

[144: Dr. Jill Carnahan interviews Steve Stavs from Made To Thrive on The Future of Health](#)

**Text:**

Dr. Jill 0:12

Well, hello, everybody. Welcome to another episode of Dr. Jill Live! If you have missed previous episodes, you can find them all on my YouTube channel, on Stitcher, on iTunes, or anywhere you listen to podcasts. If you like this episode or any previous ones, would you just stop by and subscribe to YouTube or leave a review on iTunes? That really helps us reach more people. And thank you, as always, for all your wonderful feedback and comments during the show. We're live to Facebook, and we will post this on all other channels right after the show.

Dr. Jill 0:43

Today, I'm super excited to talk to my guest, Steve Stavs, from South Africa. I want to introduce him in a moment, but today we're talking about the future of health. We're going to dive deep into the things that make us more resilient, the things that we're seeing as changes in our healthcare system, and how we can approach that in a new way with a new lens. And as for me, as you well know, one of my favorite things is the idea that we can really transform the way medicine is practiced and the way patients are treated. So we'll dive into that today as well.

Dr. Jill 1:15

Let me introduce my guest. About Steve: Steve is considered one of Africa's leading professional coaches and internationally trained biohackers. Over the past 20 years, he's been interviewed on radio and television and has been invited to speak at a host of international forums and conventions. He has lectured to over 10,000 professionals in the medical, health, and wellness industries and continues to connect with his audience, empowering them with knowledge, skills, and practical tools to become courageously equipped and live a life of thriving. We [do] share this. With an undergraduate degree in science together with certifications in functional medicine and Chinese medicine, Steve combines many disciplines of medicine to offer clients a master plan. This has led to thousands [of people] testifying to his transformative process over the past 24 years. One of his main purpose drivers from success to significance is his empathic support of his community. He is passionate in his belief of encouraging people to thrive by unlocking their unique talents and potential to ensure that they're able to thrive in their full optimization. I love this, every word of it, Steve. Welcome to the show.

Steve Stavs 2:22

Thank you so much, Dr. Jill. What a privilege to be here.

Dr. Jill 2:25

Thank you. So I love to start with [one's] story because story is what drives us. How did we get into this? You've got lots of credentials, certifications, training. You're obviously moving and shaking in the world and transforming lives. But how did this start? Where did you grow up, and how did your background frame you for this kind of career?

Steve Stavs 2:44

Sure. Thanks, Dr. Jill. Look, it started way back at medical school in the 90s. In the physiology lab, we were doing VO<sub>2</sub> maxing. And I had this elite athlete on the treadmill, and I looked at his body and I looked at mine, and it looked very different. I'm an immigrant from the island of Cyprus. My parents came here in 1961, and I was born here, but [I was] brought up very Cypriot—very Greek. So food was used as a tool to deal with emotions and pain and hurt, and I was very different to the other schoolboys and schoolgirls. So it was difficult being a foreigner in Africa. I gained weight, and they used to call me "Bubbles," which was really difficult. It was a difficult sort of identity to adopt, Dr. Jill, because then that frames everything. So you're carrying too much weight. The kids are not nice. They are nasty, and they tease and mock you. So these hurts and pains develop in areas where we have to deal with them, and one of the ways is food.

Steve Stavs 3:49

In a Greek home, it was all about food. I gained a lot of weight and was probably 20 to 30 kg—just too much—about 40 to 50 pounds overweight. Then, at medical school, I realized that if I'm going to have a future with regard to health professions, then I need to really get my body and my mind in shape. So from then [on], I started using [my] heart rate in the 90s to track what was happening when I ate certain foods or when I ran or exercised. That was my first health optimization tool or data point that really helped me with my diet, helped me with my nutrition, and helped when I ate. I realized if I didn't eat at night, my heart rate was far better in the morning. I think I was an early adopter. That was probably in 1995, looking at certain data points to help me. I lost a lot of weight [and] leaned up. I was inspired by Professor Tim Noakes in South Africa with regard to the low-carbohydrate, high-fat diet. And that was my story.

