

[00:00:00] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** Welcome back to the Flex Diet Podcast. I'm your host, Dr. Mike T. Nelson, and on the podcast we talk about all things to increase your performance, add more muscle, better body composition, and do it in a flexible manner, all without destroying your health in the process. Today we've got on the podcast, Michael Easter.

[00:00:28] You may recognize him from his first book, the Comfort Crisis. He has another book coming out. Depending on when you are listening to this, it may be out called Scarcity Brain. We talk about that. We talk about a wide range of topics, everything from fasting, the magazine industry or I was a expert for a couple articles he had written in the past why you should do hard things. The difference between effective hard things and just doing hard things. What role does temperature play in your training? And just a general wide ranging conversation, and we kick it off with why? Speaking of doing the hard things, writing books is not easy.

[00:01:16] So why is he writing another book? I say this as I'm recording this in the process of writing two books and helping with a third not an easy process, but again super useful. So we do touch on that and we vent a little bit about the diet and magazine and exercise industry and some of the messaging that goes into that.

[00:01:39] And if you enjoy doing hard things, but you want to do them with a purpose, check out the Physiologic Flexibility certification. It will open again this September 18th, 2023. Go to physiologicflexibility.com to get on the wait list. It is a certification that's a level two to the Flex Diet certification.

[00:02:04] So the Flex diet certification is the basics in exercise, nutrition, and sleep, and the physiologic flexibility certification. We talk about the four pillars of homeostatic regulation. Just fancy words, but things your body must hold constant. In order for you to stay upright such as things we talk about in this episode, temperature, pH breathing, and fuel systems.

[00:02:32] If you can expand both ends of each one of those four pillars, I believe you can become more robust, anti-fragile, just generally much harder to kill, and your recovery will also go up quite a bit. So if you're interested in that, I'll have a lot more information coming out. You can get on the wait list at Physiologicflexibility.com and enjoy this podcast with author Michael Easter.

[00:03:02]

[00:03:03] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** Welcome back to the Flex Diet Podcast. I'm here today with Michael Easter. How's it going, man?

[00:03:08] **Michael Easter:** Good. Good to see you. Thanks for having me.

[00:03:11] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** Yeah. Thank you so much. I really appreciate your time. I know Scheduling's been a little bit interesting and you've been super busy with another book coming out in September now too.

[00:03:22] **Michael Easter:** Yep. Another book coming in September, so The Comfort Crisis came out about two years ago.

[00:03:27] And then my next book is called Scarcity Brain, and that comes out end of September.

[00:03:32] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** Nice.

[00:03:33] **Michael Easter:** Been running around craziness, trying to get the book done so I finally feel like I can semi rest for a moment until the storm picks back up in September.

[00:03:43] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** Yeah, and you're a crazy person. What made you finish one book and then try to write another one right away and actually finish it?

[00:03:50] **Michael Easter:** Yeah, that's a good question. That was a great question. It I actually signed the contract for that book before. The first one came out, so oh, interesting. Yeah, like two, three weeks before comfort crisis came out, I signed the contract for the scarcity brain. So it took one and a half years to write basically.

[00:04:13] And then editing stuff and going over all the final copy was, has been about six months. Yeah. I don't know why I did that though. I'm, I told my side, I told my wife, I'm like, I'm not doing, I'm not doing it, but I already know I'm gonna freaking do, I'm gonna sign another contract before Scarcity brand comes out.

[00:04:29] But I am going to tell them I want three years, not one and a half.

[00:04:34] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** Yeah, one and a half. That's a short time period, man. From my understanding of those kind of level of books,

[00:04:40] **Michael Easter:** Yeah, you I have to go all in for a year and a half and it just consumes your life and it's, there's different ways to do it.

[00:04:46] You can lengthen it and just not go all in, or you can just compress the time and drive yourselves Absolutely freaking bonkers in the process, but that's okay.

[00:04:56] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** Yeah. I think it was Steven Pressfield who said he always had another project in the works before he finished the next one. So he always felt like then, at least when he was writing full-time, which was later in his career, that he had something to do.

[00:05:11] So I think it might be this sort of mindset of, oh, even if that one doesn't do so well, oh, I've already got the next one. The next one's already, lined up of I. Keeping going. And I know some other authors I think I was listening to Jack Harr was on Joe Rogan the other day. So he was talking about all the different multiple projects he has.

[00:05:28] And he usually is starting to write one book, I think, as he is wrapping up the other one, which. To me, it just seems crazy.

[00:05:35] **Michael Easter:** It's mildly crazy, but it's, it's a living there's various ways to living. Worse things

[00:05:39] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** to do. Yeah. Yeah. So what inspired you to write the comfort crisis? I loved it.

[00:05:44] I thought it was great. And we intersected, I know you'd interview for some articles in the past and I ended up when I off and did some of the physiologic flexibility stuff, which I think overlaps pretty nicely with what you ended up writing in the comfort crisis.

[00:05:59] **Michael Easter:** Yeah, so it really was just an observation that in the context of modern life, usually to improve your life, especially when we're talking about health, you often have to go through short-term discomfort.

[00:06:10] It's like the story of improvement is now like embrace short-term discomfort to get a long-term benefit. And that's something I picked up just through life experiences and also working at Men's Health. It's every single story that we would write. You had to do something uncomfortable to get this benefit that the magazine is trying to sell you.

[00:06:28] If you want to, if you want to improve your fitness, you're gonna have to work out. And that's uncomfortable. All our weight loss stories, as much as we told you was gonna be easy, wasn't gonna be totally easy. You were probably gonna be hungry, and that kind of sucks, but that's how you would lose the weight.

[00:06:43] And so it was just seeing that story. And then I ended up doing some stories that were off the grid. Spending, like a week up in the mountains and realizing when I came back, how, one, I felt a lot better. You're just like, you felt like you've done something challenging.

[00:07:00] You felt, you feel a lot calmer. A lot of good things happen when people spend extended amounts of time outside, especially when they're doing physical things outside and. Getting home, you realize oh man, it's so different living in the modern world than it is, existing outdoors and the, and yet humans existed outdoors for two and a half million years.

