

Women, Fasting, Keto & Cancer – Amy Robach with Dave Asprey – #779

Announcer:

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Dave Asprey:

You're listening to Bulletproof Radio with Dave Asprey. Today's guest is going to be someone who can talk with you about women and intermittent fasting because she's used IF and keto to be a part of her life after cancer. She's well-known journalist Amy Robach who's covered major national and global news events. She co-anchors ABC News, GMA3: What You Need To Know and is on 20/20 The Investigative Show. You'll find her on Good Morning America and on other ABC News platforms. We're going to learn from Amy how she handles the demands of that amazing career blended with her family and her wellness and how IF plays into her life. Amy, welcome to the show.

Amy Robach:

Thank you for having me, Dave. I'm excited.

Dave:

You're a professional journalist, so I'm going to be able to ask you lots of questions because you've asked more questions than I have at this point, right?

Amy:

Probably, but I will say I do prefer asking them rather than answering them. That's alright. I'll let the tables be turned for this hour.

Dave:

Well, I appreciate you taking the time to do it. It's really cool. You, in 2013, had an on-air mammogram for Breast Awareness Month. You were 40, you'd never done a mammogram, what happened?

Amy:

I wasn't going to have a mammogram until I was 50 because those are the guidelines, those are the recommendations for anyone who has no family history. I was of average risk, that's what they call it, when you don't have family history, so you can wait until you're 50. I considered myself a relatively healthy person. My mom is one of nine, my dad is one of six, so I have lots of aunts, I have lots of female first cousins, no one had breast cancer. When Robin Robert in Good morning America asked me to have a mammogram at 40, in a MammoVan in the middle of Times Square on live national television in front of about 5 million people, I said, "No, that's ridiculous. Why would I do that?"

Robin told me that more than 80% of all breast cancer patients have no family history and that I was the perfect person to walk into that MammoVan because it seemed to her that I thought cancer couldn't happen to me and that's the way a lot of women and people in general feel. Especially if they don't have that connection, they think, "It could never happen to me." She told me, "I guarantee you, if you walk into that MammoVan, you will convince at least one woman to make that appointment, to keep that appointment and she will find her cancer early because of you. You will save a life," is what she told me.

Pretty hard to say no to that. I did a 180. I said, "All right, Robin, this is for you. Literally, this one's for you. I will do this." She's a breast cancer thriver herself and so I just felt like that was the right thing to do for another woman. I went in. I started getting phone calls from a number that I didn't recognize and so I didn't answer for over a week. Finally, my assistant called me and said, "Has the breast imaging center from the MammoVan gotten a hold of you? They've been trying to call you." They finally got her. I said, "Oh, that's that number." Then I never listened to my voicemails. It's really irresponsible, but that's just the way I am. When I started-

Dave:

You have a busy.

Amy:

Right. Then I started listening to these voicemails and they were very urgent, saying, "We need to get ahold of you." Long story short, they told me that I needed to get a follow-up, that they saw something suspicious. I sent it to my OB/GYN. She told me, "It's most likely calcium deposits. It's most likely nothing, but out of an abundance of caution, you should get this follow-up mammogram." I will tell you I scheduled it begrudgingly a couple weeks later actually annoyed and not nervous at all, thinking this is why 40-year-olds shouldn't get mammograms because they have unnecessary testing and unnecessary anxiety, so I just thought, "Oh, here we go."

I got a call the night before, this is pretty interesting, from NYU and they said, "Your insurance company has rejected your follow-up mammogram. You'll have to be paying for this out of pocket. You need to give us a credit card number right now." I said, "Well, how much is this going to be?" They told me, "Minimum \$800, but it could be double that depending on how many images we need to take." I have to tell you and I'm a well-paid career woman who had the money and I have great insurance, but I still hesitated because I just thought, "That's a lot of money for something that's probably nothing."

For a second I thought about saying, "I'll just wait until next year." How many women would have had to have said that, wouldn't have had the choice but to wait another year, right? It was one of the first things that popped in my mind the following day when I had a radiologist telling me I had breast cancer. It was one of the first things my mind went to, "Oh my god, what if I had waited a year?" After several tests and after a surgery, I ended up having two malignant tumors in my right breast and had spread to my lymph nodes. I was stage II invasive breast cancer.

I went through eight rounds of chemo and had several surgeries. I'm on drug therapy tamoxifen for 10 years and most likely will be on another drug therapy after that, probably be on some medication for the next several years, but I'm grateful for that. There's a lot of side effects, but I'm just grateful that I have that opportunity to be able to have a better chance at living longer and potentially dying of something other than breast cancer. Once you have a cancer diagnosis, it lives with you for the rest of your life because every six months you go when you get your blood tested and they're looking for tumor markers and you literally get this or this.

I have to tell you it messes with your mind, it messes with everything, and at first, it was crippling, it was debilitating. I would go into panic mode. I'm getting emotional even thinking about it, the week of and then waiting for the test results. That's the way I live for the rest of my life. Then you have to decide, "What am I going to do with this fear? Am I going to let it cripple me or am I going to let it motivate me, A, to live better, and B, to do everything I can to be as healthy and as strong and as fit as possible if I get that bad news one of these days?"

Dave:

Do you ever find that the fear that's still there that it makes you procrastinate on your six-month visits, some part of you just doesn't want to deal with it and-

Amy:

Yes.

Dave:

Yes?

Amy:

Yes.

Dave:

How do you manage that?