Steve Stavs 4:45

I've always sort of believed in ancestral living in the ways of Africa and using health optimization data points to help people transform their lives. And not only transform their lives, Dr. Jill—the heart that I have for people is that they sustain their transformation. Too many people come into my office here, patients that I saw today, and they're sick, they've got disease, and they've got pain. Then they put the plan together and followed it, and then six months, nine months, or a year later, they're just not continuing with this healthy lifestyle, and they're back to sickness and disease. So what are the tools we can use? What are the belief systems that we can employ to help patients, clients, and people abroad sustain their transformation? But that's my story. It's an exciting story [of going] from pain to purpose, I think. But there you go.

Dr. Jill 5:39

Amazing. You know, it's interesting; I didn't know your back story, but it makes perfect sense because all of us have a struggle or an issue and we find success or this transformation. And then, if we're healers at heart, which you clearly are, we want to share it with the world. We're like, "How can we help other people to do this?" I love the word in your bio that I read—the empathic part, right? In fact, I'd like to talk about this briefly because I'm sure a lot of our listeners [know someone or can identify themselves]: Emotional eating; you mentioned that. I think that's such a core [issue] because what happens in our family of origin is often there's a reward: "Oh, you did great in school. Let's go out for ice cream," right? So tell me a little bit about how that was ingrained because it's so common to so many. And then how did you change that when you were sad or lonely, or you had a reward, and you maybe thought because of your background to go towards food? How did that change? And how could people out there [who are] listening change that for themselves?

Steve Stavs 6:36

Yes, it's an incredible question, because I think it's just the heart of a lot of transformation. At the practice here that I do [with] patients and clients, I say that the most simple tool to transform your life is to change your nutrition, but it's the hardest tool. It's the hardest but the most simple. In other words, it's the lowest-hanging fruit, but it's so tight on that tree [that it's hard] to pull it off and consistently keep it off. It's so difficult because food is so ingrained in the culture. It's so ingrained in healing because food can be so nutritious and healing to our bodies. And I look at all the neurotransmitters and neuromodulators that are released when we eat. And dopamine—you get a huge hit from food and even serotonin. So I think there's a lot of neuromodulation that's going on when we eat.

And my upbringing being Greek was all about food. So it was a whole process and a ceremony and a celebration, which is good in certain ways because we used to sit around the table and we used to connect with one another, and there was a lot of community. But there was a lot of overindulgence and overeating, which was very, very problematic. So I linked it to my purpose. And this is what we do with clients and CEOs.

Steve Stavs 7:44

We do a lot of health-[related] corporate optimization here in Africa and beyond. We see CEOs, executives, and directors, and we link it to their purpose and their community. If someone can have a clear, concise, articulated purpose, then often I get them to use that as a foundation to be able to have self-control and be able to stick to their plan over the years because, at the end of the day, they know that they want to live out their purpose, which brings them significant significance. It brings them value. It gives them meaning. We use the word 'meaning' significantly in our practice and with the health of corporations worldwide because people really, at the heart, need to first be accepted and then, secondarily, have meaning in their lives. So purpose—[it's about] finding out people's purpose, being able to articulate that purpose, and then for them to actually use it in a way that they can then have self-control in all areas of their health and their living.

Dr. Jill 8:45

I love this so much. First of all, biohacking—I want to go to that next. What is a biohacker? How did you get into it? I'm a fellow biohacker. All of this we're talking about is: How do we really optimize our health?—and we'll dive into that. But when I hear you say meaning and purpose, a couple of things come to mind. Number one, flow states—optimization of neurotransmitters—we're going to talk about that. How do you get into it? But one of the ways to get into flow is to find your meaning and purpose and kind of follow that. Those are the places where you find the most natural highs from the neurotransmitters that happen in those activities.

Dr. Jill 9:20

But the other thing that comes to mind is blue zones, which being Greek, there's a blue zone in Greece, Italy, and all these [other] places. These are the places where the highest percentage of centenarians—those over 100 years [old]—exist. So we say, "What are they doing right?" And consistently over the blue zones is meaning, purpose, and connection, which you mentioned both of. And I love that because you're taking a habit that may be hard, like eating a healthy breakfast every day or fasting in the morning or whatever it is, and you're linking it to: What do I really

want to be, do, or accomplish in my life? That will actually make the habit stick, which is why it's so successful. So let's go back to biohacking. Let's talk about: What is biohacking? You and I [both] know this, but what does that really mean? And then why is it a place where we can go to find transformation?