[00:07:21] That's the context that we evolved under. And really the main difference between modern life and there is the level of comfort. And so most technologies and advancements and progress we've made have been designed to make people's lives easier and more comfortable. Which is great. It's a great in the grand scheme of time and space.

[00:07:39] But at the same time we've also in the process, engineered out of our lives some things that keep us healthy. For example, movement. We've engineered into our lives some things that when overdone make us unhealthy. For example, hyper processed food, right? And on. There's so many different ways that the world has changed that can sometimes be at odds.

[00:08:01] With our health that the book really just dives into that

[00:08:04] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** topic. Why do you think humans are wired to want comfort in the short term, but there's a long term cost to it? I have my own theories on that, but what are your thoughts about how we end up being wired

[00:08:20] **Michael Easter:** that way? Oh I think it's basically that for the vast majority of time doing the next easiest, most comfortable thing kept us alive.

[00:08:29] Yeah. Like it never made sense. Think of getting, think of pick any random trend, like getting in an ice bath like that doesn't make any damn sense a million years ago because like you could actually freeze to death afterwards, right? Yeah. You can't go into the warm truck or whatever.

[00:08:43] Think about the context of food. Food is scarce and so if you come upon it, You should probably overeat it because you may not come upon it again anytime soon. Movement makes zero sense to move more than the bare minimum to just get energy, right? Like exercise is a thing that we invented like 150 years ago, basically.

[00:09:04] So doing the next easiest, most comfortable thing is essentially a survival hack. For most of time in an uncomfortable world that demands a lot of us, but when you put that sort of tendency or drive, whatever you wanna call it, in a world where things are, have been engineered to be easy been engineered to be more comfortable, that starts to backfire and it's a basic mismatch.

[00:09:27] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** Yeah, that's one thing I got from Dr. Koba Z Health years ago was that your body is basically wired to survive. Like your physiology, your neurology, it's gonna do everything possible in order to survive. And if you just, that really changed how I looked at it. Even just perf like high-end performance. It's oh, why does this, a high level athlete have this crazy movement adaptation?

[00:09:47] Because for their body in that situation, that was, better. And even the general population clients, when I was working more with them, especially more in the past, for years I used to get mad at 'em, what are you doing? Why are you going through the drive through at said fast food place?

[00:10:02] And then I realized, oh, to their brain, they're, the lizard brain, however you wanna phrase it, which is an oversimplification, that's efficiency. Like their body is driving them. If you can get, 1200 calories in a matter of minutes for \$3 and 17 cents, like you're literally wired to do that day in and

[00:10:22] **Michael Easter:** day out.

[00:10:24] Yeah, totally. And it's even, it's funny too that you said it's like a survival thing because, the theory of natural selection says we want to survive and procreate, but survival trumps procreation. Like when people in survival mode, they're not looking for mates. It's like number one, survive.

[00:10:38] Because if you favor procreation over survival in a dangerous setting, like you might get caught in a that situation and not make it out.

[00:10:49] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** And I think it was Charles Quin who said, we're basically like cave people with cell phones now. Yeah. Like our genetics and how we're wired, even though we have these, bigger prefrontal cortex brains

that can do a lot of thinking of stuff at the base level, it really hasn't changed that much, especially in a couple hundred years.

[00:11:06] **Michael Easter:** Yeah, I almost even see us as basic animals, but with Pop-Tarts it's like you look at a lot of the same behaviors that you see in most animals are apparent in most humans, but just at a different scale. Look at people on cell phones. It's like the exact same behavior a rat hitting a lever in a, an old Skinner box or whatever.

[00:11:24] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** So what are some of the ways. Out this then what is your viewpoint on that? And then we'll get down to maybe some more specifics from there.

[00:11:34] **Michael Easter:** Yeah, I think the big picture part of it, there's like multiple ways to look at it, but I think like a big message that has been useful for people who read the book is realizing that one, you're wired to do these behaviors that we have demonized.

[00:11:52] You're not a bad person for wanting McDonald's. Like you should want McDonald's. Yeah. It's like totally normal. In fact, it would be abnormal if you didn't want

[00:12:02] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** McDonald's. Yeah. I don't trust those people who are like, oh, I don't need any like high calories, cupcakes or cookies that it's I don't trust you.

[00:12:09] If you, if that and you don't like any type of music whatsoever I wanna see your belly button because I think you're an alien. You,

[00:12:16] **Michael Easter:** I'm,

[00:12:20] So one, realizing you're not a bad person for not wanting to exercise, wanting to eat junk food, whatever. But then also the realization that like it is gonna be uncomfortable to start making changes. A lot of the sort of the broader fitness industry and nutrition world has tried to sell everything as like easy and effortless and you're never gonna be hungry if you eat X, y, z.

[00:12:42] This workout is gonna be just so easy. It's like just sitting on the couch. It's it's never, it's not, it's never gonna work if it's like that. So I think one, so accepting that it is gonna be challenging, but also realizing it's probably not gonna be as bad as you think. Because we're very like future thinking.

[00:12:58] And when, when we start to feel a little bit uncomfortable, it's like our brain catastrophizes and goes, oh, this is just gonna get worse and worse until I die. But if you actually put yourself in a situation where, say you're hungry, it's usually not that bad. You're like you're more anxie over what it might become than the actual moment right there.

[00:13:19] Same with exercise. It's like in the moment it's not bad, but you're thinking like, oh, this is just gonna get worse and worse until I die. So also realizing that,

[00:13:28] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** Yeah, that's the one thing I found helpful with intermittent fasting. And generally, I, I like people to take one longer fasting approach, what Brad Piman has talked about in eat, stop, eat, take one day, work up to a 19 to 24 hour period, do a run in period for six to eight weeks.

[00:13:44] And the biggest thing that I got from that was, oh yeah, I'm gonna be a little hungry, but. It's not too bad. My productivity didn't completely crash. Like a lot of times I get more stuff done, so I'm not stopping to eat even, at a higher level. Most exercise is pretty good.