Amy:

I know that I'm not going to feel that relief until I get it done. I actually punted, I waited eight months this time, and then, it was just in the back of my head just eating at me, eating away, eating away. I know it's not going to get better until I go ahead and make the appointment. It's just a matter of how much do I want to suffer, either get it over with or keep punting.

Dave:

I feel like a lot of people don't want to look at their antiaging labs because they're afraid of what they'll find and so you procrastinate. I'm even guilty of that. I've had so many labs, but it's like, "I'm not really worried about what I want to find, but it's work. What if you don't find something?" There's that little voice in the back of your head. I think it's healthy that you're sharing that that's going on, even though you know you should do it ...

Amy:

Correct.

Dave:

... you still waited a couple months. Do you rely on external accountability? Do you have an assistant or family member, someone who's like, "You have to do this now"? Is that the trick?

Amy:

Well, with other things in my life 100% my assistant is. I love her. Her name's Daneska. She is on me to make sure I get everything done that I need to get done, but when it comes to my personal health and fitness, I am my own motivator. Now I have friends who I've surrounded myself, we're all motivated by fitness. I go to bed each night texting my run buddy, "When are we running tomorrow? What time?" and I make a date. I make a date to either run or to go to the gym. Now we don't really do that, but to do a peloton Zoom class or whatever. I don't miss a day where I don't make an appointment. I've got two friends, but one in particular and we hold each other accountable and it's pretty awesome.

Dave:

You rely on a friend for that which is so important, especially when everyone's at home just to have that because holding yourself accountable for health stuff is really hard for everyone.

Amy:

It is.

Dave:

In your case, you think it'd be easy because you face something that could have been fatal, but you're still relying on friends to do that. Thank you for just talking about that because it's a big deal. What other things are you doing in terms of, "Okay, I've had this happen"? Did you change your priorities? Did you change how you just allocate your day because of this? Talk about that.

Amy:

I've changed everything in my life. It was a slow evolution because at first, like I said, you're crippled by the fear. You feel sorry for yourself. You feel weak. I didn't trust my body. I was scared to trust it. I was scared to make plans. I thought, if I do, then something bad will happen. I had to get out of that cycle. It was a slow process. It started with me running again and building up the belief and strength in my own body, but now I've gotten to a point where I've worked on myself not just physically and not just nutritionally but also spiritually. I wake up now, I meditate, which I never did before, 10 minutes every morning. Then I've already prioritized my fitness. I already know at what point during the day I'm going to be doing what and for how long.

Yesterday, we were just like, "Let's run eight miles." My husband runs with me too. We just spur each other on, but also one of the big things I ask myself when I wake up is, "What am I going to do to enjoy my day?" I've joked that I live my life like a country music song. I live like I'm dying because we all are. We're all one day closer to our deaths. I think those of us who have looked at it at head on are more aware that anything can happen at any moment and you should live each day like it's your last. How can I enjoy every moment actually? Even when it's something I don't want to be doing, can I at least accept it? Can I surrender to what is and then just find a way to maybe up the game and make it fun or make it enjoyable or do it with someone I love?

I really set my priorities on how I can enjoy my day and how I can give love and receive love. Those are my goals. My goals used to be very career oriented. I'd make a list every day and I'd have to achieve certain things before I felt like I had a good day. Now the priority is on enjoyment and less on achievement.

Dave:

Which is higher on your list, health or enjoyment?

Amy:

I think they go hand in hand. I'm one of those weird people who enjoys running and enjoys going to classes and enjoys making my keto meals every night and planning them out. I actually have fun while I'm contributing to my health. I also find ways to hike the world and we were planning on running the marathon in Berlin until COVID-19 struck. Just finding fun ways to make fitness and health enjoyable and exciting and adventurous.

Dave:

They go hand in hand, which is a brilliant strategy, right? Because if you had to do it, you might as well make it social and fun.

Amy:

Exactly. I don't do it alone. I don't do it alone. I'm always with friends and that's what makes it fun. I think if I had to do it by myself, it would feel different.

Dave:

That's a great piece of advice for listeners, find a friend even on Zoom and you can both ride your exercise bikes together and you have social time, right? Do you love your body now?

Amy:

I do. I'm proud of it. I work hard for it. I'm 47 years old. I had two children and battled cancer. I have scars to prove, all of those things. I do love the body I'm in. Sometimes when I'm running, I can get emotional because I'm proud of where I am on a strength level. It's not about how much I weigh or even how I look in clothes. I just feel strong. I'm proud of how strong my body feels.

Dave:

That was actually the intent behind my question. Thank you for eking that. I [inaudible 00:13:13] body looks, but you have to love your body, right?

Amy:

Yes.

Dave:

Because it's providing you strength now. How about loving yourself? A lot of cancer survivors develop a sense of distrust of themselves. Did the spiritual work you did help you there?

Amy:

It's been helping me and I'm still on that path and still on that journey, but I know that yes, the first question you ask is, what did I do to deserve this and then I have. I beat myself up. I say, "Oh, it's when I was so stressed about my career or so stressed about my divorce and so stressed about blending a family. I let all of that stress get to me. Then that's why cancer happened to me," but you really do blame yourself. It's not healthy or helpful to go into a blame game, but what you can do is, "How can I change how I think of myself, how I think of others? What energy I allow into my body and how can I find peace?"

