whether they're performance or body composition, with your lifestyle, and enjoying yourself, and sometimes eating things you want to eat, and like all that kind of stuff. And it's going to take time, and it's going to take experimentation, and you're gonna have to really pay attention to things over a period of time. Like it just No, and I'm not even saying this to like, throw any anybody under the bus because we're all like that. That's human nature. But it's just too bad. Because the answer, I really believe that the answer is in the slower approach and empowering people with knowledge and with sort of a reframing of this whole process as like, it's a lifelong journey.

And you have to take all this information that people are throwing out at you and use it. However, it works best in your life, instead of saying, Okay, well a bunch of these like buff, good looking people are

doing keto. So I guess that's what I got to do. And if it doesn't work, I'm a failure, or whatever, you know.

Michael Nelson

Yeah, I don't think that's the hard part because you're always at least I am. I'm trying to balance giving people quote the answer and then and trying to get them into context to have a deeper discussion. Because like you said, I know that that's going to be more successful long term. Right? So if you take like an extreme restrictive approach, that might be okay, in the short term, right.

And I do agree that people, especially like intermittent fasting, I think of people started doing that I've played around with it probably 12 years ago now. And to my shock, I thought, compliance was gonna be horrible, like, people would never do this. And under short term, it actually was much better than I thought, and I think it's because while you're fasting, what do you what do I do then? Okay, just take a period of time and don't eat anything with calories.

Right? Very straightforward, you still get a lot of questions on it. But compliance was easier than, okay, just have one, you know, 500 calorie meal, or I tried all these other options. And they all just ended up in disaster even for myself, like I found once I started eating like, okay, now I just want more food, even if it was healthy salad with spinach and, and steak or whatever, it was easier to take a period of time don't do anything.

But the hard part I ran into was, everybody then wants to extrapolate that into the future for the rest of their life. Yes. Oh, so how do I do this? Like for every day, like, what you have to eat at some point, right? You can't fast, you know, forever. So then you get into the conversation of what you were saying, What is your goals? What are you trying to do? Like? How do I think of for myself as a coach, like, how do I prepare someone for when we release them back into the wild? And they end up at a buffet or a social event?

Like how do I prepare them with tools, so they don't end up, you know, face first into like, four birthday cakes on Saturday? Because they were so restrictive for four months. Now, all of a sudden, they got let loose into the wild. And it's it's just a disaster. Right? And it's, it's so weird, because like, how do you? Like how do you kind of balance those two? Knowing that I agree, it's like a more restrictive, the answer approach does work. And it works until, paradoxically, it doesn't work.

Ashleigh VanHouton

Yeah, I mean, I think one of the things that I've really been grappling with, personally, and then with any clients or people that I'm working with over the last few years, and I have to say, I think this honestly comes with like, lived experience, ie age, you know, like, I don't know, maybe there are some like really sorted out 22 year olds who can figure this out, but I just unlikely it just comes with like being alive and having tried a bunch of things for a long time.

But it's it's a, it's can be really difficult, I think, for people to come to terms with the fact or accept. And this makes it sound like a negative thing when it isn't that there are sacrifices and compromises that need to be made with every decision or goal that you have in life, whether it's fitness, whether it's in

relationships, or work or any kind of new undertaking, you are going to have to sacrifice something for something else. And you have to decide there isn't a right or wrong answer.

And it doesn't necessarily whatever choice you make doesn't reflect poorly on your character or your worthiness necessarily, it's just that you have to decide, and you have to accept. And I think that because we are in this increasingly online world that is very marketing heavy, that is very curated, we are led to believe because it sells diet programs or whatever we're led to believe that you can kind of have it all, if you like, try hard enough.

But I mean, that isn't the case. Because again, and again, and again, I have clients coming to me who are like, I want to look this way, and I want to have this lifestyle. And I'm like, if you could if you could figure that out, you'd be a trillionaire like, it doesn't work for most people. And there's nothing wrong with saying, Okay, well, I still want to be fit and look good, but I'm gonna be okay with being five to 10 pounds heavier than my ideal because I want to have a drink on the weekend.

I want to not intermittent fast every single day, whatever. Or, you know, I have clients coming to me that have this goal. And they're like, but I've got this travel coming up and I've got this wedding that I'm going to and this and that I'm like, again, make the decision. Do you want to get drunk at the wedding? Or do you want to do this photo shoot in two months? You can't have both, you just can't. And people kind of don't want to hear it.

They want to hear like you said they want like sort of the answer like the secret trick that we're all hiding or something that will allow you to have it all and you just kind of can't so I think again, this is something that I've had to work on myself over the last decade or so. And I work on by being I think honest and patient and you know non judgmental with my clients where I'm like I understand your the friction here. I understand that you're trying to figure out what actually is important, and it is going to take time and again there's nothing wrong with making money. One or the other decision, you just kind of have to figure out what the best decision is for you and then work towards that goal.

I think so often we get lost in the daily minutia of what we're doing. And we forget what that that goal is right? Like going back to throwing keto under the bus. It's just so easy, right? I mean, oh, yeah, like it's just thrown under the bus. But you know, so often people, they understand that keto can be very effective for people for weight loss and stuff, maybe for temporary, in temporary bursts. And so they get really, really stuck on this, like, macro counting, or like, as long as I'm just not eating carbs, but then it's like, my energy is flagging, my cycle is gone.

I've hit this plateau, I all these other negative things. And so maybe they've forgotten that like, Okay, well, your goal was to feel good look good perform well, your goal wasn't to eat zero carbs. So if this plan is no longer working, consider having some fruit with your lunch or eating some carbs around your workout and just see how that works. That isn't a failure, that's a win, because you're learning about your body. And you're figuring things out as you go. And that's like, what life is about. So, anyway, I think it's a process and we all can kind of backslide. And, you know, because we all want to be perfect. And we all want to have everything now. But I mean, the reality is, it's neither of those things are gonna happen. So,

Michael Nelson

yeah, and I think that's where having a good coach is useful. Right? Because you can have those conversations and a lot of times I forced clients to, to pick. Right. And one of the questions I got from John Berardi was, do you want faster results now that are not sustainable? Or do you want more long term results that are more sustainable?

And everyone's like, why want like the short term goals that are sustainable? It's like, that's unless you're a professional athlete, and you have nothing else to do and maybe, you know, some other borderline illegal substances that you know, each have their own. It's not going to happen. Yes, there's genetic freaks, where they can get by and just everything works better for them, of course, that but the freaks are the outliers, right? They're probably not you. And if they were, you're not going to pay for coaching, because you wouldn't need it at that point.

Ashleigh VanHouton

Yeah, you wouldn't be coming to me if you were already that sort of that,

Michael Nelson

right. Yeah, right. I think even with my own life, it's like, okay, could I be leaner than what I'm at now? Sure. if I'm completely honest with myself, is that my priority now? No, because I know what the cost associated with that is, like, my goals are more, you know, grip related strength, performance related, you know, I've got writing a couple of books, I've got other projects, I've got clients. And I know, to get substantially leaner, it's a lot more time, at some point, my energy levels gonna drop.