[00:14:00] Granted, if you're going for an elite level performance, probably not the best day to do it, but it's really not that bad. You still have to like it in stores, et cetera. And for me that was interesting, and I've done it a lot with clients since then. And we can talk about the physiologic benefits, but I think the mental benefits were much higher than I expected because now that they've done it, if you're trapped in an airport and the whole, all your food choices are horrible and overpriced, eh, maybe I just won't eat.

[00:14:27] Okay. Like it, it becomes like a legitimate option where I think before. You haven't practiced that skill or have that experience, you're just, that doesn't even enter your brain as a potential path to go down.

[00:14:40] **Michael Easter:** Yeah, I'm with you. You have to do it a few times and then you realize you're actually fine.

[00:14:44] And a lot of it is just future thinking. I find that fasting, it's like, to me it probably at the end of the day, it's all. How much energy did you eat? How much did you burn? Sure. But it's just not a lever that a person can use That makes that a lot easier. Like to me, I find it easier just don't eat X meal than eat this specific thing X amount of times a day.

[00:15:07] Yes. I think that's really easy. What's harder to think about the specific thing you should eat or just don't eat right. Don't eat. ISS pretty approachable. And yeah, I think it's, I think it's useful for people. Some people it may not be perfect for, and that's, to me, that's like the diet industry gets so criticized so often, but at the same time, I think that people learn a lot by trying diets.

[00:15:28] Yeah, it's probably gonna fail. In five weeks, if you're trying to do, you're doing it perfectly, but you might learn one or two things along the way. And maybe that gets put into this sort of bucket that becomes the Mike Nelson diet. That's just for you.

[00:15:43] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** So what are your thoughts about, obviously I'm a big fan of metabolic flexibility in terms of high use carbohydrates, high use fat, if we're just talking about nutrition do you think that would lend itself to being more.

[00:15:58] Flexible within some of these more, I don't wanna say extremes, but areas on the edges where there is more discomfort that you're physiologically able to go from a period of fasting to, falling face first in a birthday cake and not having as many sort of consequences from it.

[00:16:16] Yeah,

[00:16:16] **Michael Easter:** and I may not be, this may not be a perfect answer to this. But I do feel like just the ability to be adaptable and not rigid to one specific thing over another is useful, especially if you live in any sort of. Chaos in your life, meaning you gotta travel, sometimes you have to do X, y, z.

[00:16:38] You're, if you're, a business person, you have to do all these business dinners and lunches, like having more options rather than less seems like a good thing to me. Like when I travel, I usually, I live in on Pacific and if I'm going to the East coast, I'm usually having to leave super early.

[00:16:55] So it's like I'm not gonna eat at 6:00 AM. And then I get to the East coast at three, four, whatever it is. To me that's very easy to just be like, okay, I'm having one meal the day, and that makes it a lot easier. And then when I get home, it's okay, maybe I'm going to eat a little more than usual, but also like I have a trip coming up and I know I'm gonna lose five pounds on a five day trip or whatever it is, or six day trip.

[00:17:15] So

[00:17:18] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** yeah, I would agree with that. Even like from. Regulatory of like circadian rhythm. There's some super fascinating stuff that once you've removed lights as the main cue that food, and this is my biased opinion, is the backup system to that. And so we've, I've played around with a fair amount with that too, of just shifting food.

[00:17:37] Especially people are doing a lot of time zone changes. That seems to be useful too, which, goes back up to what we just. Trying to be more adaptable per se. And I think of this too, when I have some people I work with who are doing, prep for, special forces selection and stuff, and the ones I always laugh at are the guy is always guys who come in who have.

[00:18:00] Everything like super prepared. They have all their supplements set out and they've been like this robot for six months, like trying to get ready. And on one hand I'm like, I commend your discipline and your movement in the right direction, but you gotta understand like the day one you get there, all that stuff is fucked.

[00:18:17] Like you're not doing anything, any of that stuff. And early on in my career, I. Screwed up. And I didn't tell them that 'cause I didn't quite, couldn't quite grasp it. And it was they failed out like on day two, where now I get those people, I'm like, okay, so now we're gonna have you fast for 24 hours, or we're gonna give you just a shit ton of like shitty carbohydrates and they're gonna go see if you can perform again because you're not gonna be able to regulate that stuff to the extreme degree that you've done here at home.

[00:18:46] Yeah. If you want to be a monk and be a bodybuilder or do something like that where you control your environment. Great. But the reality is you need to perform in all these weird, obscure circumstances. That's literally your job. Yeah. So you should probably add some variability now before you get forced into the variability.

[00:19:05] Yeah. That's

[00:19:06] **Michael Easter:** such, that's such a good point. And I do feel like. If you, being adaptable to me is like the key. If you're doing anything that is unpredictable, which is to say most things are unpredictable, but the more unpredictable it gets, the more able you want to be like, no, I don't need anything.

[00:19:23] I'm fine. And so to me, a lot of times when we get hyper-specific with routines and behaviors and specific pinpoint approaches, that becomes

more of a liability than an asset. Because when you talk to people who make it through Ssf and have been in a while, you're like, what do you need?

[00:19:41] You're like, oh, nothing. Yeah. I'm good.

[00:19:42] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** Yeah,

[00:19:44] **Michael Easter:** that's what you wanna be. You wanna not have need anything. Like for my, for a lot of my work, I have to travel into obscure countries and weird situations and If I'm being hyper picky about food and need to pack in like a bunch of supplements and shit that's not gonna work.

[00:19:58] That's ridiculous. I can't be like, oh yes I've come to visit this tribe in the Amazon, but oh no, I think that has gluten in it. What you're sharing with me I can't eat that. That doesn't work,

[00:20:08] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** yeah, I told this story before, but a good buddy of mine got sent over to the, Southeast Asia.

[00:20:15] Didn't say what it was. It was, they were doing sort of a practice training drill, they said, so it was him and six other people in the military. And I asked him, I said, Hey man, how did it go? He is oh, it was great for me. I'm like, uhoh, that makes it sound like it wasn't so good for everybody else.

[00:20:28] He is oh yeah. He is they, some of the options they only had were like certain areas, weird grocery stores, street vendors, that kind of stuff. And he has a very, I'll say wide diet of interesting objects from all forms of food, like iron stomach, as trained that way. He is yeah, all the other guys were sick for the first like three days and I was great.

