



**Tess Bredesen:** Oh yeah. Oh yeah, no, I, when it comes to ice cream, I know how to get what I want that's for sure.

**Jen Fisher:** Love it.

**Tess Bredesen:** So that's kind of the background of, you know, know a very, I would say pretty standard diet. We didn't talk about nutrition a lot. And when I was around seven, my mom, who is this brilliant physician, she is lean and physically fit. When she was 43, she was diagnosed with breast cancer. And it was a really, I would say, a very confusing time as a seven year old, you know, she outwardly her outward appearance was that of the epitome of health.

Right. But then to try to reconcile that with her being sick was very confusing to me. Society, I think, tends to conflate physical fitness or weight, right? The number on the scale with true health. And you know, now I've learned that health is so much more than just that. Has so much more than just this outward appearance, but at the time it was, you know, really troubling trying to reconcile that. And I think it planted the seed. I think later on, I realized that is what planted a seed of this kind of intense, almost desperate curiosity of like, what is going on here? What are the things within our control that can help or limit our health and our longevity. Later on that I started really getting into the education of it. So a friend of mine gave me the China study, which is it looks at the effect of casing, which is a protein found in milk on tumor growth. And this idea that what you could impact cancer growth. I mean, that was flooring to me at that time. And from there I kind of, dove in head first. So looking at the biochemistry of it, looking at the socioeconomics of food, I mean the political history of these farm bills, like I got really into Earl Butts in the 1973 farm bill, I just found everything really fascinating. I just wanted to unpack it all. But it was also kind of, you know, necessary at that point in time. Now I have this, all this new information and this education, and yet I still had this taste and this love for ice cream, and pizza, and pancakes and all the good stuff that we all love today still. And so I think, yes, I have a passion for nutrition and, you know, using food as a tool to optimize true health. I want to call it, you know, true health or whole health, but I also want to come at it from this place of deep understanding that food is so much more than just food, right? Food is tradition. Food is culture, you know, food is joy. Food is family. So that I think is where I focus in my practice and my work at Thrive is, you know, I like, I like to tell my clients, we draw this like three circle, Venn diagram, one circle has, you know, your biomarker. So it has like, you know, hemoglobin A1C and fasting glucose, fasting, insulins, etc. One circle has your genetics. And then the other has your lifestyle and your, your preferences and, and you know, what you like to eat on a daily basis, what your family likes to eat. I think our job is to identify that intersection, right. That sweet spot in the middle that's where, you know, where that's, where the magic happens.

**Jen Fisher:** Yeah. I mean, first of all, thank you. So, so, so much of that resonates with me on a very personal level I don't know, you know, but I was diagnosed with breast cancer at age 40.

**Tess Bredesen:** I didn't know that.

**Jen Fisher:** Yes, very similarly, probably in the best physical shape of my life, doing everything, you know, that they quote unquote, say you should do to kind of keep cancer away. No family history, obviously with the family history later on learned that it's a very small percentage of people that have breast cancer, that actually have a family history. But yeah, and, and it's interesting, that because I really, I'm not a nutritionist, but I dove into all of those same things to, especially during my treatment

to kind of understand like, okay, what are the things that I can boost do to boost my immunity? What are the things that I can do to help prevent this? Or, you know, and even if it just helped a little bit, but I kind of in a way became very obsessive about it during my treatment and have carried many of those learnings and behaviors.

**Tess Bredesen:** Yeah. I think sometimes those moments of greatest challenge provoke this, you know, this intense, intrigue or curiosity, that otherwise we wouldn't have looked under that rock. We wouldn't have explored this path. We are, my family is similar, so we do not, my mom does not have the BRCA gene or mutations. Neither do my sister and neither do I, and yet it does run in our family, for whatever reason. And so nutrition, of course, it's not, we would, I would be remiss if it said, this is the answer. It lies only with nutrition course it's much more complex than that. And yet nutrition, we would also be, you know, remiss to say that nutrition doesn't play a role.

**Jen Fisher:** Right. Yeah, absolutely. But I, I think the, you know, just the story around your curiosity for me, it was, I was looking for a reason why, right. Like I needed the answer. Why?