Like, I know what the trade offs are associated with it. And I just don't want to pay the cost right now. And I'm okay with that. I'm fine with that. You know, which is much better than I think 15 years ago, I would have been like, why am I not leaner? Why am I performance goals? You're like, trying to do all of it at the same time, and you're trying to ride three horses with one ass and it's just not going anywhere?

Ashleigh VanHouton

I might have to steal that and use that. I'll credit you. Yeah, but I mean, you're saying again, like it's, it's sort of an age and wisdom thing. Like, I think that's one of the reasons, well, maybe not a big reason. But it's one reason that I think I'm doing so well with, like this postpartum, having a baby, all the things that happened to your body.

You know, I did this a little later in life, like my mid 30s, which, you know, I think is pretty normal these days, but it's still considered in some circles a little on the old side to be having. But I not only did I have 20 years of consistent dedication to working out that has kind of shaped my body and prepared me in a lot of ways. I also had all of these years of understanding, like you said, sort of what it takes to look a certain way to perform a certain way, all of these things.

So I just knew my body better I was a little bit more at peace with the fact that you know, yeah, my body is going to change during pregnancy and postpartum but age changes your body regardless, like I don't want to, to not do things that are important in my life because it might do something to my body, you

know what I mean? Like, anyway, and I just like knew myself and I knew about nutrition and I knew that you know, I'm not somebody who eats a ton of carbs normally and when I got pregnant I mean that went all out the window and window because I'm hungry and like it is what it is but I understood that it was a time of like, learn listening to my body not you know, I feel for a lot of these women cuz I was doing a lot of research to during my pregnancy and like a lot of women who are just so concerned with gaining weight or all of these things, and I understand you want to be healthy during your pregnancy.

That makes a lot of sense, but, but it just it makes me sad that it's just another thing that people have to stress out about during a pretty intense stressful period of your life. If, and I really embraced it as like, if there was ever a time to just listen really closely to what your body is telling you to do, it's right now and I just I did that. And that doesn't mean that I ate cinnamon buns all day, every day, I did eat a few. I didn't work out as hard.

I didn't push myself I didn't intermittent fast. I didn't eat low carb, I ate food that was nourishing to me. And that was another like, funny, controversial thing is that I same way when I was pregnant that I when I wasn't, which means I was eating organ meats. I was eating a ton of protein. You know, people all joked with me, they're like, Oh, you're gonna have the weird aversions where you can eat meat, and it's going to be funny.

Haha, organ meat lady can eat meat. And I was like, no, no, I'm good. I ate all of it. But people were really concerned about like, the health and safety of eating like, you know, slightly runny eggs or, or beef liver during pregnancy. And I'm like, nobody, nobody ate anything. If I was eating, you know, cheese, like mac and cheese and ice cream all day, because we've normalized that for pregnant women, we haven't definitely starting to eat, you know, nutrient dense foods. But if it's healthy for me, it's it's healthy for the baby. So it worked for me anyway.

Michael Nelson

Yeah, and the thing that makes me just so nervous, which is probably easy for me to say, as a male who's not going to be pregnant is women who know they're pregnant and are trying to actively lose weight. And you look at what their caloric intake is. And you're like, all like, and then you look at some of the, you know, the Dutch famine and some of this, we just studies of just super low caloric intake when people were pregnant, the epigenetic changes that occur with that.

And it just, obviously, as a male makes it easy for me to say, because it's not me doing it, but just the the data on how you're just not setting your kid up for success. It's your just all the things I've seen is not beneficial. And you're probably not even going to get to the goal that you want to get by doing that, either. It's just all negative, as far as I can see. But you could probably speak a lot more intelligently to that.

Ashleigh VanHouton

Well, I mean, it's definitely a very, it's a tough subject. Because where do we draw the line between right like, this is actually like a, an issue that like professionals need to help people with because if you're so concerned, and you're under precise weight during pregnancy, that's a that's a problematic thing. But I think, if we pull it back out to like, a more macro scale, and if we, this is something I'm

working on, I'm actually developing another course that we can talk about, but the fit the fitness culture around women, and how if we can, if we can reframe it so that our worth and our self confidence and our feelings about ourselves is not so closely tied to how we look, then this won't be so much of an issue.

Because, again, there are realities, there are realities for men and for women. As we age, as our goals change, as we go through different life stages, your body will change. And that doesn't have to be catastrophic. It's okay to have moments or periods where you're like, Whoa, like I had a couple times during my pregnancy, where I was like, how the hell is this going to go back? To what it was before? Like, what's going to happen? You know, I'm not saying I felt perfectly happy all the time. But I really never was like, What am I going to do, I'm ruined, I'm going to look terrible.

I'm, this is awful, you know, I was kind of like, in awe of what was happening. And I think that if we could, we're never going to, we're never going to get rid of the desire to look good and be attractive. That's very human trait, we all kind of want to do that to some extent. But I think especially for women and fitness, it is so tied to what you look like instead of what you are capable of. And so if we can start to dismantle that a little bit and start to just slowly over time on an individual micro basis, start to change that to, it's incredible what your body is capable of during pregnancy and beyond.

It's incredible what you can go and do in the gym. And if that gives you muscles, great, if that makes you look a little bit better in your clothes. Fantastic. But what's more important is your work ethic and your ability and what you're learning about your body and your strength and all those things, then there will be less women being like, Oh, I better count my calories and try not to get too fat during pregnancy, you know. So I think it's it's a much bigger problem, really. But I think it's something that we can all make steps every day to just slowly over time try to improve. I mean, this culture didn't happen overnight. And it's not going to change overnight. But I think that we can, we can improve it.

Michael Nelson

No, I agree. Well, things I've said to clients, which I've kind of half jokingly is like, you can't hate yourself lean. Right? You can try and yes, you may make some quote, air quotes progress in that direction. But I mean, this was like early on with clients where they got to their goals. They looked amazing anything that we set out to do it. Yeah, it took a while it took longer than they expected, sometimes a year.

But I was also amazed. And this is my error, assuming that once they got to it, they would let go of kind of the psychological baggage that came with it. Sometimes they did, but a lot of times, they didn't. And I was like, Oh, that was That was my mistake of, you know, taking them for their word, getting them to where they wanted to go.

And then once they got there, they were still unhappy. I'm like, oh, man, you know, and so I, on one hand, I under, I understand it, but now at least, I tried to have the conversation ahead of time of, you know, let's try to shift you exactly what you said to be as performance based as we can. Yes, I know, your goals are body comp, yes, I know, your goals are more physique related. But even with like, I do the same thing with physique competitors, because that's like the most controllable thing that you have direct control of not 100%. But, you know, can you do the training? And can you do the nutrition, you

know, the strength gains you get, which are much more measurable than any change in body competency, especially on a week by week basis. And if you're doing all of those things, then you're gonna get as close to whatever your maximum result you could get.

We don't know what that's going to be everyone's going to respond a little bit different. But at some point, you can only control the process, you can't directly control the outcome. And just being aware of, you know, different red flags. And, you know, I've referred out multiple people to a psychologist, where, you know, hey, I think you should talk to someone about this.