I'm always striving for peace and joy from within, not from external sources. When I'm running, I'm running a lot of times to self-help books. Sometimes I listen to music, yes, and that's great, but then yesterday, I ran to Eckhart Tolle and I've listened to his book multiple times, A New Earth, The Power of Now. Michael Singer. Gabby Bernstein. I am listening to so many of these people who I admire on how to think differently and change your attitude towards what's happening. With that fear of recurrence, that's my biggest battle because what I didn't realize until I had breast cancer is when breast cancer is metastatic when it returns. Right now, it is a terminal disease. There is no cure for stage IV metastatic breast cancer and that's what they're testing for.

That is something that can take your breath away. If it returns, if it metastasizes, I can live for a while and I can live probably pretty beautifully, but that is what is going to end my life and that is such a scary thing that hangs over my head. Instead of having it be a macabre thing, what I try to do is make it, like I said, be a motivating thing. Yup, that's right. It could happen. You could also get hit by a bus. I'm a journalist. I've covered tragedies all around the world. I see what can happen in a split second. All of these things, I think, make me realized that this spiritual work that I'm doing that I think a lot of people are doing is exactly what we should be doing.

These tragedies or these moments or these unthinkable things that happen are the motivator to guide us on to the path we're supposed to be on. If everything had gone great and I had not gotten cancer, I know I wouldn't be who I am today from a physical standpoint, from a mental standpoint, from a spiritual standpoint. In a way, you have to thank these moments that shook you enough. What are the young kids say? You're woke. I got woke from that, but I remember my oncologist telling me and I remember not being ready to hear this that every woman who had had breast cancer 10 years reflecting back wouldn't give it back. Because it changed who they were so fundamentally and made them so much better than they ever would have been, they wouldn't give it back.

Dave:

You've really achieved gratitude which is a hard state to be especially for something that can be fearful. Congratulations.

Amy:

Thanks.

Dave:

Is there one thought leader, personal development person who stands out as the one who helped you achieve gratitude?

Amy:

It's Eckhart.

Dave:

It was Eckhart.

Amy:

It was Eckhart Tolle. No question. When I read A New Earth, it changed my life. It actually changed my life. I was introduced, I think, first to this world because I was listening to Oprah's SuperSoul Conversations. She's interviewing all of these amazing leaders from Deepak to, like I said, Michael Singer who was also one of my favorite untethered soul. That was probably my entree into it and then I think I got my master's degree when I started listening to Eckhart because it took it to another level for me that I understood it. It's funny. 15 years ago, I don't know when A New Earth, not A New Earth, when The Power Of Now came out. I can't remember how long ago it was.

I remember someone gave me the book and I started reading it. I was like, "What is this?" I wasn't ready for it. I read the words, but they didn't hit me, they didn't move me, they didn't change me, I didn't feel it and I don't think I read past chapter two. I was like, "No, thanks." It's so interesting when you're ready for it, it's life changing. When you're not ready for it, it's almost like you're reading Chinese.

Dave:

I love that when you're ready for it mindset because if you're not called to read it, you can't force yourself to do it. It doesn't work. Is it the same thing for nutritional stuff? You've gotten into keto and IF. Did people pitch that to you before cancer and you rolled your eyes and said, "What the heck?"

Amy:

I used to joke and say, "I drink Chardonnay and eat French fries as much as I want and I'm fine." It was almost hubris at that point just thinking, "I'm fine. As long as I work out, I can eat whatever I want."

Dave:

I wish that was true.

Amy:

I know, right? But guess what? It's not. I remember when I started, I had a friend who actually gave me some research on metastatic cancer and keto. They've done several studies and they're doing more and there's more and more coming out, I feel like weekly about metastasis and keto and fasting. My biggest takeaway is it can't hurt and it likely can help. I've never felt better in my life. When I first started trying it, I actually thought it was so counterintuitive eating healthy fats instead of avoiding all fats, which I had done my entire life and then realizing how many carbs I was actually eating and pretty much why I was hypoglycemic. When I was on Good Morning America, I would have three breakfasts. I would wake up at 5:00 AM and have a breakfast. Then on the set, I'd start starving and I'd have to have a breakfast, and then when I get off the set, I'd have to eat again.

Now I can fast all the way until noon and be perfectly fine. It's this amazing feeling of, "I'm not a slave to my next snack or a slave to my next meal." It's so empowering and my brain is working sharper. I don't search for words the way I did. I don't get lethargic in the middle of the day and need a coffee. It was unbelievable, all the effects that I didn't even know were going to happen until they did.

Dave:

We're about the same age. Around now is when a lot of women's brains go sideways for several years, right? You're saying your brain works better now, even after chemo which can be rough on the brain because of what you're doing with food. I found a study that's in Fastest Way, my new fasting book, that quantify the number of thoughts people have every day. It said that at least 15% of the average person's thoughts are about what is their next meal, right? That freedom to not think about food means you can also think about something else, right?

Amy:

Yup, I just got chills because it was all I thought about before.

Dave:

Me too.

Amy:

It was just like, "Oh, I'm hungry. Oh, I'm hungry. Oh, I'm hungry." I just didn't realize that if you actually put the right fats in your body, you don't think about food. You forget, "Oh, whoa, I didn't eat." That's where I am I. I eat two meals a day, but sometimes it still blows my mind that I just didn't need to eat

because I do like a brunch basically. I didn't need to eat lunch or I didn't need to have that afternoon coffee. I remember just feeling giddy about it. All this time, I had back.

Dave:

The sense of freedom, right?

Amy:

Not just in my thoughts, but searching for food and having to make the food and then having to clean up the food and having to buy the food. It was freedom. That was one of my favorite unexpected joys from fasting and keto.