**Tess Bredesen:** Yeah, yeah. I get that

**Jen Fisher:** So I started to kind of look into all aspects of my life, but I will tell you during all, during my chemotherapy, we had pizza Friday. Chemotherapy was on Fridays. And so we had pizza Friday every time I had chemo because they give you steroids and it makes you ravenously hungry. And when you're ravenously hungry, the best thing to eat is pizza. So go for it.

**Tess Bredesen:** Absolutely.

**Jen Fisher:** You just have to give yourself permission sometimes.

**Tess Bredesen:** Totally, totally. It's like no judgment space of like, this is what my body needs right now. Right. I'm a huge proponent of like listening to your body. And part of that is like familial aspect and like that communal aspect of what the pizza does, what it allows, like the cortisol levels drop. You're having fun with your family. You're enjoying it. Right. It's so much more than just the pizza.

**Jen Fisher:** Yeah, absolutely. And I think that probably leads into my next question is what is, I mean, we've talked about kind of, you know, nutrition and our physical body and obviously, you know, illnesses and things like that. What is cognitive nutrition? That's kind of a newer area. That's your specialty in some ways. So talk to me about that because it's, you know, this brain, body connection, right?

**Tess Bredesen:** Absolutely. Yeah. And that is it cognitive nutrition. It is a mouthful. But I am a cognitive nutritionist. That's what I call myself, which basically means that I'm using nutritional strategies to essentially enhance cognition and prevent cognitive decline down the road. Cognitive health, if we were to like, you know, expand the topic is essentially our ability to think clearly, to learn, to remember things. And so cognitive nutrition is essentially using foods using herbs, spices, you know, nutrients as a tool to enhance and protect those cognitive functions. And this is where it got really exciting about six months or so ago. Arianna Huffington invited me to come to Thrive to create a course. So we created this course called *Nourish to Thrive* where we are getting into how we can eat to stay sharp and enhance our focus, you know, enhance our productivity, our creativity levels, you know, prevent that 2:00 p.m. slump that we all have at the office and we still have when we're working from home. And so that's kind of if we're packaging it as cognitive nutrition it's looking at whole health nutrition, but with a focus on

how do these things impact our cognitive health? Because oftentimes when we're thinking of nutrition, we are siloed into this idea that it's about our physical appearance or our physical, in physical terms. So how it affects our weight, our cholesterol levels. And we rarely think about how it is affecting things like our mood or our focus levels, right? Our ability to prevent chronic disease down the line. And so that's really where we're getting into kind of the, the quote unquote, the meat of it. Finding a way to talk about nutrition through the lens of what it's doing to our brain.

**Jen Fisher:** Okay. So let's talk about that. What is the connection between our diet and, you know, mental health and cognitive. When you talk about cognitive health, it's inclusive, I assume, of like our mental health, but things like our mood, our ability to focus, all of those things that you just mentioned. So how does our diet affect those things?

**Tess Bredesen:** Yes. Great question. There's so many puns in nutritional science, but this is literally the bread and butter of what I do and what we do at Thrive. Actually, there is been so much evidence that has accumulated in recent years, linking nutrition with mental health, that this new field of nutritional psychiatry has emerged with experts that are now agreeing that diet plays as important of a role to our mental health as it does to heart disease as it does to diabetes. So for example, you know, there's one study that looked at the effect of dietary changes on depression. So half the study participants were given like nutritional counseling and instructed to, coached to eat more vegetables, more fresh fruits, more, fish, olive oil, nuts, and seeds. And then they were coached also to help them reduce their sweets and their processed foods. And the other half of those participants were given one-on-one social support. And after the course of 12 weeks, those with improvements to their diet showed significantly happier moods than those who didn't. So there's definitely a link here that, of course the science is robust and growing, but I think there's a couple of themes at play here. Like we said before, this is much more complex than we can just bucket in nutrition. But a couple of big themes at play here are metabolic health, gut health and inflammation.

**Jen Fisher:** Okay. So let's dig into this. Let's talk about what does it mean to be, I don't actually know what this means. What does it mean to be metabolic healthy? I mean, I think I can make an assumption, but I'm probably wrong.