[00:20:52] It's oh, just think of. The time and the money that is spent on training and, elite operator gets taken down by interesting object off food cart, yeah. It just street meat. It's what?

[00:21:06] **Michael Easter:** No, it's totally real. And like even even the water in a lot of countries yeah, you, you can't drink it.

[00:21:11] But if you can like very slowly. Tiny bit a day, your body starts to realize what's going on and you get used to it.

[00:21:20] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** Yeah. I had this weird thing where I would try to, like towards the end of the trip, I would try to brush my teeth with it, and

then as it went up towards the end of the trip, I would hedge my bets just a little bit, hopefully not crossing that threshold because I get nervous about being on a.

[00:21:38] Long plane flight and having, something be a little weird. Or if I was gonna be in an area for several weeks, I do it in the middle of the trip. So that way if something weird happened, I'm not on a, seven hour flight using the bathroom the entire time. But yeah, same thing. It's like you're riding this line of I don't wanna get sick, I don't want to go overboard, maybe there's an opportunity here.

[00:21:57] I can, expand my gut biome a little bit. And there's super interesting data on people who. I don't remember the study, but they traveled, I wanna say it was like to Africa or something from the US and they did gut biome samples before they left and a couple days after they landed and showed just like huge differences literally within a couple days too, which is fascinating.

[00:22:18] Wow, that's wild. Yeah. So how would we expand our adaptability? What would you recommend?

[00:22:27] **Michael Easter:** To be quite honest, one thing, one thing that I think is useful to people is. In the context of today where information can be so hyper specific is realizing that a lot of, like most things fall into very wide ranges, and you hear some tip on the internet about you need to do X thing at X intensity for, Y minutes.

[00:22:47] And you better not do it Z Minutes.

[00:22:50] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** It's God forbid you do his zone two training for 20 minutes instead of 30 or 40 or 60.

[00:22:55] **Michael Easter:** Yeah. Yeah. It's like most things fall into ranges and so much of the information we have around health is, it's, there's a lot of uncertainties around a lot of things.

[00:23:05] I feel like as much as people have gone down insane rabbit holes of eat this, not that, and all these different like hyper-specific diets, to me, like the one thing that we can walk away with is you should probably eat foods that are mostly like minimally processed.

[00:23:20] If you eat some stuff that's processed every now and then, you'll probably be fine. And also don't eat too much of all of it,

[00:23:28] Soccer. I don't know if that answers your question, but I feel like we've, we're in a place now where we have so much data that we're trying to like, figure out what it all means and maybe airing a little too far on the side of it's

[00:23:40] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** gospel.

[00:23:41] Yeah, no I, with. With some general population people. I'm like, how about you eat something green that's not a green skittle? There's things called broccoli and spinach and green beans and then they come back with oh, so and so said vegetables are out to kill me now, and the lectins. And I'm just like, oh god.

[00:24:00] Like I never would've thought like doing a career in nutrition that we would get to the point that I would be fielding questions in my inbox about. Don't eat vegetables because, and these are people who don't have digestion issues. They don't need a low FODMAP diet like their digestion's perfectly fine.

[00:24:14] I'm like, I get it. If you have some digestion issues you're trying to work around, cool, whatever. But yeah, that did some of the basic stuff. I just never thought we'd have these arguments about yeah, now we're having these debates about it.

[00:24:26] **Michael Easter:** Yeah. It's crazy. And I understand why people are confused because Totally.

[00:24:30] A lot of times the arguments are from people who are really good at social media. I. Yes, and they're convincing. It's what sells on social media isn't nuance. No. No one wants to hear you. I found that out. Expound on all these different shades of gray. It's like it things capture people when we, they're presented in black and white.

[00:24:50] That's what moves the masses. And unfortunately, it's often weaponized if you ask me.

[00:24:55] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** And if you can be more, take something that everybody loves and tell them not to do that. Like coffee. This came out like about six months. It was maybe six months or a year ago. Said person who I won't say is his name, said Coffee is now bad.

[00:25:09] And he goes in this whole spiel and he presents like some cell line study, an old one-eyed ferrets or whatever, showing how coffee, caffeine was

bad. But then if you listen, interestingly, he's I made it all the way through med school without coffee or coffee and you don't need it. And I'm like, oh, okay.

[00:25:28] So a little bit of personal bias there. And so I got pissed off because then of course everyone's emailing me about it. And literally within 10 minutes I found seven umbrella meta-analysis being done. So a meta-analysis, as right? Compilation of studies. An umbrella review of meta-analysis means multiple meta-analysis that they've put in one paper, and that in general within moderation, right?

[00:25:52] Coffee has lots of health benefits and sadly, maybe like the number one source of antioxidants for some people, which is even more scary. But that doesn't sell, right? It sells to say coffee's gonna kill you. And everyone's oh my God, I love my coffee. What is this guy talking about?

[00:26:08] **Michael Easter:** And the other thing to me, it's if coffee were actually killing people, we would know it

[00:26:12] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** there, there'd be tons of dead people everywhere.

[00:26:14] **Michael Easter:** We would know it. And so if, let's say coffee does raise your risk of death by some percent, is it worth giving up coffee the rest of your life? Yeah, I'd rather live to, to, 90 and drink coffee every day than 92 without coffee.

[00:26:32] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** Totally Me too. Seems like a good deal to me.

[00:26:35] **Michael Easter:** I don't

[00:26:35] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** know.

[00:26:36] Yeah. But there you go With your context and rational thinking again. Yeah. Lemme try briefly on social media. I do like your social media. I think it's actually very well done. Do you think there's ways we can prevent or present information in a better way to get across the idea of context and just general principles that may be a little bit too basic, but are beneficial for people?

[00:27:06] **Michael Easter:** Yeah, that's a good question. It's one of those where, I'm pretty sure that I would have, I would be a lot more popular if I. Just did everything black or white and told people that, shit was gonna kill him. But

it's I'm not gonna do that. To me it's like finding, as a journalist, I always think of what's the hook?