Dave:

Thank you for saying those experiences. It's freedom in the head and it's freedom in the life just because food is not your master. I really appreciate how you said that. Now, you're doing IF six days a week?

Amy:

Yes. I do it seven days a week sometimes, but if I really want two on a weekend, I'll say, "Okay, today's the day." I would say 12 hours is me not fasting. That would be my non-fasting day. I would never eat before 12 hours.

Dave:

Which isn't as harsh as it seems because if you have dinner before 8:00 and then you have breakfast after 8:00, that's a 12-hour fast, right?

Amy:

Exactly. It's very easy.

Dave:

What's the length of fast that works best for you.

Amy:

I like a 16 hour fast. 16/8 is what I usually do, but every now and then, like I said, if I listen to my body and somehow I feel like I'm ... The only time I'll do a 14/10 is if I know I have a major workout. I have to get it in before the run or if I waited, it'd be too close to my runtime. Those are the only times I wiggle it a little bit because I know, "Oh, I'm about to do a 10 mile run. If I eat too close to it, that's not going to work. If I don't eat at all, that's not going to work," but I'm telling you I just did a seven mile run two weeks ago on a 17 hour fast and I was fine. It's amazing what your body can do.

Dave:

You just blew everyone's mind with that because most people are like, "That's not even possible." You're like, "Yeah, I'm a cancer survivor and I'm a woman," and all that kind of stuff.

Amy:

It wouldn't have been impossible for me to even consider before. That's why I'm laughing thinking, "How is my body able to do this?" and then you realize our bodies are capable of so much more than we give them credit for. That's been also some of the beauty and all of this, just marveling at what our bodies can do and what they can do really well if we know the science behind it.

Dave:

Do your colleagues make fun of you?

Amy:

Yes.

Dave:

Are you like that person in the breakroom, "Don't eat the donut. You don't want to do that. You don't have to do that"?

Amy:

They probably hide them from me. They don't want to have me see them. I'm like, "I'm not judging you, to each his own." I don't want to be that person, but I do think initially, I was what you call a keto evangelist because you get so excited about how great you feel, you want to share it. It's not even that I think everyone needs to or shouldn't. Certainly everyone isn't able to do some of the things that I can do and obviously you should talk to your doctor, but you just want to spread the information because again it's so counterintuitive to American culture and how we were raised and how we were taught to eat, even the food pyramid that we learn in school.

That's why I was so excited, but I will say I have a dressing room of women, my hairstylist, my makeup artist and we've all been keto together. That's actually been really great, so when we all go out to lunch or when we used to be able to go out to lunch together, we would all order the same things because if one jerk orders French fries for the table, it's a lot harder. I do find it great. My husband does it with me and then my parents actually did it too. My parents are now at their high school weight. I thought that we're going to tease me and make fun of me, but when they knew the reasons why I was doing it, they said, "We're going to do it too. Why wouldn't we?" Everyone who has joined has stayed with it because they see the benefits, they feel the benefits.

Dave:

It feels like it's more sustainable than any other diet I've ever done and I'm about 15 or so years into doing it including the fasting. It's just the least amount of work and the least amount of distractions of anything else. It seems to have the most health benefits too.

Amy:

It's so true and I've been so impressed. I'm four and a half years now. What products have been made available has been pretty remarkable? I love wine. I've always loved wine. The fact that now you can have wine that's less than one gram of sugar per glass and you also get zero hangovers as well, you just think, "Wow, I can drink two glasses of wine, wake up and feel like I just drank two gallons of water." It's pretty remarkable, not that the two are the same, but I appreciate how the food industry has reacted to the benefits and made so many more just in the last few years. I can't imagine what it was like 15 years ago. I'm sure there was nothing available.

Dave:

That was why I started a company to make that stuff and Bulletproof has done pretty well, but I really would like to have a protein bar.

Amy:

Bulletproof has done pretty well. Bulletproof Coffee. You have a coffee named after you that everyone just says, "Oh, is that Bulletproof?"

Dave:

It's just what you said, there just wasn't anything you could do. You couldn't go to 711 and get anything that was food. By the way, now you can because they've just started stocking the coffee. For me, that was actually one of the biggest like an emotional experience. I'm like, "Wow, this was when I started things. Why can't I eat?" Now I can. Thank you for calling out what the food industry has done to change because it's not just Bulletproof by a longshot, it's actually respecting, "Oh, this is what people want." I also recognize that it's scary if you make snack foods and you're like, "But people who are fasting don't eat snack foods." Yeah, there's that. Do you think we'll continue to see changes or is big food going to continue to tempt us with sugary crap?

Amy:

Well, I think there's always going to be that temptation, but I do think that more people than ever before recognize that sugar is a drug, that sugar is horrible for you. There's no benefit to it, whatsoever. When you go to get a PET scan, when you are a cancer survivor, do you know what they inject in you before they scan your body? Glucose.

Dave:

Radioactive sugar, right?

Amy:

Exactly, because cancer cells love sugar. They love glucose. For that fact alone, I thought, "Why would I put?" I started looking at desserts and looking at sugar as a mortal enemy. It's not that that's going to be that dramatic for anyone else who hasn't gone through something like what I went through, but if we can look at it as, "Why would I put this poison in my body?" I do think more and more people just intellectually, "It makes sense. How is that good? How is that good? Why isn't fat healthy fat?" Good for you. I know people are always afraid of cholesterol. All of this misinformation out there. I thought fat was the enemy and then you start realizing "Wait, no, it's sugar that's the enemy."