I'm not saying you need to see them. I'm just saying, talk to them to see if there's anything, you know, they're correcting people's language right away. I was one thing I didn't do early on, which has gotten a lot better because I think I was too afraid of clients being like, Oh, I hired you for this unknown. Why are you telling me about how what sentences I write to you? And it's like, my buddy, Adams joked is like most, most people just should all over themselves, right? Oh, I should have done this. I should have done that. It's like, you did what you did, and we'll figure it out. Going going forward to

Ashleigh VanHouton

so good. I like that. I'm stealing. I'm stealing a lot of good one liners from Yeah, no, go ahead.

Michael Nelson

Yeah, you find that too? Do you correct people's languages? Or do you have certain red flags that you're just like, oh, oh,

Ashleigh VanHouton

yeah. Yeah. And I mean, what you're saying too, about, potentially at least suggesting like referring people out? I mean, really, who, who among us? couldn't benefit from talking to a therapist about one thing or another? For sure. So I mean, I think that's an I hope that's becoming more normalized. But yeah, I mean, I think that this negative self talk and like negative language, again, is very, very prevalent with women too. And we do somehow, and we all like, have this attitude of like, I recognize that what you're saying is good for other people.

But for me, I'm just gonna keep like saying nasty things to myself. Like, we all somehow think that it's like different for us for some reason. It's like this weird, reverse narcissism where we like, don't like ourselves. But we somehow think we're different from everybody else. It's really interesting. And we all again, we all do it like everybody still at probably, I'm sure it has these moments of like backsliding, but I just I try to with some of my clients, like, it can be a slippery slope of like, maybe sharing too much of yourself too. Like you want to have some kind of professional distance, but I try to, to let them know that like, I go through similar things. And I've gone through similar struggles.

And that, you know, and I use, because it's just so topical, it's so recent, but the you know, postpartum, getting back into fitness experience that I'm literally currently going through. It's not always easy and looking at yourself and seeing something, somebody seeing a body that maybe is quite different than what you're used to seeing. And like the performance thing for me, because I've done a lot better at using, again, performance and strength and those metrics rather than what I look like. And even that

was rough for me postpartum because I get back and I'm like, Well, I feel fine. Let's try push up. What because there's things that I always really did use to boost my self esteem, like, Hey, I'm the pull up lady, like, I'm good at pull ups and push ups and I've got all this upper body strength, and I'm like, Oh, wait, all of those are actually mostly core, and I don't have any of it anymore. And so coming back to that it was a it really was I had to practice what I was preaching to everybody else and be like, I instead of looking at this, like, look at all the things I can't do anymore. I used to be so strong. I'm going to say I have all of this history, this knowledge, this muscle memory, and I'm going to slowly and steadily get back into this.

I know I will get it back if I'm consistent and I'm smart and I don't go too hard and hurt myself. And so every day I had to do that I had to go in there and be like okay, I can I doing pushups on my knees. Like it was such a blow to my, my ego to do that for a few months. And I was like, This is what I'm gonna do, instead of hurting messing up my core injuring myself trying to be some hero for who, for what, who's looking at me, nobody cares.

Right? thing it's like I actually talked about this in one of the other programs that I do is that I think this like this negative self talk and like thinking about yourself so negatively in the gym or about your body or your abilities, it is this almost weird form of ego or narcissism, we think of it as low self esteem. And that's certain insecurity. And that's certainly part of it. But it's also this, like, you're so concerned with what other people are potentially thinking about you, or how you look to other people, or how big a deal it is that you have five pounds on your body that you don't like, it's like, literally no one cares. But you. So maybe let's think about, let's unpack that.

Like, why is it that you care? Why is it that it's so important to you? And let's work through it? But I mean, I think, you know, and it was a good experience for me with the pregnancy with my competitive bodybuilding thing. Having abs and realizing that also, no one cares about that. Cool. Fact, that looks great. And then they go move on with their life. And I'm like, okay, all right. I guess this doesn't matter that much. But I mean, maybe people have to go through that experience for themselves. But I think again, it's like, check, check yourself a little bit like, you're you, no one cares. But you. So let's figure out why these things matter how we can maybe look at them in a healthier, more productive way. Because like you said, hating yourself never really got anybody healthy in the long run.

Ashleigh VanHouton

But it is it's like it is an interesting sort of ongoing, I don't want to say therapists, because health coaches are not therapists, unless they are trained therapists. However, there is an element of sort of like, coaching counseling thing where you do have to balance like, I don't want to just tell you what you want to hear. I don't want to ignore these red flags.

I do want to continue to work with you and help you how I can but we have to like address that. So much of this is about behavior. It's not about lack of knowledge. It's not that you don't know that, you know, eating vegetables is better than eating junk food. It's not that you don't know that lifting weights is a good thing. It's like there are behavioral, mental hang up things that we need to work through. And coaches sometimes are a big part of that. So yeah, it's a lot more than just telling people what to eat or how to work out.

Michael Nelson

I think of it in terms of identity. So one thing I do with clients is try to figure out what, what is sort of underpinning their identity, because I went through a similar thing probably just probably eight years ago, and maybe it's because I was turning 40 Or who knows, but I said, Okay, I'm gonna for the 800th time relearn how to squat because I've had hip pain, whole bunch of weird stuff that's gone on. And I remember the day it was literally lifted in my garage.

And I said, Okay, I'm going to start all over from ground zero again for the 800th time. And just want to squat without pain. I don't care what's on the bar. That's not the goal. I just want to repattern to for what my physiology is a better pattern, and I'll add weight over time. And I remember literally front squatting probably just like 95 pounds. And it was great. It didn't have any pain was just doing higher reps. And I remember thinking, what am I doing? I need to put more weight on the bar. This is stupid. And I'm like, oh, Where's that coming from? Like, that wasn't the goal. Like I'm not competing in this event I'm not paid to do this event was I'm doing this in my garage.

Nobody even knows what I'm doing. Number two, no one gives a shit what I'm doing. There's this this ego like identity thing of like, You're a grown human. You're not even squatting 95 pounds, what's wrong with you? You're in the fitness industry? How dare you tell other people how to squat and like all these thoughts that just go through your head. And I realized that Oh, shit, like more of my identity is tied to lifting and I thought that it was you know, and that was kind of a release a starting point to think about, okay, well, what is my identity?

And in changing that, to I am someone who does these things, I am not someone who is. Right. So to try to remove myself from that. And I've done that in the past with if you've probably higher level athletes who have been injured, right? And then their whole identity was this person who was very competitive at a high level. And that got them to that level. But when they weren't able to do that thing anymore, just watching everything kind of unravel, and you're trying to explain to them that, you know, yeah, at some point, you may need professional help.

But, you know, can you think about your identity as someone who isn't someone who is that thing, someone who does that thing? And yeah, just Yeah, spending time I think, thinking about those before you have to reach a point where you have an injury or you have something happened where now you're forced into that corner, like hopefully maybe you can circumvented a little bit ahead of time?

Ashleigh VanHouton

Yeah. Yeah. I mean, I think it's, it's also important for people I'm sure this happens in other industries, too. It's not just like the fitness or nutrition industry, because you know, what you're you're speaking about, it's the same with food too, right? Where, oh, sure,

Michael Nelson

oh, I'm

Ashleigh VanHouton

a vegan, or I'm a carnivore. And it's like, if someone catches you eating, like something that isn't part of your thing. It's like, I don't tell anybody, like, I joke in my family all the time, like I was eating, I don't know something the other day that like, wasn't meat, I'm like, this is non brand. Don't tell anybody. I'm like eating seaweed snacks, like this is a vegan food, like, I joke, whatever.