[00:27:25] What's the thing that's like interesting to people? It's like the one thing I can pull out that feels specific almost in the vein of The counterintuitive thing, like you were just talking about but is actually leads into advice that is reasonable and backed up. Yeah. So trying to find that, I think around good ideas is probably more challenging, but it's, I think it's also worth it because that can, bring people in.

[00:27:49] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** Yeah. And I always, at least for myself, I always have this sort of internal debate of same thing. I'm not gonna go out and just. The sky is falling and all this kind of stuff just to get views because eh, I like sleeping at night and I can make money in different ways. But yeah, I'm trying to get across using the hook and using similar in my air quotes here, tactics, but get a better message across to people.

[00:28:14] And then I always think of it doesn't matter who doesn't get it, it only matters who gets it. So even if you get. People, but they take more action and they actually physically, mentally get better. Then that's good. I would love to see some follow up metrics on a lot of the bigger social media accounts where I think they get a lot of hits.

[00:28:34] I think they get a lot of eyeballs, but I'm not so sure they drive a whole lot of actual change, which again, is much harder to measure too. Yeah.

[00:28:43] **Michael Easter:** Yeah. And and I think if. So let's say you come across some study that's if you eat, I don't know, I'm making this up. 12 ounces of vegetables a day.

[00:28:55] You X, Y, Z happens to your health. Obviously, like that's a guesstimation and If you eat 11 ounces, you're not gonna die. But it's also good ounces to, it's also good advice to basically say eating vegetables seems like good advice, right? So like finding some of those nuggets where you might use the spec specificity, which people really love.

[00:29:15] Yes. But then also couch it like, oh my God, did you know if you eat X amount? This is what this study showed. And then, and oh by the way, like if you don't, if you don't actually hit 12, You're still doing a good thing, like just try and hit the number make a healthy attempt and hoorah, guys,

[00:29:30] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** Yeah. It seems like the formula is have something controversial that goes against what people believe, roll out some form of horribly done study or some mechanistic thing that they can solve that why in the person's brain, even if it doesn't really mean a whole lot, and then tell them exactly what to do.

[00:29:49] But never hold anyone accountable on doing that. Yeah. Yeah. It just seems to be like the magical formula as far as I can piece together.

[00:29:56] **Michael Easter:** Totally. And also, yeah, and it's, and social media is inherently flawed with how how much time and. Word counts. You have to explain something. Yes. So just by using it as someone who's trying to spread a good message, like you have to accept the fact that these are the constraints of the platform.

[00:30:13] And just do the best that you can there. It's like I have a friend Tamara Hasell, she is a columnist for the Washington Post. She writes a lot about. Health, nutrition, food, and she's like one of the sharpest knives in the drawer by far. And she'll tweet stuff about her work and like people will be like, ah, all, all this.

[00:30:33] She's giving good information. Yeah. But like people will tweet this like random nuance and she's her line is always, of course it's simplified. It's a fucking tweet, yeah. What do you think here? Like of course we're have to oversimplify some stuff sometimes.

[00:30:48] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** Yeah, but everybody just wants to find everything wrong.

[00:30:53] And if I get one more DMM from some random business coach who I don't know, who's trying to convince me I need to create more 22nd reels to post my Instagram account, I'm like, oh, please. Like I'm fine with putting little soundbites and stuff here and there, but also it's Do I really think the same person who's gonna consume a 15 second soundbite ad nauseum is gonna pay for a 30 hour certification on this stuff.

[00:31:17] No, of course they're not. So it's am I, who am I trying to appease to? Yeah. So anyway, that's a little ranting. We sound like a bunch of old people ranting about social media, which is ironic since we both use it, yeah. Wow. That's the

[00:31:29] **Michael Easter:** world we live in now. We have this thing that you almost, you know, like being in the book industry, it's like my publisher basically, Requires that I be on social media.

[00:31:38] Oh yeah. So you ha you have to use it. And then the question is okay, how do I use this in a way that's not gonna drive me crazy? And I feel like is give at least giving people some information that they can hopefully use to live better.

[00:31:50] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** Yeah, totally agree. Speaking of trends on social media, did you ever predict like ice baths would be like the craziest thing now?

[00:31:59] **Michael Easter:** No. I, no, I didn't predict it would be that, but I do feel like. You can predict that there will be a trend.

[00:32:08] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** What are your thoughts about using sauna and Cold as a way to talk about adaptability and expand sort of your horizon of temperature exposure? Even

[00:32:16] **Michael Easter:** I. I haven't, I can't speak super intelligently on this topic 'cause I haven't done a lot of ice baths in sauna.

[00:32:23] For me, I tend to think about it what's the lowest effort thing I can do to get something similar or more. And so like for me it's just like I could do the ice bath in the winter or I could just go for a hike for an hour. You could go outside really cold.

[00:32:41] Just go outside because I know for sure that if I'm gonna cover ground outside for an hour, like that's good. I know that being exposed to nature. That's good. And being exposed to cold. Okay. That could be good too, probably, so that's how I view it. But I also I don't know what to think about ice baths, to be honest.

[00:32:57] I have some people, some people are like, it's all hocus pocus, but then you have other legitimate people who I. I respect and I trust who are like, I don't know, dude, I just feel better when I get outta the ice bath. What do you want me to tell you? It's okay, cool. You do you. So what's your take on them?

[00:33:15] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** I started looking at, it had probably four or five years ago, and I remember right when Wim Hoff was becoming more popular kind of early on. He just kinda had this exponential increase. And I remember at

the Swiss conference, went out to dinner with a very large, we'll say prominent fitness nutrition guy.

[00:33:31] It was a private conversation, so I won't say his name, but who can probably figure out who it is. He's from Canada. And I was asking him, I said, Hey man, you kinda think about Wim Hoff of some of the breathing and some of the cold water stuff and he is huh, I don't know. It's interesting.

[00:33:45] But he's pretty kooky. And that was his response and I was like, yeah, I don't know if he's the guy I would go to for the hardcore science on it, but he was very good at explaining the experiential components of it and obviously did a lot to, popularize it. So I started looking into it around, before Covid happened, I bought a 15.6 cubic freezer filled it full of water.