I do think I do think we're going to see the food industry continue to step up because I think people are educating themselves. We are spreading the word and we are living proof. It's not even like, "Don't even listen to what I'm saying. but just see how I'm living, see what I'm capable of, see what my body looks like." That is the truth. That's the irrefutable proof right there.

Dave:

Do you worry about the type of fat you're eating as a cancer survivor?

Amy:

Yes, obviously, there are a million studies and most of them are against red meat. I try to be balanced in what I eat, but I am a meat eater. I do love meat. I think a lot of it has been how it's prepared and how it was raised, so yes.

Dave:

You're making me dance here. All right.

Amy:

I'm very careful about grass-fed beef, about not searing beef, all of [inaudible 00:29:20] microbiologist.

Dave:

You're so Bulletproof. Those are the hardest things to tell people, "Don't burn your steak." They're like, "Shut up, Dave." "No, it matters and listen to you."

Amy:

It doesn't matter because of the carcinogens, right?

Dave:

Yes.

Amy:

It's all about reading the information that's out there and then making good choices and doing things as you say, "I eat a lot of varying and different types of meat and again it's the quality of the meat. It's where your meat comes from, that all matters."

Dave:

It does. That's why I started growing my own meat. I'm right now recording this on an organic farm. We have lamb that's grass fed and then salmon. You feel different when you eat it.

Amy:

That's awesome.

Dave:

What about omega 6 fats, seed oils and their link to cancer? Do you minimize those?

Amy:

I do.

Dave:

That's so good.

Amy:

I try to cook with avocado oil. I don't do olive oil anymore, but I don't do any vegetable oils for sure. That was one of the first things I threw in the trash can [inaudible 00:30:27].

Dave:

As important as minimizing sugar for preventing cancer. That's been a huge part of the whole Bulletproof, the diet and the books. It's like, "Guys, stop eating that stuff."

Amy:

I know.

Dave:

Now, I got to ask you. When's the last time you went out and had a scoop of grass-fed ice cream or something that actually had sugar in it?

Amy:

Something that actually had sugar in it, every now and then I will indulge. I'm try to think, when's the last time I had? My husband, I haven't had one yet, but brought home doughnuts. I am about to murder him. I was like, "Why did you bring that in the house?" They're sitting there and I walked by them at least three times today. I'm like, "Nope, nope, nope." I can't think of the last time, but there have been moments where maybe a birthday cake, have a couple bites. Those are the moments where you're like, "Okay, I can't be this annoying person who won't have some birthday cake." I think in special occasions, where you feel like a jerk if you don't participate.

Dave:

Right.

Amy:

Those are the ones. I'm like, "This isn't going to kill me to have a couple bites of birthday cake." That's usually when I'll indulge or if it's a dark chocolate mousse or cheesecake or something, I'm like, "I'll have a bite." Every now and then, that's fine. I don't think I'd sit down and have the entire slice or the entire desert.

Dave:

Do you feel guilty or worried when you do that?

Amy:

I did it first. In fact, I will tell you the first 18 months, I did not cheat one time. I was militant about it. I actually, like I said, got emotional if I even thought about looking at anything that had sugar in it and can even considering putting it in me because I just thought, "Why would I do that? Why would I do that?" As time went on, I let myself every now and then say, "Okay, if you really want something ..." This is what I do. I was in Italy and I really, really, really, really wanted this pasta. I don't really like pasta, but this was the, what's the kind? The mushroom pasta. I was immediately, in Italy, "I'm going to have this small dish." Then I thought, "Okay, is it worth a 20-hour fast?" and I decided it was.

Dave:

There you go.

Amy:

When I do indulge, I tell myself, "Is it worth the 20-hour fast?" If it's worth a 20-hour fast, then the few times that I felt it was I did and one of those times was in Italy. Then I felt fine. I fasted for 20 hours. I figured I went right back into ketosis and I was okay.

Dave:

It takes people some time. The way you're describing this, you go through the keto evangelist phase which certainly I did a long time ago on Atkins. I lost 50 pounds. God, I was like in early 20s. Then you have to tell everyone. Then it was like, "Shut up." You're like, "Oh, actually, they don't want to listen to me. Okay, I'll shut up," And then from there, you go, "I'm never eating a carb again." Then there's a modern thing, "You know what? Sometimes it's worth it if I don't do it a lot." Describing your evolution as a normal non-health expert to say like, "These are what I went through," it's really helpful for people to understand that. Sometimes the way to be keto is, "Just shut up and eat." You'll be judged less and it's okay."

Amy:

Then people ask you, "What are you doing? What are you doing differently?" It's way cooler when people come up and ask you, "What have you done and what are you doing?" Like I said, letting the proof be what they see.

Dave:

You have five kids in your blended family. Are they just like, "Mom, shut up already about keto"?

Amy:

Yes, I actually had them do with us because when they were a little bit younger when I first started, they didn't have the ability to get their own food. By default, they were eating keto-ish. I know that it's not something ... Of course, they go to school and have pizza. It wasn't as if they were strict keto, but while they were here, they're pretty much we're just healthy fats and no carbs in the house. Then it's hilarious. I don't know what other people's kids sneak in, but my kids would sneak. I would say, "Oh, my God, who cooked pasta?" They would go and spend their money at CVS and buy a box of pasta, cook it and try to hide it. I thought, "This is crazy."