But a lot of people do feel very, and especially if you are like a forward facing like an educator or like a content creator or whatever. And you you've kind of built your brand or your following on being a certain way, I feel like I just wish that we could again, kind of be more like open minded and open to context and nuance so that we aren't like attacking people for like learning or making changes or like things happening different in their life and then responding to it.

And I think it's important, you know, I've never been in the lead athlete, I don't have what it takes, don't have the fortitude. But I think that it's there's something to be said, for trying to really kind of be a well rounded person as much as you can. Like, I think that when people get and we all kind of go through this when we get really excited about whatever CrossFit or whatever it is that we're into at the time, that that's our thing, and we're very excited about it, and we dedicate a lot of energy to it. But then when something inevitably goes, it can be really, really damaging to our self esteem to our like function, you know, when we lose a sense of who we are, because something changes. And I think that and this is something I think you talk about a lot too.

But resilience and flexibility and adaptability is those are like the most important some of the most important things to for thriving for a human being. And if you are not able to do that, if you're not able to adapt, if your sport changes or you're injured, or you get pregnant, or you decide that you need to eat differently, or whatever it that's, it doesn't matter if you were perfect over here, being a carnivore athlete, if something gets thrown into the mix, and you fall apart, then maybe what you were doing wasn't ideal, because you actually aren't as adaptive or resilient as you thought you were right.

So it goes back to things like maybe having some other hobbies outside of this one thing that's really big to you, or, you know, experimenting with different foods or different training modalities, or like reading some books outside of your area of expertise, or, you know, maybe you get into like knitting or poetry or something, thing that you're doing all the time, because it's just good to use your brain in different ways to identify as somebody who's willing to step outside their comfort zone, try new things, all of that makes you a more adaptive, resilient human being.

And I think that and it makes life more fun too, right. So like, again, it kind of goes back to so often we like are seeing these super successful people online and like they're, they're good at this one thing, and it's so impressive. And it makes us want to pick our one thing. But similar to what you said about elite athletes, most of us aren't that most of us aren't elite athletes who are just going to be incredibly successful good at one thing, so let's like, do a bunch of stuff and have fun with it and see kind of what lens and like, enjoy your life that way that went in a weird, different tangent, but I feel like it's important. It will make people I think, happier in the long run than trying to just put all your eggs in one basket, you know?

Michael Nelson

No, I, I agree. You're preaching to the choir here, obviously. But I think if you think about how do you want to design your life? And what is the thing you kind of want to or multiple things to build it around? Right? So obviously, I love kite boarding. And yeah, after I've got done kite boarding for three hours ollie to pop tarts and drink a beer. Don't worry about it.

No, don't worry about it at all right? I've burned so many calories, it's not going to be a big deal. And it's weird for me because with kiteboarding people are like how can you go out and ride for like, three hours in a row. And like, it's, it's really not that hard for me. But I realized I train a lot more than most people who do it recreationally, which is not a value judgment. It's just you know, each person does what they want to do. And then the thing that's harder for me to do, which would be jumping higher, is easier for other people to do.

But yet I'll be in the top 10 all the time for riding distance, which I don't give two shits about anyway, it's just the thing to do to get to the next thing, right it's like if I can get more practice and more time on the water when I'm presented with you know, wind and be in that area, then I can you know work on jumping 20 feet or whatever. But it's just interesting how other people will look and be like, Oh, they want to do the one thing that you're good at, but you don't care about the thing that you are good at you want to do the thing they weren't good.

Ashleigh VanHouton

Nobody's happy. No condition we're just and you know, it's funny because like the thing We're saying that that creates so much unhappiness in like the human brain. It's also what makes us so great as humans, it's like this desire to like, move forward and strive and like, do new things and accomplish new things. Like that's why we're here using the internet and going to space and all that stuff, because that's how human beings brains work.

But it also creates so much unhappiness. So it's like, you know, finding that, that balance, and I almost feel like that the pandemic in the last year has either like it like made or broke a lot of people in that way, because we were so forced to slow down. And you know, my lifestyle now is so light years different than it was before the pandemic. And I've had to grapple with that sometimes. And sometimes it sucks. And sometimes I miss it.

And a lot of times, I'm like, wow, this is just so much better now, because I care so much less about things that ultimately don't matter. I feel so much less of this missing out, like I have to go go go go and be doing doing doing all the time. It's really helped refocus me. And I mean, I was very productive. In the pandemic, I wrote two books and had a baby, I got a lot done. Yeah, it wasn't the things I was planning to do. But that's cool.

But I think again, it's like it's just this, I keep going back to this idea of like balance and moderation, whatever those words mean. But like this idea of just knowing that there's sacrifice and compromise and being okay with it, instead of trying to just never be happy with where you are where you're trying to like just kind of finding a place of like contentedness, you know, like, I can still work on myself, I can still work on these goals. But this stuff's great. And it's cool to be a beginner and, you know, kind of just find some peace with wherever you are, I think is like, ultimate success.

Michael Nelson

Yeah, I mean, I realized that to just mean up until the pandemic, I look back and I'm like, Okay, so like a three and a half, four year period, like, how long was I home in a row, and it literally was three and a half weeks, which happened once. You know, on one hand, I'm like, Oh, that was madness. On the other hand, when you have all those opportunities removed, like we literally we're in Australia, like four weeks before the pandemic, we flew back from Costa Rica in the middle of it with the airport, shut down all sorts of stuff.

So on the one hand, I'm so thankful that we we had the opportunities, and we actually did them when we could, right, we would never have been able to foresee, like you won't be able to travel and all the restrictions and you've been in Canada was obviously by far, much worse than in the US. On the flip side, I was like, okay, so what can I do now? What can I control? Same thing with clients? Okay, what equipment do you have? What can you control?

And okay, so, yeah, so I spent four months just doing some, you know, boring zoom to aerobic training, that's probably a good time to do this. I couldn't do it, my garage, I had all this stuff there, luckily. And then also realizing that, okay, so I can work on some other projects. And I kind of forgot that, like, wow, training is so much easier when you wake up in the same bed every day around, like around the same time you don't wake up and go, where am I today?

I'm not on a plane, in a car jetlag, all that kind of stuff. You're like, oh, wow, you can actually make progress much faster when your life kind of looks like Groundhog Day, you know, so similar to you, what are the things we can do to move stuff forward? And then on the other side, like, oh, I want to really go back to the pace of before having experienced that literally the direct 180 degree opposite, like probably not maybe something in between, but then realizing that okay, if I'm presented a seminar, I'm going to be a lot more particular about seminars now than in the past, right?

If you want me to come out to the middle of East cupcake, nowhere, there's no kiteboarding. And I don't know that many people there, it's going to be a lot more expensive than it was before. And if you don't want to pay great, I'm okay. Just letting it go. Yeah, right, we're before. Sure. What do you want on there? You know?

Ashleigh VanHouton

Absolutely. I'm 100% with you. And I've had to make those decisions already. This year. I'm like, still in the process of like, merging a little bit and like traveling for work, because, you know, I'm still thinking of myself and like, postpartum and I want to bring my kit everywhere I go, which makes things of course, infinitely more work.