[00:34:09] It turns out those freezers are not meant to be filled with water. So there's a few issues make, making sure they get sealed and the sides don't scrape off, and all that kind of stuff. And I figured I was in lockdown. I wasn't traveling, wasn't teaching. I'm like I just start doing this every day and see what happens.

[00:34:24] I started doing aerobic stuff on top of my normal thing. Did my cold water immersion each morning and. My hypothesis was just like exercise is that, over time it would get a little bit easier. And the thing that surprised me after doing it six days a week for over a year at that time was every time right before I would get in, there's this hesitation of what are you doing?

[00:34:45] This is stupid. You could die in here, right? 'cause it's really cold, but yet your kind of more rational brain knows that, it's not that bad. I can get in, I can get out. It's a safe environment, it's controlled temperature, et cetera. I would've thought that little hesitation would've gone away, but it never, it got better because you could think more and you had more experience, kinda like hard exercise.

[00:35:07] It's if you came to me and said, Hey, let's go do a two K on the rower today. No. Because you didn't know how much those types of exercise suck, and your brain always remembers that. And so for me, what I found was that I think, like you're talking about doing something difficult every day.

[00:35:25] I can eliminate the excuses. Like it may be warm outside, it may be cold, but the water temps gonna be the same. It's in my garage, I have it here. It literally takes a couple minutes. So I found it reduced a lot of the barriers to

doing at least one hard thing a day. And it still legitimately felt hard and was hard just to get in.

[00:35:45] Once you've been in for a while, that's not too bad. The second part I realized is, The adaptation to it appears to go away super fast. So I did that and then once we got to travel again, went to Costa Rica, came back, and even after two weeks of coming back, like when I got into the cold water, it literally felt like I had done none of it ever before.

[00:36:07] It felt absolutely freaking horrible and I kinda had to start with those adaptations again. So those are the kinda the two things I thought were shocking to me.

[00:36:16] **Michael Easter:** That's interesting. I would I don't know. I feel like when I will say I, so I train in my garage in the summer.

[00:36:22] Yeah. And I live in Vegas. I'm just, I'm not gonna drive to a gym. So I'll train in the garage and it'll get up to 115 in there. Oof. But, The first hot days where it's over 90 in the garage miserable are so damn hard, so bad. But then once I get into July and August where it could be one 15 and I'm just like, I'm used to it, so I do think that adaptation is really fascinating and leveraging that as a tool for. Something that you're doing, maybe like an event. Or whatever I think can be useful for people and just like I think it's useful to take your body to areas that it's not used to. Yeah. Get cold sometimes.

[00:37:05] Get warm. Do it however works best for you that you benefit from, so

[00:37:10] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** yeah. Yeah, and obviously I'm biased. That's the basis of the physiologic flexibility course was okay if we're gonna expand our boundaries, like what based on physiology should we do? Because there's a hundred things you could do and there's probably some benefit to all of 'em.

[00:37:26] What I said is, okay, here's you your main four homeostatic regulators, right? Temperature, pH. Oxygen, carbon dioxide and fuels. So within each one of those areas, you can either go up or down, right? You can get warm or you can get colder, you can high pH, low pH, and then just put those into a system.

[00:37:43] Because the biggest issue I saw was that, not you per se, but a bunch of people running around. Advocating, just do stuff that's really hard. CrossFit is a good example. Yeah, I like CrossFit. I think it's great. I have a lot of clients

who do CrossFit. I think it can be incredibly wonderful, but there are some areas where you're just doing really hard shit for, I don't know what reason.

[00:38:06] Yeah. There's things where it could be hard, may not necessarily be productive at a certain point, so how do you do the things that are hard but are also productive at the same point?

[00:38:15] **Michael Easter:** I'm with you. But yeah, A lot of what? I talk like I've ramped up too because I think sometimes. People just read like a, the copy about my book that like the freaking publisher wrote, and they just assume that I'm just like, yeah, do anything hard, just anything hard is gonna help you.

[00:38:34] It's actually a little more complicated than that. But

[00:38:36] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** I don't have dumbbells on my foot and that's hard. It may do damage too, but that's not productive

[00:38:43] **Michael Easter:** is. Asking people to ask themselves, why are we doing this in the first place? What are we trying to get out of this and vocalize that I think can be useful. So to me, doing, if you do some big epic thing outdoors that you didn't think you could do, I think you really do have to make the logical jump and host analysis to be like, what happened out there?

[00:39:08] What were the times where I didn't think that I could keep going? I did keep going. And so what happened there? What is that analogous to in my life? And really having those moments where you analyze it, because when you look at something, like the old rites of passages that people would have to do.

[00:39:23] Yeah. There was always the reentry where we're gonna talk about what just happened, right? And we're gonna blow this into our lives in a reasonable way. Whereas if you're just going and doing that and then just going back and be like, all right, now I can take on the world. It's You burn some calories, but I don't know if you're gonna be able to take on the world now,

[00:39:39] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** yeah. There, there seems to be a general human trend to want to skip the integration. Yeah. Like I think we can get ourselves jazzed up to do hard things for a short period of time, no matter what that is. But I just see this across different disciplines from, people that do some special forces, challenge to.

[00:39:58] Applied medicine to, sweat lodges, hardcore exercise, whatever. It seems like when they're done, it's ooh, done with that. Everybody wants to skip

to the next thing and not, okay, what were the lessons from that? How do I incorporate these into my lives? Whereas things I should maybe be doing different on a daily basis instead of just oh, next thing.

[00:40:16] Let, here we go.

[00:40:17] **Michael Easter:** Yeah, I'm with.

[00:40:19] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** So tell us a little bit about your next book. What is the basis for that and how did you come up with I guess the sort of hypothesis for

[00:40:25] **Michael Easter:** it? Yeah, so it's called Scarcity Brain. It's basically, it looks at, we all know that everything in moderation is fine. Why the hell can't we moderate?

[00:40:38] So it looks at What are the things that humans evolve to crave, and how do we now have an abundance of all those and what's that doing to us? So if you think about the past, it's like we evolved in these environments where everything from food to stuff to information to the number of people we could influence and on was all scarce and hard to find.