They're older now. I've shown them. They've seen the transformation I've had and they get to make their own choices now. I've really eased up on what their choices are and they can decide what they want to decide, but I can tell you, I already see them, looking at them ... My stepson Wyatt used to drink sugar and that was my big thing. The other day, he accidentally got a Dr. Pepper instead of a Diet Dr. Pepper and he went, "Oh, my God." He saw that it had, I believe, 60 grams of sugar in it. He said, "I can't even believe this." He dumped it in the sink and threw it in the trash. I thought, "Yes."

Dave:

Wow.

Amy:

The fact that they're even looking back at the label and looking at the sugar or the carb content, I do think that there's a foundation there for them to make better choices as they get older, but yes, and they've really enjoyed some of these meals. They say things like, "I'm not going to lie, Mom, this is pretty

good." That's about as good of compliment as I get, but they haven't embraced it. They've tolerated it. I do think it's built a foundation for them later.

Dave:

Most kids, if you just switch to healthy fats, more saturated fats, less seed oils, they like it better. That's a painless thing to do. How old's your youngest?

Amy:

14.

Dave:

14. My daughter's 13. It's a very interesting age where they do end up having more food autonomy and it's okay and you just hope you did right before then. How did they respond? They're much younger with the cancer diagnosis. Were they real supportive of your diet at the beginning or was it out of the sphere of understanding?

Amy:

Yes, I think initially and they know why I started it and why I do it. They know it has nothing to do with weight loss, although I did lose weight, which I wasn't even expecting. Basically, I'm my high school weight. I actually didn't even think I had any weight to lose, but I think they've seen how strong and fit and sharp and happy and just energetic I am and they get why I'm doing it. Yes, they've always been supportive, always. I've never felt anything but support when it comes to my choices. In fact, I know for a fact both of my daughters are really into the ... They don't do a significant past, but they punt breakfast until 11:00.

They definitely say that they feel better when they don't eat breakfast which is obviously the opposite of how I was raised and when I was bringing them up. I was like, "You have to eat breakfast You have to eat breakfast." I used to make them and they didn't want to. Now they said that was the best thing that no one's making them have to have breakfast now because they don't want to.

Dave:

My daughter just hate that too. She's like, "Dada, I just don't want it." I'm like, "Don't have breakfast. If you're going to go to school though, you're going to have to figure that out," but on weekends, we make something with bacon and good stuff. Just not of interest which is amazing. Kids seem to know what works if only we don't break it, right?

Amy:

It's true. From the time they were young, they always fought me on breakfast. I would always make them have it. That was the big win. They were very excited that I did not and suddenly I felt comfortable allowing them not to have breakfast.

Dave:

I'm hopeful that all this stuff I'd tell my kids will stick at some point. You mentioned diet sodas. Do you use NutraSweet and all that kind of stuff or is that just your kids doing it?

Amy:

I do not. I do not drink any of that. Believe me, before all of this, there was always some diet soda in my house. Now there is none and anything they have, they've gone out and gotten on their own, but I figure at least in those moments when they've chosen to use their own money to get a Diet Dr. Pepper at least, it's better than getting a Dr. Pepper. I know that there are still issues with a lot of any chemical that they're putting in our body other than water, but I will tell you, we have Brita filters and we're big LaCroix people. I hope you don't have anything against that, but we pretty much go through-

Dave:

Carbonated water is great for you. It's probably better than regular water, and no, it doesn't make you all acidic. You breathe out the CO2. There's no science to say CO2 is bad for you. It's good for you.

Amy:

Good. Well, we have an entire refrigerator that my kids have called the LaCroixidge. It's like basically LaCroix.

Dave:

Ours has some Lacroix, some Zevia and some Pellegrino in it.

Amy:

Pellegrino. My kids all love sparkling water. That's our go to always and Diet Coke or diet whatever is a special occasion that might happen once a month for them, but I've really made a point to not have that at all in the house.

Dave:

It's so cool. You've actually done so many of the things that are in the lifestyle that I've been evangelizing for a long time. Where did you get all this information?

Amy:

Online and my friends and I, we have an amazing friend group and we're constantly sharing different articles and different research that we find in different health magazines and we're always on the lookout for that. Even someone who I work with, Dr. Jen Ashton, who I love, not only she's an MD and an OB/GYN, but she also has her nutrition degree from Columbia. She and I are always sending things back and forth too. She's also intermittent fasting and she's modified keto, but she just told me about these amazing Palmini, these angel hair pasta that's hearts of palm.

All of us are trading different secrets and things that we found. It's been really an awesome group of women who have just been sharing information and then doing some of the research and following up with new articles. It's been awesome.

Dave:

This is something that's really new because I thought you might say, "Oh, I hired this amazing doctor who put me on this special diet." There's enough information from enough credible people that if you sit down with a couple friends, you can source it yourself and decide [inaudible 00:40:57]. You've got your oils, right? You've got your sugars, right? You've got your IF. You're doing all of this stuff which is really impressive. I was going to say, "Who's the secret doctor behind you?" I love this. You're an example about of how anyone without a giant doctor's bill can figure out what you've figured out.

Amy:

It's so true. We have so much information. Obviously, you need to know how to vet information and know what's real and what's not. That's a little bit of a slippery slope just when it comes to the web, but I have been ... Obviously, you know certain sources that are trusted in this world, The New York Times. You've got certain magazines. Men's Health actually was the first one interestingly that sparked my interest and that was the study on metastatic mice and ketosis. They had a set of metastatic mice. Half of them were put on the SAD diet, the Standard American Diet and the other half were put on keto. The keto mice lived twice as long.