But it there definitely is a freedom to being able to just be a little bit more clear on what your goals and your criteria are and being able to say no to things that that don't work for you. And you know, for people like you and I who we essentially work for ourselves and we have to we have to get up every day and kind of like create a do or we don't get a paycheck, right? It can be a trickier process because yeah, you're like, well, even if I don't like this, I don't I don't want to say no, but like it's sometimes feels

good to and I have a friend, a very good friend of mine who actually is a co author of this book who she gave me like cool advice that I like and maybe this is something that's common sense to other people, but the way she laid it out i really liked it, when she decides whether she's going to take a project or not, it has to she says it has to hit two of three criteria, ideally, three.

But it has to, like, make good money for her, like, whatever she thinks is kind of worth it. It has to be fun. Or it has to like, further her sort of brand or career or work in some way. So it has to very distinctly hit two out of three of those boxes. And if it doesn't, so even if it makes really good money, but it's kind of like outside her thing, and she doesn't really want to do it. She's like, No, sorry, or whatever. And sometimes if it's just fun, but it's like no money, it's not really helping her in any way. Maybe she'll say no to it, you know, and I think that that was helpful for me, because I'm like, Alright, is this is this going to be worth it? And it's, it's helped me not get on a plane a couple times when I otherwise would have.

Michael Nelson

Yeah, and those are always hard decisions, especially when you work for yourself. Right. And I always feel like if you make a decision to go one direction, I just talked about this undercoats podcast of I'm trying to finish a couple of books. And one of them is a pretty big project has a deadline, the end of August, which I have to get a rough copy done, which is great, because I love deadlines move forward. I I knew I'll get it done.

But then the flip side is, as you know, right from writing a book, it takes a lot of time, there's a lot of things that are just going to happen because of the process. It's just the way that it's going to go. And yes, I probably could take on a lot more one on one clients. Would that help my bottom line right now? Yeah, but I also know that the amount of time it's going to take, you know, I can't open 10 slots, even if I could fill them probably could. But the amount of workload that that's going to add like instantaneous is going to take away from you know, writing the book.

The hard part, as you all know, too, is that I don't get paid until the book is done and sells and is delayed from when the person gets money, you get paid out. So you're in this like weird period of time where you're doing, can I work for nothing, right? And can I can I make it through, right? What is the fine line of I don't want to drive myself, you know, into the black. But if it goes well, then you potentially have a payout on the other side versus I can't afford to miss the deadline. I like sleeping. I like training. I like some other things in my life.

So I decided back in January, paradoxically, after going to Costa Rica, we did a Ayahuasca ceremony there. But I'm like, okay, then this is the direction I'm gonna go. Literally, I get back two weeks later, I had five clients drop off within three weeks, because of just finances a basement flooded, like, you know, got deployed for military like, not really service related per se. I'm like, Oh, crap, that's like the most people have ever dropped off in like 15 years at once. And so my slid reaction is like, well, I need to fill their slots, like immediately.

And that's like, whoa, hold on a sec, like if you do that, or are you delaying? The other thing that you just said you committed to was the actual project. And so I find it all ironic that as soon as you kind of put a stake in the ground of like, this is what I'm going to do or you know, I'm gonna get substantially

leaner. You get three invites to parties or there's something like the universe, God, whatever. It is, like, Hey, you said you're gonna do this thing. All right, here's your shit test your it's common. My buddy Rick was saying that I talked to him about this. And he's like, yeah, he's like, I've just been doing this kind of trust fall with my business for like six months of doing these other projects. And he's like, and I went off social media and I just other stuff I wasn't supposed to. I'm like, Well, how's it going? He's like, so far, I'm still in business. So I'm still doing okay.

Ashleigh VanHouton

I really want to go back because I don't know if I've talked to you about the Ayahuasca thing. How was it? Oh, yeah, dressed personally like some other drugs maybe. But like Ayahuasca I have zero interest in but what was your experience?

Michael Nelson

was pretty crazy. Like I talked about the first one on the podcast before so I've done it twice. We went down in January, not this past year, but the year before is the first time and something I've always been interested in. So me being me I spent five to six years of like reading all the research I could find. I didn't read any trip reports.

Yeah, people I knew did it. I talked to him about it. I wouldn't be interested in their experience because it's always interesting. And my thought was okay, you know, in my brain, you know, how you have kind of like the perfect setups like the perfect training plan, the perfect nutrition and never happens, right? It just never happens. So my my brain I was like, Okay, I'll start with, you know, psilocybin we'll go to a country where it's legal. I'll start with a small dose and we'll just kind of you know, escalate from there. We had the opportunity with some people we were in with a special forces experience to do Ayahuasca in Costa Rica. And so I talked to them about it.

They had gone through the same person the year before and And so I checked with them, you know, did all the homework. And I'm like, Okay, so the only reason now that I wouldn't do it is I'm just nervous about what I might find. Right? And it's like, if I wait another year or two years, is that nervousness gonna go away? Probably not. Right? But that's probably a good thing. So we went down there and even told my wife Jodi did it to that I'm like, Okay, if we meet, you know, the shaman, she doesn't like to be called the shaman. But it's just easier for references. We'll know what that is.

And I'm still like, Man, I don't know about this. I don't know, if I trust this person. I'm like, here's all my money in cash. I'm out, keep the money, you get paid. So we met her and I'm like, okay, you know, seems to be seems to be okay. And then they do it overnight. And so the first part of the ceremony, they have all these people they're helping, and she's like, Okay, I want, you know, you people over here, you know, on the right side of the room and YouTube on the left side of the room.

And I heard her over talking to, they call them the guardians who are helping with the ceremony. Just like watch this right side of the room, the left side will be fine. Just you keep your eyes over here. I'm like, what is it? This is crazy. What is she talking about? And there's this one guy, Rob, who was just kneeling by this entrance point. And she's like, Okay, your job is you're just going to kneel by this open air in Costa Rica. The other side is just an infinity pool. And I'm like, why is this guy kneeling in front?

There's nobody that's going to scale up a cliff through the jungle over this cool like to come in the other side. Do what right? And so like, in the middle of the ceremony, I remember waking up and going. Wow, I'm so glad that guy, Rob's there. Like he's watching stuff. I'm so glad that he's there. Like, the things you think about in the ceremony that seem just bizarro like makes sense at that point.

Michael Nelson

So I didn't really have much of an experience at first. So I'm watching all these people go through and sick. I didn't throw up at all, but people go up and receive it like as a sacrament. Right? So we do something called Die made, which is more from the Church of Dianetics, just Ayahuasca has nothing else in it, you kind of go up and each person goes up.

And then me being read all the research, I'm like, Well, I know what the half life is. And you see, all of a sudden, the first person just wow, like, has a reaction starts throwing up. Five minutes later, the next person just started to lose in the third person. So you're watching like this wave, like kind of coming at us just hearing it like, right? And I'm sitting there going, Oh, shit, here comes a wave. Here it comes. Like nothing happens. I'm like, I don't know. So she comes over. Are you doing fine? Like, yeah, whatever. It's a gives me a second glass.