**Tess Bredesen:** You might be right. I don't know. Metabolic, so yes. So it's a, it's kind of a broad overall term that a lot of people are kind of talking about. It's kind of trendy of a term these days, but we really don't know what it means. I think when we say like we're metabolic healthy or metabolically unhealthy or metabolic syndrome, right. These terms are kinda being thrown around. So essentially what it means to be metabolic – or what metabolic health is describing is how well, or how poorly we generate and process energy in the body. That's, that's it right. It's about energy, how we make it, how we store it, that's metabolic health.

**Jen Fisher:** And does that determine our metabolism?

**Tess Bredesen:** So that will, you know part of metabolism is, you know, is it running optimally or not? So we think of, you know, we tend to think of metabolism as this like static thing. I have a fast metabolism, I have a slow metabolism, but I like to think of it as you can call it metabolic health, you can call it metabolic fitness, just like, you know, would go to the gym and like lift weight to like increase your muscle, you know, your muscle mass and your physical fitness. You can do things to help become more metabolically fit or metabolically healthy. So, you know, metabolic health kind of, if you're thinking that

as like the foundation, I like to call it, I like to think of it as like the foundation of whole health or true health. And the flip side of that is that poor metabolic health is associated with worse brain functioning, you know, lower energy levels, worse memory, lower mood, and then later on, higher risk for chronic disease. So, it's pretty surprising, but about one in only about one in eight of us in the us are metabolically healthy, kind of have optimal levels of metabolism, right? Those biomarkers of a healthy metabolism. So we can all do things to help us encourage or promote healthy metabolism. Right. We all could use a little bit of this education, right. Something that we may not have gotten in school, but it applies to all of us because we all eat, right. We all should take some sort of nutrition education and learn a little bit more about metabolic health because it relates to all of us. So one thing that we can do to help achieve, you know, more kind of improve our metabolic health is by considering, what I like to call in what we call at Thrive, the sugar rollercoaster ride. Right? So if you are thinking of our day in terms of a sugar rollercoaster ride, if we have toasts and coffee in the morning, right, maybe we kind of spike and it goes a little bit high. And then, you know, maybe if we have like a sugary snack in the afternoon that helps us kind of lift us up, but then a lot of us, I know I've definitely experienced, this will deal with that crash later on, maybe like an hour or two after lunch where we, you know, it's like the infamous 2:00 PM slump where we find it hard to focus, find it hard to be creative. You know, this is the moment where I definitely want to take, if I'm working from home, then I want to kind of sit on, lay down on my couch and just kind of like, ignore all the emails coming at me for like 30 minutes. You just can't handle it. Right. You just, it's just one of those that slump, right. That is the crash of the sugar roller ride. So one of the best ways we can help to achieve metabolic health is by stabilizing that sugar rollercoaster ride. And, and we can do so by incorporating into our meals, foods that act as sugar stabilizers. So that's any foods that contain fiber and, or good fat. So like, nuts, non-starchy vegetables, spinach, broccoli, cauliflower, asparagus, avocados that contain both the good fat and the plenty of fiber. There's like 10 grams of fiber per avocado, that's a good example. And all of these things are going to help to stabilize your ride.

**Jen Fisher:** And so do you eat those at the same time that you eat? You know at the same time as you eat the things that kind of might spike sugar rollercoaster?

**Tess Bredesen:** Exactly. Yeah, that's a great way of looking at it. So it doesn't mean that you don't, that you can't have these things that are increasing your – that are spiking your blood sugar. It just means that if you're looking at your plate and you see something like a piece of toast, you know, that's going to, especially if it's like, you know, a simple carbohydrate that's gonna, increase your glucose or your blood sugar more quickly –

**Jen Fisher:** Add a slice of avocado on top of it.

**Tess Bredesen:** Exactly. Exactly. How can we look at the foods and the food pairings in a way that's going smooth out your ride. So that's where kind of, you know, this balance of food plays a role and these pairings of food. So if you're looking at your plate and you see something that you think, okay, what's my sugar rollercoaster ride, gonna look like if I just eat these foods, and maybe if you're seeing a spike, maybe if it's something like a simple carbohydrate, like bread or pasta, or, you know, even if it's a dessert, like if you're having you know, a slice of cake, that's totally a slice of cake, have some nuts and seeds, or, you know, put some walnuts, either eat it before, or with the chocolate cake. But even when you're having a piece of chocolate cake, wonderful, you know, enjoy that piece of chocolate cake. But if

you're putting some nuts on, on the side of it, you're going to help, inhibit that you know, that extreme incline that will then, you know, start to inhibit that sharp crash as well.