[00:40:57] But we now have an abundance of all those things. So it investigates what that is doing to us and also how technology is using a lot of sort of ancient tools to push us into more over time. And the, honestly, like where the idea came from is my editor one night texted me and was like, I just thought of a cool book title.

[00:41:20] What if there was a book called Scarcity Brain? Do you wanna write it? I'm like what's it, what's the book about? Yeah. And he's I don't know. That's your job to figure out. So I'm like, so I started thinking at first, I'm like, dude, get the hell outta here. And then I'm like, oh, actually, you know what, that's like kind of an extension of the work that I've been doing and so he was onto something, even if he knew it or not.

[00:41:41] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** What would be some more examples of that? I like the idea.

[00:41:45] **Michael Easter:** Food is a very obvious one. Yeah. Information, up to, even 700 years ago, the average person took in their entire lifetime about the same amount of information that we get in a single day today.

[00:41:56] Wow. That's crazy. And we are because we had this scarcity of food stuff, information, number of people, we could influence all these different things. We evolved to really crave them. But because we couldn't get them that often, it's like you can't overdo it. But now it's like if you crave an, if you crave information, which humans do, and you have access to the internet, it's just crazy.

[00:42:20] You're just taking an information after inf piece of information and we can hit sort of a tipping point where we reach this overload point. Influence, people evolved in these small bands where there was clear delineation about who was the leader, who wasn't. There was only so many people you could influence.

[00:42:39] And now we have social media where we're literally gamifying influence. And by the way, you can potentially try and get status through that and status over all these different people, right? More people than ever before. And so it looks at a lot of these sort of different

[00:42:55] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** topics. Yeah, the social media one is interesting.

[00:42:58] I think it was Ryan Holiday was talking about, he is it's almost like this human trait to want to seek status in an online environment and approval from more people. 95% of which you'll never meet and you don't even know. Yeah, totally. These are not like people you're close to. You're literally trying to get affirmation and positive.

[00:43:23] Effects from complete strangers,

[00:43:27] **Michael Easter:** right? Yeah. Yeah. And by the way, it's all, put behind algorithms and tracked and a lot of the tech companies, they know exactly what you are going to react to. And what they're trying to get is your attention. And so if you think about life as just a culmination of whatever you're aware of, Our awareness is increasingly gravitating into tech because tech is good at pulling on these sort of evolutionary cravings that we

[00:43:56] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** have.

[00:43:59] Do you find that hampers attention span and your ability to do deep work? So one of my hypothesis, and I've noticed this after I've had a launch for the flex, I inserted the fex where I'm. I'm trying to get back to people in a little bit more timely matter on social media. 'cause sometimes it'll be days before I respond to people or, email or people have questions.

[00:44:20] I'm usually putting out a little bit more content like when this when the open period ends. I feel like I gave myself squirrel brain during that week. Like I feel myself wanting to go more to my phone to look stuff up. And if you were to stop me in that mid action, I couldn't really tell you what I was going to look at that I would probably make up some excuse about, oh, I'm gonna check my dms or whatever contrasted versus the other things I think that are highly rewarded are, for example, like you writing a book.

[00:44:52] That's a lot of deep work. That's a lot of excluding literally almost everything else in order to produce something. So it just seems weird to me that we have this. Dichotomy where everybody's vying for our attention, and we may get more trained that way, but yet at a higher level, we're actually rewarded for shunning all that stuff and being able to put something physically out into the world.

[00:45:15] Yeah,

[00:45:15] **Michael Easter:** I It's almost like your experience with the ice bath. Yeah. If you're in the ice bath a bunch, like you can you adapt to the ice bath. If you get away from it, all of a sudden the ice bath is really damn cold. Yeah. So I think the same with attention. Like when I've spent extended periods of time outdoors without access to electronics.

[00:45:34] When I come back and use them, it's just holy shit, this is so stimulating. Feels weird. And then, but then once you start using it, then it's just like your pace picks up and I think your attention gets used, adapts to that. So what is

[00:45:49] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** the way out from that? Would you, I know you've talked about time in, nature.

[00:45:53] I think you talked about a minimum of, was it three days I believe to kind Yeah, there's some, like a better word,

[00:45:58] **Michael Easter:** reset. Yeah, there's some interesting research that basically just suggests you should be going out into nature a few days a week. Even just 20 minutes seems to help. You should be going into sort of wilder spaces at least five hours a month.

[00:46:12] And again, this is like one of those range things, but it's five hours gives you a good timeline and then three days every year you should spend off

the grid deep in the back country. And that seems to do a lot of good things for people. It's a. A prescription to not be as crazy, if you will.

[00:46:29] There's a lot of interesting stuff around that, specifically like with attention, with focus, with creativity, but also with happiness, feelings of life satisfaction, that sort of thing. Calmness. Data and the catch to all that, by the way, is that you can't be using your cell phone while you're out there.

[00:46:46] Or it negates the benefits. There's some really cool studies where researchers have, one group walk around just without their cell phones and the other are on their cell phones as they're in nature. And the group that wasn't on their cell phones has a lot more gets a lot more benefits.

[00:47:03] And in terms of the actual phone, one thing. People forget is that the average person today spends more than 12 hours on digital media. That's so crazy and only part of that is from cell phones. You might spend three, four hours of screen time on your cell phone, but you're also putting in three to four hours on the tv.

[00:47:26] You might be putting in a few hours on the computer. You might have iPad time. So I think when we focus a ton on using our cell phones less, what happens is that people begin to get bored. And so then they go, okay, I'm just gonna watch Netflix. And it's

[00:47:42] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** like my iPad's not a cell phone, so it's cool.

[00:47:44] Yeah.

[00:47:44] **Michael Easter:** You like, there's no difference. There's no difference. And so finding ways to just have complete removal, I. Every now and then I think is really important. And it could be, on a day-to-day scale, it could just be like, I'm going for a walk for 30 minutes and I'm not taking anything every single day.