Great. So the person the second person is like, completely out of it. Like, you ever heard that sound of someone throwing up and you can hear them choke on their own vomit. Like just that reaction. Like that happened to her, like, everyone like is on her. And I remember the shaman holding her telling her Okay, come back to your body, come back to your body. And I'm standing there watching this going, oh shit, what am I signed up for? Like, what's going on? And then, you know, comes back. She's like, Do you feel anything? Like, no gives me a third glass.

And in the meantime, the guy next to me, this has been like, other than when the person had the reaction. He's just like laying down on the ground. I'm like, I don't know, you must be doing fine sleeping, I guess. She comes over and she's like, Do you want a second glass? And he's like, no, no, I'm like, Whoa, I guess he's going through some shit too. So comes over again, just like anything happening. I'm like, no, just like no visions. Like, now, she gives me a forest glass. And I'm like, at this point, I'm thinking I don't know about this, you know. And as it's going by, I get to see everybody having all the reactions, everything going on.

And I'm like, Well, maybe my thing is that I just, you know, don't have an experience, like maybe my experiences that I just don't have an experience. So she gives me a fifth glass and then at that point, and then I remember like the whole world kind of falling apart. And then waking up on a beach in Costa Rica with with Jody, and we were down there doing kiteboarding which was kind of wild. Oops, I think your screen froze again. Or you woke up on a beach? Yeah. So I woke up on the beach. And because the question I had is like, you know, am I going in the right direction? Right? All the things I'm doing is am I really going in the right direction?

And the answer I got was, um, yeah, so we're hanging out drinking coffee getting ready to go kiteboarding and then that got stuck on like a loop for what literally felt like seven years. It was like you were watching a VHS tape. Like you knew you were there but you knew you were watching it. And then

it would end after like 10 seconds and Then we'll just repeat it. So it's almost like, yeah, the lesson is, they're going in the right direction, maybe you should be more present with what you're actually doing in your life. Oh, and by the way, as well, here's like seven years of practice of being present, because you can't do anything else at the time. And all I kept telling myself was like, okay, when the sun comes up, this will end, right, because it can't go on forever. It has to have an ending at some point. And sure enough, like, second the sun came up, like it ended. And I was like, like, out of it. And like things were sort of like, back to normal. Which was wild.

Ashleigh VanHouton

Okay, so you have a very high tolerance, it seems like, I guess, yeah. Did you did you watch? Like, was your wife they're going through at the same time? Did you see her reaction?

Michael Nelson

Yeah. And so the, the crazy part about it is because all my stuff was so late, that I gotta just see everyone go through. And so her thing at that time was helping with, with her gut, she had done some carnivore stuff. And she didn't really have any visions or anything, but she got up and use the bathroom about like, 12 times. And when she moved, like, her posture was a lot better, which was crazy, you know, and the next day or got was, you know, a lot better.

She didn't have any of the more of the psychedelic type stuff. But you know, her gut was a lot better, which was, which was good. And then this year, when we went down, I was like, my question was, okay, how do I decide what projects to do? Right? And so same, same same Shaman. So I go up there. And she's like, well, which glass Do you want? I'm kind of looking. And then she points to this, like, really large one. She's like, I remember you from last night.

This one's yours, my couch yet? You know, so lay back down, and literally within a half hour, it's like, oh, well, you should just do projects you love. I was like, Oh, this is so simple. Like, why didn't I think of this? Right? If the answer is just like, so simple. And all the questions I kept asking was, like, oh, the answer is love. So to do the things you love, I was like, Oh, okay. And I'm like, that was like it within the first half hour. So I'm like, okay, cool. Well, can I get off the train now?

Can I just like, you know, leave? Do I have to go through like the next seven hours? It's like, no, like, you just can't get off the bus at that point. So yeah, this year wasn't as intense. And I remember asking myself the question of like, oh, well, should I go back up again? And the answer, I just, you kind of have this sort of weird gut feeling the answer was like, No, I'm like, that probably wouldn't end. So well. Yeah. Yeah.

Ashleigh VanHouton

So it's amazing.

Michael Nelson

I would, I can't say I would recommend it, I wouldn't say I would not recommend it. But you know, having only done it twice. And being there, especially after the first experience of watching everything that happened. And the second one was much more just milder, a little bit more quiet. I could definitely

see how like, so many things could go just so wrong. Right? And, yeah, just, if people do it, like do your homework, like spend some time thinking about it? T

he biggest thing for me was like, Are you going to be in an environment that's going to be safe, right, you can't necessarily control if it's good or bad. I just tried to think of it as easier or more difficult. Most of the time, I think it's probably going to be beneficial. But at the same point, you still have to do all the integration work, right? You may have gotten a message or received or heard something that is useful. But then you you still have to go back and do the work to integrate it. Right.

And so like even now, we had a chance to do it in June again. And I'm like, man, it's not the best timing and I'm like, what I even if I had the opportunity was there. Like no, I think I'm still working on the stuff like from from January, so I think I'm probably good for for a while yet.

Ashleigh VanHouton

Yeah, okay. Well, I mean, I live in Canada, where we've got some more lacks recreational drugs. Yes. Anyway, so I'm kind of like cool with what I'm working with over here. Yeah. But But I have to say, Yeah, I've heard I've heard good things. I've heard bad things.

But I do think that what I hear over and over again is like you got to like really kind of intrinsically want to do this for yourself, rather than someone says like, hey, go do it. It seems like a cool plan. And like there's no part of me that wants to see other people go maybe if I could, like do a really bougie version where it's like just me with a shaman like secretly in a room where I don't have to experience other people's like outs and like bar fests and like, you know, like, I don't know well, maybe someday but for now I think all I think I'll try to find some other avenues but it's fascinating. It's very interesting, that's for sure.

Michael Nelson

Yeah, we didn't have that many people get sick so they'll usually do like combo beforehand. A lot of times we did it after so combo is the secretions and peptides from this Amazon frog that they burn your skin and stick it in which sounds even more horrible. But a lot People will purge from that. And so their thought is they'll generally do that beforehand, as like a cleansing type thing.

So a lot of people will get sick with that. The Ayahuasca they use the die May is literally just the shrub in the vine, they don't add anything else to it a part of their religion. I have this kind of wacky theory that some other places because I have asked the shaman, whoever the local person is, can add other things to it. My thought is not any data to show this is that adding tobacco and other things to it, because a lot of Westerners want to come down and they want to purge. They don't feel like they got their money's worth otherwise. So yeah, and I think it's individual to it hasn't happened to me, but other people who have described it, they're like, oh, at that point, like just throwing up sounded like a great idea.

Ashleigh VanHouton

Extra to not vomit for seven hours. Yeah. Anyway, to each their own right.

Michael Nelson

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. But now that's the short version of it. Wow. All right. Yeah. And then switching gears after that was probably more information people wanted to know. Yeah, no, that's cool. So tell us more about the book, the the premise of it and how it's different from your last one. They can find the podcast here we did about your last book also?

Ashleigh VanHouton

Yes, yeah. So the new book is called carnivore ish. And it's essentially, it's a book about nutrient dense food. And it's about honoring and kind of enjoying the foods that the human being is meant to eat, which is, generally for most of us a combination of animal protein, and vegetables, fruits, fats, all of those

Michael Nelson

things, kind of the whole vegetables aren't bad now.