**Jen Fisher:** Got it. Got it. Okay. And you mentioned glycemic index, and I feel like the glycemic index is like, I don't know, just this source of like confusion in mystery for so many people. So let's talk about like, what should we know about the glycemic index that like isn't confusing or hard to understand or weird to apply

**Tess Bredesen:** For sure. Yes. It's like all of these headlines about nutrition are so confusing. They all seem counterintuitive. We kind of have to break it down. And so the – let's just break it down real quick and say, this is one lens through which to look at nutrition or at the nutrition of foods, but it's not the whole picture. So quick context, what is it? Right. Glycemic index is a measure of how quickly a food increases your blood sugar, right. And it's a rating. So each food has a rating. And if you're looking at it, it's going to have you know, a number between one and 100. 100 is just the high, because that is what table sugar is. So table sugar has a glycemic index of 100. And so how, you know, what is the glycemic index of a certain food as compared to table sugar is kind of the way that they like to rate food. So you'll see, for example a piece of toast versus a piece of sourdough toast. Sourdough toast is lower in the glycemic index because it has that sour part to it that lowers the glycemic index. But, you know, so essentially higher, the higher glycemic index, the food is the faster, the more it's going to put you on that sugar roller to ride. And the lower it is, the more stable you're going to get your ride to be. But one caveat here is that you can have a food, you know, that is low on the glycemic index that is not healthy. It's not painting the entire picture. So for example, you know, fried pork rinds are going to be a low glycemic index food. It doesn't mean that it's like a quote unquote a health food, right. It's just not going to spike your blood sugar. So the comparison that I would give is like, you know, pork grinds versus a sweet potato, and there's, you know, many wonderful nutritional benefits to a sweet potato, but it is relatively higher in glycemic index. So I like to use it as a tool of balance, learning how to use a glycemic index, to learn how to balance out your plate and pair foods, just like what we were talking about with the chocolate cake. For that sweet potato if we add some olive oil to a roasted sweet potato, if we have a side of roasted broccoli or something with, you know, plenty of good fat and fiber, what if the average of our plate becomes a lower average, you know, lower glycemic index average. That kind of, that's how I like to use the glycemic index to my advantage without, you know, without using it for kind of this end all be all of nutritional science.

**Jen Fisher:** Yeah. And where you went with the sweet potato. I was going to go with fruit because I feel like that's, at least for me, that's where I hear about the glycemic index. Like, oh, eat berries because they're low and don't eat, you know, citrus because they're high. I'm kind of saying like, oh there's some fruit that's good. And some fruit that's bad for you. So can you help demystify that?

**Tess Bredesen:** Yes. That's such a good question. I remember we were doing a webinar, and someone held up an apple and a cupcake and they were like, everyone's telling me that this is for my purposes that the apple is equal is equivalent to the cupcake. Well, I like the cupcake better. So should I just have the cupcake? Can you tell me to just eat the cupcake? I was like let's back up here, it's a little more complicated than that. But you're right that this idea of fruit having a relatively higher glycemic index, especially those of tropical fruit, plays a role. So if you are having, for example, citrus, right. If you're having an orange, Yes, the considerations are it's higher in glycemic index. Can you pair it with something that is lower? So your average is in the middle. And also for any citrus it's, you know, the

more fiber the better. So, you know, things like orange juice, and orange itself is going to have, you know, some sugar and some fiber. If we pair it with nuts or if we have that, that orange after a meal, when we've just had some good fat and ideally some fiber in that meal, then it's going to, it's not going to spike blood sugar as quickly as if we're having it on an empty stomach. Versus if we're juicing it and we're putting a lot of oranges, but removing the pulp. Then we are removing the thing that is going to stabilize our ride.

**Jen Fisher:** And you mentioned before, when we were kind of talking about, you know, the connection between our diet and our cognitive health, our mental health, when we talked about, you know, being metabolically, metabolically healthy, you also talked about gut health and the connection between gut health and our brain. And I wanted to come back to that because I feel like that is getting a lot of attention now, too.