[00:48:01] Letting your mind wander and think and work through things because when you're focused on a screen, your attention is outward and you're having to work. And so when you remove that and start to get bored when you get bored. You mind wander and mind wandering is like this sort of background process where you're coming up with like different ideas.

[00:48:21] And so this is a lot of times why people will have such good ideas in the shower because they're just like removed from stuff. And so I think working

that back into your life can be beneficial. So I tell people like, don't think less phone, think more boredom in your

[00:48:35] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** life. Yeah. I do that when I have a project or something I'm trying to solve, like ideally I would consume.

[00:48:42] A bunch of information on it, and then I would go on a kiteboard trip and not bring any of the information with me and just kiteboard hang out outside most of the day. Or if I'm here locally, I'll lock myself in a flow chamber for one and a half to two hours just to work through it with as minimal inputs as possible.

[00:48:59] And then I just give myself an old school notebook at the end to write stuff down. Nice. Because it's so hard, I think, otherwise to have that. Processing time because I realized like the bigger problems I'm trying to solve, I never solve them when I'm trying to solve them, right? I solve them when I'm trying to do something else.

[00:49:16] When it's just running in the background and letting yourself let your brain go in neutral for a while is I found actually very productive. Even though it doesn't look productive at all, it looks like you're doing nothing.

[00:49:28] **Michael Easter:** Yeah, I'm with you. Totally. And there's, there, and there's new research that backs up all this stuff, but also this is, this has been leveraged by people for a long time.

[00:49:37] Yeah. Like when people need to get stuff done, it's I'm going to be alone with myself for a while and I'm gonna lean into some boredom.

[00:49:43] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** Awesome. So as we wrap up, what would be your top, like two to three things that people should. Incorporate more into their life from what you've learned over the past few years that would be beneficial?

[00:49:55] **Michael Easter:** Oh, top level is be willing to do uncomfortable things like exercise. It's okay to be hungry every now and then lean into some boredom spend more time outdoors even though it is more uncomfortable than your air conditioned home. One thing I talk about in the book is Rucking, which a lot of people have adopted since I wrote the book.

[00:50:15] And I just think it's a great exercise for the average person. Covering ground is something humans evolved to do. Carrying things is something

humans evolved to do and it's just really approachable and pretty low risk for most people. What else? Read the book. It's got all kinds of info.

[00:50:32] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** Yeah. Yeah. And where can people find more about the current book and the one that's coming out? And I assume you've got great stuff, so give us out your Instagram and everything else too. Yeah.

[00:50:41] **Michael Easter:** The book, if you just Google my name on Amazon, both of them will come up. Then my current project is 2%, which is my newsletter that I've ramped up recently.

[00:50:51] So we published three articles a week on topics I'm thinking about. And it's at two t w pct.com. And then, yeah, I'm post stuff on Instagram as well. It's Michael Easter.

[00:51:03] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** Awesome. And last question, where did the 2% come from? Because I think that's a cool story.

[00:51:08] **Michael Easter:** 2% of people take the stairs when there's also an escalator available.

[00:51:13] That seems,

[00:51:14] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** if you would've pulled me, I would've said 10%. But the fact that it's 2% just seems so crazy.

[00:51:19] **Michael Easter:** 2%. Yeah. Yeah. And when the researchers intervened and they put up a sign that talked about the health benefits of taking the stairs, which by the way, everyone already freaking knew. Let me just say that.

[00:51:29] Yes. I think they got it up to 4%. Oh, they doubled. Yeah. So really it's not about taking the stairs, though, it's a metaphor for sort of the situation that we find ourselves in life, which is we are wired to do the next easiest, most comfortable thing, even at the expense of long-term health and growth.

[00:51:48] So the goal is that I want to build more two percenters. This is people who are willing to do the hard thing, the thing that is hard in the short term, to benefit themselves over the long haul.

[00:51:58] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** Awesome.

[00:51:59] Thank you so much for all your time today. I really appreciate it and all the best on the new upcoming book and I would highly recommend the Comfort Crisis.

[00:52:06] I thought it was great and it was a very nice, easy read, also really great background stories and everything, so I thought it was great. So thank you so much for all your time. Really appreciate it.

[00:52:17] **Michael Easter:** Yeah. I appreciate you having me on.

[00:52:18]

[00:52:19] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** Thank you so much for listening to the podcast today. Huge thanks to Michael Easter for being on the podcast here. Always great to chat with him about some awesome ideas. If you haven't read The Comfort Crisis yet, I would highly recommend it.

[00:52:33] Great book. As of this recording, his next book is not out yet, but maybe when you listen to this, so I haven't read it yet, but I'm looking forward to checking it out. He's got some great stuff on social media, so make sure to follow him. Pick up the books everything via the links down below.

[00:52:50] If you enjoyed this conversation and you're looking for difficult things to do that are also very productive, check out the physiologic flexibility certification. It is open again this fall, September 18th, 2023 for only one week. Go to [physiologicflexibility.com](https://www.physiologicflexibility.com) for all the information to get on the wait list.

[00:53:11] I'll have some exclusive bonuses that'll come out early, and if you have any questions on it, let me know. We talk about the four pillars of homeostasis. Basically how to train your body to be more resilient. Things that your body has to hold constant, like temperature, pH fuels, et cetera. You can also train the adaptation of those on both ends.

[00:53:35] So as we talked about here, you can train in heat and do better. You can train with cold and do better. And I believe if you can expand that sort of physiologic headroom, or what I call H D R human dynamic range, you'll generally be much more robust, harder to kill and recover. Much faster. The good part is you don't need to spend a ton of time in doing most of these items, which is great.

[00:54:01] 'cause most people are not quite adapted to 'em. So you don't need a huge stimulus. You don't need to spend hours upon hours doing it. So check out

[physiologicflexibility.com](https://www.physiologicflexibility.com). Yeah. Big thanks to Michael Easter for being on the podcast. Thank you for listening to the podcast. We really appreciate it.

[00:54:18] If you have time, please leave us whatever stars you feel is appropriate. If you have time to leave a very short review, that goes a long way to get better distribution of the podcast. Thank you so much, greatly appreciate it. We'll talk to you all of you next week.

[00:54:35]

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