Ashleigh VanHouton

Well, you know, it depends. It depends on the day,

Anyway, and so similar to my first book, which is actually very much like an educational like read from front to back kind of book about organ meats. And then there were some recipes. Carnivore ish is similar and that we really spend some time kind of debunking myths about the inherent unhealthiness of animal protein, which probably seems really like common sense to URI, but the, the mainstream, and I hate to say it, like it's this conspiracy thing.

But mainstream media is very much stuck on plant based stuff as a health alternative. And we're again, forgetting, like what our bodies are telling us, we're forgetting common sense. We're forgetting human physiology, which is very ranging, like we're like goats in that we can eat anything. But the things that we should be eating that are the most bioavailable, nutrient dense, good for our bodies, for most people tends to be animal protein, and then a selection of fruits and vegetables that happen to work for you based on maybe your ethnicity, where you live in the world, your goals, any, you know, chronic illness or issues that you're dealing with all of those things.

So it's similar to what we were talking about previously, where it's personalized nutrition, you kind of need to do the work to figure out like, the vegetable, that's great for me isn't gonna be great for you. That doesn't mean vegetables are bad, it means some vegetables are bad for some people, and some are good for other people. And the same probably goes for animal protein and fruits and fat sources and all those things.

But we've hit this strange place in life where it's a controversial thing to say that animal protein is good for you. When the for the entirety of human existence, we have relied on it to survive, like has anyone watched the show alone, okay, that's all I watched during the Bible reality shows incredible. And you learn very quickly that human beings do not survive on plants. And you know, even vegetarians and vegans who go on that show are hankering for some salmon real quick when you are starving in the woods and you don't have Beyond Meat, or your vegan tofu, whatever fanciness to eat, like when you

have to survive, your body will go for animal fat and animal protein. And then if there's you know, some honey or some some herbs or something, go for it.

So anyway, we've hit this place where it's like crazy to talk about this stuff, but my co author and I felt very strongly especially for women, we really do speak to everybody. This book, of course, is for everyone who likes to eat food. But we think because we are in this health and wellness world, and we see that this marketing, this plant based, morality based food marketing is directed towards women largely because they are the ones buying food for their families.

They're the ones who are going to make food decisions based on how they feel as human being, you know, it's like that whole like women laughing with salads, like marketing. You know, they want us to believe that eating plant, eating plant based food, not even vegetables, eating plant based food, which is often just hyper processed weird Franken food, that doesn't make sense. They want us to believe that that's lighter. and lower calorie and better for the world. And it's a better moral choice. And, you know, I just saw recently Kim Kardashian is like the new like, Chief taste whatever the hell for Beyond Meat or something

Michael Nelson

really Oh my.

Ashleigh VanHouton

But it's funny because they actually like she did this commercial and it doesn't show her eating any of the food, like it shows her literally pretending to chew with like a full burger in her hand, it's like a whole thing. But anyway, what I'm getting at is that she is going to be hugely influential to a wide swath of women that are that are consumers that are purchasers of these products.

And so anyway, we just thought it would be good to, to try and get a cookbook in the health food section of the bookstore, that had meat on it front and center, instead of a, you know, ice bowl or some kind of plant based tofu, whatever. And just to enter the conversation, we're not saying don't ever eat fruits and vegetables, we're not saying you have to eat raw liver to be healthy.

We're just saying that it's better for all of us and our health and our well being to instead of going by what is trendy today on social media to honor what your body wants to eat, which is animal protein, and whatever else goes with it. And so my co author, she's a trained chef and recipe developer, and she's done this work for a very long time. I'm a little newer to this world. But I am a staunch animal protein advocate who has thrived on it for a long time and done a lot of work with my previous book.

So we collaborated and created 125 recipes, there's a couple of cocktail recipes in there, there's desserts, there's sides, all of them have some kind of connection to animal protein, maybe it's bone broth, or maybe it's ghee, or butter, or duck fat, or, you know, whatever. And there's every kind of animal protein, there's game meats, there's seafood, there's fish, poultry, all kinds of things, as well as red meat. And we call it a carnivore ish to sort of like this cheeky way of saying, like, you know, if we call the book, eat healthy food and figure it out, as well. So we had

Michael Nelson

to be better than die animal die.

Ashleigh VanHouton

So we've had to kind of like, you know, pick aside a little bit, but it's been really interesting to see how much more controversial it has been received than we expected. Because again, if you actually look, if you don't judge a book by its cover, which says carnivore ish, and there's some steak on it, if you open the book, and you read the research, and you read the conversation, and you see how open and non judgmental and nuanced the approaches, I think a lot more people would be, you know, willing to take a look and give the thing a try. But we're happy with it. We're proud of it, we think that it has a lot of healthy, good food in there for people to try. And so we're happy we put it out, even if it's if it's an uphill battle to get people to kind of take a look at it sometimes.

Michael Nelson

No, I think that's awesome, because I think I've had a few friends so far, they've all been women who, especially in the last couple of years have just switched to a more plant based approach. And again, if you're doing it more for ethical reasons, for religious reasons, okay, I, I kind of get that right. We can have a discussion later. But most of the time, they're like, no, no, it's just so much healthier.

And on one hand, exactly what you said I'm like, but you're eating highly processed foods, they just happen to be processed with plants, and that you've been sold. And I get that that's where it all the media is that that's better than historically, every time we mess with food, I'm thankful for all the innovations we've had. It's definitely been beneficial.

But I don't think you could find most or anyone that would say yes, base your diet on processed foods that's going to be going in the right direction. Right, but yet, it seems to be okay. If it's plant based processed foods. That's okay. That's all right. Well, it just seems backwards.

Ashleigh VanHouton

These kind of like, like terms that mean nothing that people are very confused and kind of miss educated about like I literally was talking to somebody on Instagram who said, I'm making a switch from beef to Beyond Meat because I'm trying to eat less processed food. Right?

That's really did not understand what it meant. Because yeah, ground beef is a processed food too, because unless you're eating it directly off the kibble. It has been processed. Most food has been processed. We're talking about minimally processed if you're eating a local orange that's minimally minimally processed, it was taken off the tree. You know, if you're eating local beef that's minimally processed.

If you're eating Beyond Meat, like God only knows what it is that you're eating, but plant based Yeast is synonymous with healthy. And it's it's misinformation because plant based food can be healthy plants can be healthy. It's the same as you know, the vegan craze where like vegan baked goods, and even keto baked goods and even healing your baked goods, they're still baked goods, maybe some of them

might be healthier for you because you're allergic to egg or you don't like white flour, it's still a processed junk food. It's just a different version.

But we think now anything with plant based on it is healthy. And it's just doing so many women a disservice who are already being told eat low protein, eat low fat, or you'll get fat, it's messing with our hormones, it's messing with our body composition with our ability to reproductive health and to sleep and to get strong and to build muscle and all of those things.

Because we're telling women eat less, eat less protein, eat this plant based crap. And it sucks. And you know, one last thing I'll kind of leave here and I've mentioned this on a bunch of different podcasts because I think it's so compelling is when I was pregnant. And I was doing like you I like to do a lot of research. So I was doing a ton of research about having a baby. And I was listening to these podcasts. And I was listening to a podcast about pregnant nutrition and pregnancy.