**Tess Bredesen:** Yeah. And, and rightfully so. And I'm so happy it is getting the attention that it deserves because it plays a tremendous role. I would argue that we are, we're kind of like on the, you know, just scratching the surface of how big a role our gut health plays in our cognitive health and in our overall health. This is kind of the, you know, like we talk about like going to Mars, like understanding the gut, is like, you know, this like this frontier in, in medicine and in functional medicine. And the reason being, so your gut contains actually about 500 million neurons and that is second only to our brain. So it's earned itself and rightfully so this nickname of quote unquote, your second brain. About 90% of serotonin, so you know, that that quote unquote happy hormone is produced in your gut. And this explosion of studies on this gut brain connection has really, I mean, I don't want to, I don't think this is hyperbole to say that is really revolutionized our understanding of these links between, you know, food and how we digest foods and mood and cognitive health. And it comes down to this idea that our gut and our brain are communicating with each other very closely, much more closely than we realize in past decades. So when we say, you know, how that feeling like, when we're nervous, like if you're about to give a presentation to your boss, either you're going to have like these butterflies in your stomach, right. That kind of sense of like, I have butterflies in my stomach, that's a two way street, right? So when your gut is stressed, it is sending signals back to your brain. And when your brain is stressed, it is affecting your gut. So the gut contains both good and bad bacteria, right? The good bacteria help to, you know, produce neurotransmitters like serotonin and dopamine, which of course positively impact our mood. And in fact, a lot of antidepressants increase the levels of those same compounds. And then we have bad bacteria, right. Which are going to thrive on, unfortunately thrive on all those foods that as a kid I loved and, you know, truth be told, still love, right? So, these unhealthy sugars, you know, and processed food that the bad bacteria feed off of that and too much bad bacteria, we're always going to have some bad bacteria. And ideally we're always going to have some good bacteria, unless for example, we've just taken an antibiotic. But, if we kind of built up our, our ecosystem, then we're going to have good and bad in our job is to help to enhance the good and inhibit the growth of the bad. And we can do that in a few ways. So, and actually one of the things beyond nutrition to consider is stress. So it takes about two hours. All it takes is about two hours of kind of acute stress to completely change the bacteria, the ecosystem of bacteria, living in our gut, which can then of course, negatively impact our mood and our mental health. So, you know, not saying that nutrition is the only component, but it's a major component of the things that we can do to help to encourage the growth of the good and relieve, therefore relieving the stress in the gut and in turn in your brain.

So for example probiotics, right? Little bit more trendy of a topic these days. This is the, you know, probiotics are the beneficial bacteria in our gut that help to keep our intestinal lining intact. They help us digest foods. They help us absorb nutrients. And of course, a lot of them are, you know, help to make these neurotransmitters. So they actually can improve cognitive function. And so probiotics, yes, you can find them on the shelves but because you know, supplements are not really regulated, and we don't really know, even if with the best of intentions a lot of these supplement companies we just don't know if they're, once they get to you, are they still going to be alive and that bacteria alive? So, some of them are great, right? It's, it's good to take a probiotic if you have a trustworthy probiotic, but it's equally as important to ensure you're getting alive, you know, probiotics while they are still alive and thriving through food sources. So for example, fermented food like sauerkraut, you know, my husband is still kind of learning how to use sauerkraut. And so I still have to kind of hide it for him. Like he were a four-year-old in little sandwiches, but kind of adjusting your palate to sauerkraut or even yogurt in ensuring that the yogurt has live and active cultures, or natto, or tempeh, kimchi, right. Any kind of fermented foods are going to give you that, that source of probiotic. And then we have the prebiotics, they're equally as essential because they are helping to keep the good bacteria in your gut alive and thriving. So prebiotics are basically the food for the good gut bacteria and prebiotics are found and this array of food. So beans, berries, oats, garlic, onions, dandelion greens, asparagus is another good one, jicama is another great one for prebiotics. So good sources of prebiotics. So prebiotics as, as in the good food for your good gut bacteria.

**Jen Fisher:** Got it. That's so helpful. And I'm thinking every time you mention one of these foods, I'm like, okay, I eat that. I don't eat that. I eat that.