I just remember reading that and I started sobbing because I just thought, "Why wouldn't I do that? Why wouldn't I do that?" There's just been a recent article that Dr. Jen sent me about combining chemo with keto in lessening the effects. Oh, my gosh, when I was on chemo, I gained 10 pounds because all I did was eat carbs because I was so sick and so nauseated. I felt so sorry for myself and I just wanted to eat pizza and pasta and that's all I did and I gained weight. When I was finished with chemo, I had to lose weight which is not what people necessarily think of when they think of chemo. I couldn't believe that I had gained weight on chemo, but it happened because all I did was eat carbs.

Then when I started changing my life, my oncologist, she was one of the first people who said, "What are you doing?" I told her about keto and she was surprised, started doing research, started doing it herself. She and her husband started doing it. Now she tells her patients about it. How about that?

Dave:

I had a conversation at the beginning of Bulletproof with the CEO of a Fortune 100 company who had pancreatic cancer and it was, "Dave, do not tell anyone. I never told anyone." The day he figured it out, he was inoperable because it was too big. He did chemo, but he immediately went keto right away. He did chemo, but he did something called insulin potentiated therapy because cancer cells love sugar so much, during the chemo, he had to inject insulin to make the cancer cells suck up the chemo. His doctors wouldn't support him even though other doctors do that. He just snuck the insulin in. He shrunk his pancreatic tumor to the point it was operable and he never told his family or his workplace that he saved his life with just keto and chemo.

Amy:

I have chills right now because that makes sense. Scientifically, it makes sense.

Dave:

IPT, it's called. I've known about this for 20 years. In fact, we're not doing it regularly in every cancer clinic just drives me nuts.

Amy:

I'm glad you told me about it because I will put that in my back pocket. That is-

Dave:

[crosstalk 00:44:19].

Amy:

Absolutely. That makes so much sense. It just does on every level. I wish I had had the information that I got after the fact while I was going through treatment. I would have 100% done that. Also, it's just a cool thing to know that you have power. You can control what you put in your body and you can have an impact on your outcome. That's what we all feel out of control. That's where all the fear is because you're thinking, "I can't do anything. It's happening to me and I have no say," but actually we do have so much more to say than we think and that's what this information that you're providing to people gives back the power to the patient, to the person.

Dave:

In fact that's in the definition biohacking. It's blah, blah, blah, so that you have full control over your own biology because there's a sense of betrayal. If you're obese like I was and your brain isn't working or if you get cancer, "How could my body do this to me?" and you really have admirably just stepped up and taken control. I have a question for you though. I've seen so many, hundreds of thousands of people over the years with all the blogging and stuff that I do and just personal conversations. A lot of women who go keto or intermittent fasting have said, "I felt really good at first and then my sleep quality went down and then my hormones got irregular and then my hair got thinner." Well, I guess hair got them because of chemo but-

Amy:

Chemo, yeah, and then I'm also on tamoxifen. I'm on tamoxifen and that is something that basically strips all my estrogen away. Hollywood starlets do hormone replacement therapy and add estrogen to their beauty regime so that they look youthful and their skin is dewy and their hair is thick and all of that. I'm battling that on that level, but I actually would argue, my personal experience has been through keto, through fitness, through intermittent fasting. I feel like I regained some of what I lost and what I lose with the drugs I take. I don't feel like my hair in fact ... Then I'm also someone who takes, I might take biotin. I take daily supplements. I try to get obviously all of that to my food number one, but I just do whatever I can.

I have not noticed that. I have not noticed even some of the side effects that people talk about what tamoxifen. I had them initially, and then when I started doing keto and intermittent fasting, I don't think it's in my head. They went away. People say they can't tolerate tamoxifen. I'm fine on it.

Dave:

It's because you're biologically more resilient because you learned how to eat, you fixed your cell membranes and the longer you do it, it takes two years to replace half the fat in your body and another two years to replace another. You're upgrading your cells, which you can handle more of everything in the world ...

Amy:

Exactly.

Dave:

... which is beautiful.

Amy:

That intermittent fasting, allowing yourselves to repair them, I love thinking about that when I'm fasting thinking I'm giving my body a chance to do something other than digest. While that also just makes so much sense and why would from antiaging to anticancer it just makes so much sense. I can tell you, you mentioned your brain on chemo. I remember that actually was one of the scariest side effects of them all. I'm obviously on live television for a living and I remember not remembering the day before at all. Short-term memory was gone. My brain wasn't firing. I couldn't think of what to say. I had nothing to respond.

I remember being panicked that someone was going to say something because I wouldn't know what to say back. That loss of trust for your brain is mind-blowingly scary. I remember especially when I started doing keto and intermittent fasting, seeing my brain come back to me was everything, everything.

Dave:

Now you're giving me goosebumps. I was living with that, I don't know what that person just said, I just can't remember it, in my mid 20s and my career was growing and I had an intellectually demanding job and I was already starting to be in front of crowds in the tech industry, but still [inaudible 00:48:35], "Oh, my God, they're going to know that I have no clue what's happening right now." Somehow you make it up and it's so terrifying. It was one of the motivators for me to start doing the stuff that became Bulletproof just because it's one of the scary things and no one ever talks about it.

Amy:

No.