And there were nutritionists and at least one of them was a plant based nutritionist. So she obviously had her beliefs and biases kind of going into it. And she was saying, you know, when you're pregnant, unless it's like a really deep, moral or religious reason for you to not eat animal protein, I really do recommend you try to eat some during pregnancy because it's just really good. For the developing baby. It's all these amino acids, it's all this protein like basically explaining why animal protein is good for you.

And I just found that so mind blowing and shocking that like first of all, a plant based person is admitting that it's a good idea to eat animal protein when you're growing a human, but when it's just you on your own being a person, like don't worry about it, just eat the sub optimal crap that will make you feel like garbage. Because I don't know why. It just was like a really weird light bulb moment, to me that it's like when it really matters, eat animal protein, otherwise, you can probably get by, it's fine.

I thought that was a pretty strong endorsement for animal protein personally. So, you know, again, maybe it's controversial, but I think people will come around, I try to be like I said, not not judgmental, not aggressive, not condescending about it. And I think as a result of that, I do get a lot of people coming to me and reaching out to me who are like, I'm plant based, or I was vegan for 10 years, and I've been kind of watching your stuff.

And I'm kind of interested and I'm willing to give it a shot. Because I don't think that the best way to reach people and to change or open people's mind to change is by telling them what they're doing is dumb and stupid. I think plant based meat is dumb and stupid. I don't think the people who are buying it are I think they're they're maybe misinformed in a lot of cases. And just being willing to kind of have these conversations and be open to new ideas or new options could help a lot of people with their health. So that's what I'm trying to do with the book.

Michael Nelson

No, I think that's great. And I've had a few more one on one consults lately with pretty high level women. And, you know, a couple of times I was like, you know, here's your options, right? If you want to avoid all red meat, we can go that path, here's what you would do. The caveat being, I don't think it's

going to be the best path, it's going to be a lot harder, and it's going to be a lot more work. Or you can eat me, I can send you the research. Again, you have to decide what is going to be best for you. But they were kind of shocked.

They're like, you're recommending meat, I'm like, yeah, like you said, you get, you know, some beneficial fat and you get heme iron, you get all these other nutrients. It's easier, especially if you're busy, you get complete proteins, etc. Right? I mean, I think there's other ways you can kind of work around it. But the reality is, that's a lot of time, it's a lot more effort.

And most people when their life gets busy, just not going to do it. Right. So yeah, I think having, especially for recipes is a big one. I don't know how to prepare it. I don't know what to do. Like, and like on your last book, too. It's, it doesn't have to be super complicated to be easy and tasty and work for you. Right. So I think that's a plus, because then you can eliminate that as like a reason why they weren't able to do it.

Ashleigh VanHouton

Absolutely. Yeah. I mean, it's the same. If you're eating like plant based and eating lots of vegetables, you still have to prepare that you still have to come up with ways to write vegetables interesting every day, which Good luck, I don't know. But you know, that's what we're doing with the book too.

There's a couple more involved things if you if you're a chef, if you like to be in the kitchen and kind of play around but for the most part, it's stuff that people who are busy people who don't have a lot of time people who have families, they can all enjoy it because that's another thing I learned through the pandemic when we were home all the time and we always kind of mostly cook at home like we don't eat out a ton, but we were like doing everything at home and men make food from scratch and like, yeah, it does get tiring.

And you do get, you know, bored of it and it does get monotonous. So like, that's why cookbooks still exist and why people still keep coming up with, you know, new ideas, new recipes, because it's inspiring, and it gives people you know, something new to try, and they can kind of spice up whatever you're bored with in the kitchen. So we've got plenty of ideas in there for you if you're willing to try some new things.

Michael Nelson

Awesome. Well, thank you so much. I really appreciate it. And where can people find the book?

Ashleigh VanHouton

Yeah, Mike, thank you for your time. It's always great to catch up and chat. And I want to talk offline with you a bit more about Costa Rica, because we're going to go again, I think next year, and I want some advice.

But yeah, if people want to reach out to me, I'm on mostly on Instagram at [The Muscle Maven](#), that's my handle, you can say hi to me there. And my website is just my name, [Ashleyvanhoughton.com](#). And both of my books are there, you can see information about all my coaching and programs, my podcast,

muscle, Maven, radio, it's all on my website. So you can and then the books, you can get them wherever books are sold Amazon, Barnes and Noble, wherever you can find good books.

Michael Nelson

Yeah, and I highly recommend them books, then also, the podcast is great, too. Because I think you do a very good job of having good people on there who are knowledgeable who are very similar. I mean, that's probably why we're having this conversation, because we're both very similar of, yeah, let's just try to be a little bit more inclusive. Like, here's some options of things you can do to be better, and not just shit on everyone else for all the decisions that they did. It's like I get why you did what you did. So hopefully, here's some other options that will work and be, you know, make your life better, instead of just running around saying, Oh, this guy is fine. Look at all this horrible stuff. It's like, Hey, you're not helping the problem, right? You get a lot of clicks, but you're not being useful.

Ashleigh VanHouton

100% I will take fewer clicks and more productivity any day.

Michael Nelson

Yeah. Awesome. Well, thank you so much. I really appreciate it. Thanks, Mike.

Ashleigh VanHouton

I appreciate your time.

Michael Nelson

Thank you. Thank you so much to Ashley for being on the program, we'll have a link to pick up her new book carnivore-ish 125 protein rich recipes to boost your health and build muscle. And I thought it was very well done, very laid out. For all of us who eat a lot of protein, having new recipes and different twists on some things you might not have eaten in a while think is always a great idea. I've even told clients that if they're getting kind of bored with their same foods, you know, just pick up a book like this one and just practice a new recipe even just one per week. That can go a long way. So big thanks to Ashley make sure to check out all of her information, we'll put links down below where you can follow her.

And this podcast is brought to you by [Flexdiet.com](https://flexdiet.com). If you want to learn all about protein, and macronutrients, such as carbohydrates, fats, even a little bit more of the extreme approach with context, such as intermittent fasting, keto, etc. All of that is covered in the flex diet certification. The great part is you will learn the context as we talked about in this podcast of you know when to use each thing.

This is based on the concepts of metabolic flexibility and flexible dieting. You'll learn all about each one of the areas. And then I'll give you five specific action items. You can apply with yourself and with your clients. And if you want to go deeper, there's also expert interviews everyone from protein Dr. Stu Phillips, Dr. Jose Antonio, even Dr. Mike Ormsby talks a little bit about protein before sleep, and many other experts in there also Dr. Dan party, Dr. Eric Helms, Dr. Steven DNA, and many others.

It is currently not open. But you can go there and get on the waitlist for the next time that it is open. Also puts you on to the free daily newsletter with all sorts of more information. Thanks you so much for listening to this podcast. I really appreciate it. If you could do us a favor and go to the old iTunes or wherever you're listening to this and leave us a review.

Whatever stars you feel are appropriate and any comments would be greatly appreciated. Or if you have someone that you think may benefit from this conversation, please forwarded over or share it on the old social media. Thank you so much. Once again, really appreciate it. Talk to you next week.