**Tess Bredesen:** Yeah. And I think equally as important as like, okay, what do I like? And what do I not like? Right. So like, for something like sauerkraut, it's so dense with probiotic –

**Jen Fisher:** I love sauerkraut, I'm a weirdo.

**Tess Bredesen:** Oh, that's awesome, that's great. I kind of had to adjust I'm, you know, I kind of need to adjust my palate over time. So I've kind of adjusted sauerkraut, but I also encourage my clients to like, buy of all the list of probiotics. Right. What, what is like one or two that – you don't have to eat all of them – but can we get like a few that you love in your meals a couple of times a week?

**Jen Fisher:** Okay. So I was going to say how often, so it's a couple times a week.

**Tess Bredesen:** Yeah. If we can get some source of fermented food in our diet a couple of times a week, I'd say, you know, if we're doing it every single day, I mean, you know, the more, the better, if we're having a, a small serving of sauerkraut on something, it doesn't necessarily have to be a Wiener schnitzel but I'm thinking what it deserves. Right. But like some source of probiotic daily, it's not going to hurt. But if we kind of like, as a more feasible option, if we remember to do it four times a week, we're golden.

**Jen Fisher:** Got it. Okay. Super helpful. And, and let's also talk about, I mean, we hear a lot about associated with kind of gut health, inflammation and nutrition, like talk about inflammation, like what kinds of food cause inflammation, and perhaps that's different for, I don't know if that's different for different people or some people are more sensitive, that type of thing.

**Tess Bredesen:** For sure. Yeah. And, and this is, so I'll say like, I'll back it up first and say that when we talk about the term inflammation, which is another area that people are really interested in, and so

happy that there is interest in this topic, but we have to remember that not all inflammation is bad. So if you think about like acute inflammation, right. If you, like, if you cut your finger and you notice some redness, some swelling at the area, that's just your immune system, you know, at work. That's essential to our, our survival, right? So in some ways, acute in many ways, inflammation, acute inflammation, is essential to our survival. What we are talking about, what we're referring to is chronic inflammation. And that is essentially when your body is unable to eliminate the stimuli that it's fighting, or when there's this repeated exposure of something that's causing some sort of irritation. And there's a link between chronic inflammation and mental health issues like anxiety and depression. It's also chronic inflammation is also recognized as an underlying basis of a number of age-related diseases, including Alzheimer's. And so food plays a huge role in that you can eat foods that help lower inflammation, right? Like, I always think of, you know, the common example here is antioxidants. So any foods, any like produce that contains really beautiful colors, like, I always think of berries or like red cabbage, right? Those that beautifully pigmented, deeply pigmented produce is showing that it has these antioxidants in it, and that's going to help lower inflammation. And then we can help. We can also help to kind of suppress inflammation by just reducing those foods that can increase inflammation. So for example, they've shown in studies that those who consume foods higher in omega six fatty acids, so a type of polyunsaturated fat, we have here omega threes, omega sixes, et cetera. And those who are eating foods with a ton of omega sixes without the omega threes in their diet, so like cheese, red meat, corn oil, palm oil, these people have actually a higher risk of depression compared to those who are eating a diet, you know, pretty chock full of omega threes. And I'll, I'll put as an asterisk here that it's not necessarily about saying we, we need zero omega sixes. It's just that in our diet, we have a plethora of omega sixes, whether we want it or not. And we don't have that many sources of omega sixes or of omega threes, excuse me. So like, you know, not many people are eating fatty fish and a ton of walnuts. And so we kind of just have to support those foods to increase and try to get a better ratio of the sixes and the threes.