Dave:

Thank you for sharing that because there are people listening right now have brain fog. They're like, "Oh, my God, I thought I was alone." We hide it. People didn't know you had it, did they?

Amy:

No, and that was my biggest fear that they would, like you said.

Dave:

This is a call out to anyone who has a brain fog like that, you got to work on it and talk about it because, a, you're not alone. It happens to everyone whether or not you've had chemo and sometimes it's worse than others, but oh, my God, I'd forgotten about how terrifying that was, you just brought it up. Thank you though and I have fixed it for you and for me and for a lot of people. Your mom started a website, myketohome.com because to be the age of our parents and back to your high school weight, it's pretty life changing, how do you feel about your mom becoming an online influencer?

Amy:

I love it so much. She spent her whole life raising us. She was a teacher for a while. Then to have a second career in her 60s is pretty awesome, but I love where it came from because she was always somebody who loved cooking and in the kitchen, but once keto happened, she was actually a huge source for me. We were going back and forth with how we could make things we love keto and then actually wound up tasting better than they did originally. I would be calling her, "Mom, what did you do with this?" and we were emailing and texting. Finally, I said, "Mom, why don't you just like put all these

recipes down on a website, so not just I can use it, but so many other people can because these recipes are so amazing. I want everyone to taste how good like a lifestyle, a diet never tasted so good."

We pushed her. My husband works in the web space. His company actually helps monetize websites, just like my mom's in terms of advertising dollars. It was a nice, easy move for her because my husband could help her. It was a big process. It took her over a year just to get everything together and then to start putting out these recipes on her own website, but I'm so proud of her and I'm on her website every day. All of my friends are too there. It's so cute on Good Morning America. Everyone was like, "I cooked your mom's sage pork chops last night." I have everyone coming and telling me that they're cooking my mom's recipes and it's so cool to hear that. It's actually super fun.

In fact, I had someone come up to my daughter and she thought she was going to say, "Oh, your mom is Amy Robach," and she said, "Wait, is your grandma Joanie Robach?" It was so cool. She's like, "Mom, she didn't even care about you. She's just wanted to know about Nonie," because that's what we call my mom Nonie. I thought that was an awesome moment. We shared it with her.

Dave:

That is so impressive and awesome and I'm hopeful, there's a few 100,000 people here this interview and we're always looking for recipes that don't have all the carbs and sugar and don't have bad fats. Guys, myketohome.com. We didn't plan this interview for that everything, but source of recipes like that are tested by people who like to eat. There you go. You have some more recipes, which is really cool. If a woman came to you right now and said, "I'm thinking about starting IF," what is the number one benefit that you would tell her that she would get?"

Amy:

Energy.

Dave:

It's energy.

Amy:

Energy and then time, but they go hand in hand. I have never felt more energized and free. To say one thing is hard, but I'd say energy, time and freedom.

Dave:

Energy, time and freedom. Wow. Those are so important for everyone. It's very hard to write a book and say, "Get more energy." I always torture my editors to say, "No, we have to put energy on the cover," because there's like weight loss, weight loss, weight loss because people buy books for that, but thank you for just straight up, "Yeah, you get your energy back. Once you have that, everything else is better."

Amy:

Right. People always say, I'm sure you hear it too, my colleagues will look at me and say, "Really? You haven't eaten anything today. How are you not on the floor sleeping?" I say, "It's the opposite. Do you see how much energy I have? I swear it's counterintuitive. I know you think you have to eat to have energy, but that's not the way it is." I have people constantly scratching their heads, especially those of us who work early morning hours, there is a tendency to overeat. Your cortisol levels are probably down because you haven't slept as much as you should have or at least they're askew and then you end up

just going in for the sugary yogurt or the doughnut because we got a Krispy Kreme that just opened in Time Square.

I see all my, not all my, but a lot of the cup of my colleagues, having those sugary drinks and eating yogurt and donuts asking me how I can stand not to eat. I'm looking at them thinking, "Oh, if you just put that down, you'd feel 100,000 times better."

Dave:

It's one of those things where I still practice patience and I don't say it, but I'm always just sad when I see someone who's really heavy with a doughnut and the diet soda or regular soda because it was me. I was that 300-pound guy doing exactly that and I just didn't know better, but I know if I walk up and say something, it's actually not kind and you never do. By sharing information like you just did here, I hope that we can find a few people who are dealing with it of any age, and like what you just said, it's about the energy, right?

Amy:

Yeah. I think it's pretty cool just to know that you don't have to be a slave to it because it is a drug. Sugar is absolutely a drug. Once you stop ingesting it, you don't want it anymore. It's really remarkable. If I do taste something, all of a sudden I'm like, "Whoa." I actually I think I go, "Urgh," when I taste it because you can taste the sugar and it's repulsive. It's the opposite.

Dave:

Well, you've set your life up in such a beautiful way. I think you've inspired a lot of people, especially women, "Oh, fasting is for men," or whatever. No, it works for everyone and it works at different levels and different times. Just by being willing to share an hour with this, I am really grateful and thank you.

Amy:

Thank you. Thank you for all that you're doing, all that you have done. I probably wouldn't be here if it weren't for you and what you did blazing that trail beforehand, so thank you.

Dave:

That makes me so happy. If you like today's episode, you know what to do. Keep doing what you're doing and be an example for people, but don't be that person who walks around going, "You have to do what I do," because you don't have to do that. If you want those recipes, myketohome.com and I'm just plugging that to be nice. There's no arrangement to do that, but more recipes are always better. Have an awesome day.