**Jen Fisher:** Right, right. Yeah. That's something I need to continue to think about it.

**Tess Bredesen:** Yeah. And, and you, so you brought up a really interesting, point that has to do with inflammation before, when we were talking about the sugar rollercoaster ride, and that's this idea that inflammation is not only caused by a single food or like single categories, but also it incredibly influenced by the pairings of foods. So, for example, saturated fats eaten with a simple carbohydrates in the absence of fiber leads to hyper inflammation. So you can think of, for example, you know, a cheeseburger, right, that cheeseburger has some saturated fat and a soda, right? That's simple carbohydrate, that's sugar. And if you're eating a cheeseburger and a soda together, that's going to cause, you know, some hyper inflammation, except if you make a small change, right. If you're enjoying that burger, right. We all want to enjoy a burger every once in a while, cause it's a veggie burger or, you know, regular burger. Um, we want to enjoy, you know, to the best of our, and by the way, you know, even a lot of these veggie burgers will have some saturated fat in them. So if you're enjoying that burger with a soda, you know, can we get some, side salad on our plate? Can we get some nuts on our plate? Can we get some, you know, some roasted broccoli on our plate, like the sweet potato, right. Is there way that we can pair, this delicious meal that's going lead to hyper inflammation unless you pair it with some fiber.

**Jen Fisher:** Yeah. So it's, it seems like fiber is like the magic.

**Tess Bredesen:** Fiber really is. I would say. I call fiber, like the unsung super food.

**Jen Fisher:** Hero?

**Tess Bredesen:** Yes. Of our, like, we all kind of forget when we're talking about calories or when we're talking about, you know, MCTs and, you know, all of these kind of, um, trending –

**Jen Fisher:** Fiber seems to like, you know, neutralize things a little bit. Right?

**Tess Bredesen:** Yes. I would say like throughout time fiber, and it doesn't necessarily have to mean that we're eating, you know, if you're listening to this, it's not like we want to all of a sudden supplement with as much fiber as possible. We, I would say, so the goal for fiber over time is between 30 and 50 grams daily. But a lot of us start with, you know, we're at like five or 10 grams daily. So yes, fiber is, you know, in my book, a super food, but if we want to increase it, we want to do so it's very thoughtfully. So you want to start with adding, you know some fiber with whatever sources that you like, be it vegetables, be it, you know, some nuts and seeds, whatever your preference is, get it, you know, adjust relatively slowly, because it is going to take some time for your gut and your microbiome to adjust to this increased level of fiber.

**Jen Fisher:** You could have like bloating and upset stomach.

**Tess Bredesen:** Exactly, exactly. See, yes, fiber is in incredibly important, but sometimes especially with nutrition, we tend to say more is better and we just kind of, you know, go at it. And I would say, it's great to be invested in increasing fiber. Let's do so thoughtfully over time.

**Jen Fisher:** Yeah. That's, that's great advice because I know when I eat a very, very, very heavy fiber meal, I'm like, okay, my pants don't close now.

**Tess Bredesen:** It's like, like a food coma. You have a food baby for a while.

**Jen Fisher:** Yeah, food baby.

**Tess Bredesen:** Yep, exactly. One of the best things to help to avoid that is water. So, you know, you have inflatable and you have soluble fiber and both are going to, you know, tend to, if you have, if you're having too much too quickly can bloat, but the insoluble fiber is going to kind of get stuck in the digestive tract. If you are not doing enough to help kind of wash it down. And so while you're having this fiber, make sure you are getting plenty of water on board. Also, it doesn't help when you have like an alcoholic drink that dehydrates us. You kind of even need even more water, but that's a good kind rule of thumb is as you are increasing fiber, make sure you are having plenty of water alongside it.

**Jen Fisher:** Got it. Okay. Great advice there. I have so many more questions and we're running out of time, but I, so cognitive nutrition, I want to get to this one and I'm actually going to kind of combine two things. It's not just about what we eat, it's about how we eat it. So how should we be eating and then talk to me about the role that technology plays in our life and the impact it has on how we're eating.

**Tess Bredesen:** Yeah, absolutely. And, and I think this is one of the, the major points is that it's not just about what, but also about how. One of my favorite quotes from a woman author, Janine Ross, is the way you eat is the way you live. Or you can take it back and say, you know, how we do anything is how we do everything. Right. And if we were to apply that and think about our last meal and use that as this metaphor of how we're showing up in the world, right? What would that be telling us about our lives

right now? And it goes back to this idea that food is so much more than just food and food is also language, right? And you know, what is this food telling us about what we need? And it's very hard to listen to this language of food these days with so much background noise because most of us are not really in tune with or engaged with the meal, the food that we are eating. And I'm absolutely guilty of this as well, right. 88% of us in the us are, what's now being referred to as zombie eaters. So eating while looking at a screen.

**Jen Fisher:** I had that this morning over breakfast – guilty.

**Tess Bredeesen:** There you go. Yeah. We're all guilty of it sometimes. I think it's just part of our, you know, modern society's structure. And we kind of tell ourselves this sometimes this lie that if we are simply eating right time taken to simply sit down and eat is time taken away from a more productive task. Like I can send this email right now, or even at the end of the day, if we're exhausted, right. There's no, there's no judgment in that, right. We all kind of have built around our mealtimes, multitasking it's this and that. It's never just sitting down to simply eat. So I would argue that it doesn't have to be every single meal, but if we can do it once per day, right. One screen-free meal a day as kind of your intro. And if, if that's really hard, let's try one screen-free meal per week. Right. Of simply kind of thinking about it as this is an investment in my mental health, this is an investment in my future cognitive function, my productivity levels, once I get up after this lunch, right. It's one of the best ways we can prevent burnout is by simply kind of allowing this time, be it, you know, 15 minutes even to just be about the meal and the senses.

**Jen Fisher:** Yeah. I love that. So, so that sounds like, you know, one of your favorite micro steps, right? So screen-free meals or at least one a day, or if you can't do that one a week, to start, but what are some of your other favorite micro steps for better cognitive nutrition?

**Tess Bredeesen:** Yeah. So, um, oh man. So many micro steps that we could talk about. So my favorite, so, I think, you know, putting meal times on our calendar, I think is a really helpful way to hold yourself accountable, but also to use that, to send a signal to coworkers. I think this is especially important for leaders and managers to kind of, to set this good example, especially as we're working from home, right. When we need to cook ourselves, we, you know, it takes some time to prepare a meal, even if it's a simple meal and then it takes some time to eat that meal. So putting a block, even if it's 20 or 30 minutes on your calendar daily, and you can do it around, you know, your other meetings, but make sure that you have some time where, you know, it is at that is that time is for you and investment in yourself to be able to, you know, go back to what we were talking about before, have a meal time ideally away from your desk away from your screen. So that's one of my favorites. If we can try putting our phones away during mealtimes, one of my favorite games, this is from, pro basketball player, Andre Iguodala. He plays the phone sucking game with his friends. So I do notice, you know, when I'm with my friends, we all have like our phones out on the table. Right. And they're just kind of sitting there, but if we play the stacking game, it's essentially, what's required is that all the, all your friends kind of stack your phones, stack their phones in the middle of the table. And if you're out to eat, then the game goes, so the first person to reach for their phone –

**Jen Fisher:** Pays for dinner?

**Tess Bredeesen:** There you go. That's it. That's it. Yeah.

**Jen Fisher:** I love that one. I'm going to try that one, but I'm probably going to lose, so maybe I shouldn't try that one.

**Tess Bredesen:** Unless you want to pick up the bill, unless you're like ready with your credit card then. Yeah. It's definitely, it's a more, it's a higher investment for those who have like an important text that are or email that they're about to receive.

And then I would say my, probably my favorite micro step is it's really simple. It's kind of a small but mighty one. And that's just using gratitude at the very beginning. I think everyone can do this. Even if you, you know, if you don't have the, the time to eat away from your desk at the very least, if you think about one, two, like maximum three things that you are really grateful for that day, and it can even be like, I'm really grateful for this delicious meal I'm about to eat. Right. It can be as simple as that, but kind of tapping into that gratitude. That's so powerful before you start the meal can shift this mindset to one of more mindfulness as you are eating that meal. So that's one of my favorite ones.

**Jen Fisher:** I love that one and I am a huge fan of gratitude and can't think of a better way to end this podcast than saying thank you, Tess. There's so much in here. I mean my, my mind is, is kind of spinning with all of the things that I've learned and all of the things that I need to do differently, but so much gratitude for you, and all of the wisdom that you shared with us today.

**Tess Bredesen:** Oh, thank, thank you so much for having me. It's really been, it's been an honor and a pleasure to be here. We all have room for improvement, myself included. So it's just a journey. We're all on a non-linear journey and it's always better to do it, you know, together.

**Jen Fisher:** I'm so grateful Tess could be with us today to talk about this important topic.

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