Steve Stavs 10:09

Yes. I think, first off, if you just take a stratospheric view, it's really simple. Everybody's almost doing it that's listening to us in the modern world. I ask people this question when I do corporate presentations: Do you weigh yourself? Most people lift their hands up. Have you measured your blood pressure? Most people lift their hands up. Have you measured your glucose? Well, most people lift their hands up. Or, [have you measured] body composition? Any of these measuring devices that measure and give you feedback is a way to use data points to optimize your health. So I define it as the assessment of internal—which is your body—and external environments in order to optimize your physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being. So that could come in subjective. We do a lot of subjective assessments.

Steve Stavs 10:59

Biohacking is not only objective; I find it subjective when we ask questions and ask [things on] questionnaires. On [the topic of] community, one of the biggest questions that we ask is, "Who can you confidently leave your children with, [and] that your children know who they are?" "Who can you confidently leave your parents with, and your parents would be comfortable staying with these people?" That's a really good subjective question on [the topic of] community. So it's [utilizing] both the subjective and the objective. We know about functional medicine, and there are so many data points that we use as functional medicine experts that are really helpful. But it both can be things on [the topic of] community and purpose. One of the biggest questions I ask from a data or biohacking perspective is, "Can you clearly articulate your unique purpose?" And then they say, "No, I can't," and then I'll give them mine. I say, "My purpose is to inspire and empower people to [achieve] superhuman health and performance so that they can thrive." So these are at the heart of biohacking, and the art and science of biohacking is both through subjective and objective data.

Dr. Jill 12:03

Brilliant. I think that's one of the best, [most] concise definitions I've ever heard. I mean, you and I love this. We live it. I have my mat here [and] all my data collection points, [along with] my devices and things. But even for an average person who is

maybe just checking their weight and then checking their sleep habits—very, very subjective sleep habits, simple things—it's accessible to everyone. It's not an elite or exclusive practice. So I love that. And you don't have to have super expensive devices. I happen to love things, but you don't have any of those things to do this. So I love that. Meaning and purpose—you just mentioned that you asked people about articulating [about it]. I love that. I think that's so crucial because that's the foundation of: Why would we do what we do? Why would we [work to break] hard habits and change our lives if we don't have meaning and purpose? So if someone says: "You know what, Steve? I know kind of sort of what I'm here to do." How do you help them go deeper, articulate, and maybe even write down their meaning and purpose?

Steve Stavs 13:03

Brilliant question. We've got a whole two hours where we ask 25 questions, mainly to executives and CEOs. I find that they fall the hardest because a lot of their significance, meaning, and purpose are based on their position in a corporate [setting]. And then often, what happens is that they realize their purpose. They're in that area, and then all of a sudden they've got no meaning [or] significance, and they start using either narcotics or other things to deal with that emptiness. So one of the big things we do is the weekend test. If people are listening out there, just take a moment and maybe stop. You don't have to close your eyes. But what I do is I say: Picture that you've got a weekend conference, Dr. Jill. Okay. And it's a full-day workshop on Saturday and Sunday, and you have to entertain guests on Saturday nights and Sundays. So you get your week ready, Dr. Jill, and you get everything done. Even your family around you decides to go away for the weekend because they know how busy you're going to be and that you have to entertain people at night. And your close friends are just out of town now. They've gone on holiday. So on a Friday night, you get an SMS from the organizer saying that the conference has been canceled. Now you wake up on a Saturday morning. All your commitments and obligations have been done. You've got it sorted. Your family is away. Your friends are away. How do you spend your time over that weekend? And I get people to write. They do this, they do this, they do this, [and] they do that. They spend time here, they spend money, [and] this is where they go. This is what they consume online. How do they spend their Instagram feed? What do they do for Google? What websites do they go [to]? So we plot what happens over 48 hours. That often gives us themes, and it gives us sort of talking points in terms of where people would spend their time with no commitments whatsoever.

Steve Stavs 14:58

So that's a really important exercise. People love that exercise. And they realize, "Oh, if I've got no commitments, I spend a lot of time reading health books, ordering health things online, and finding ways that I can improve my health and [that of] others by going to a health shop" or "going to a bookstore and reading the health books in the store." So that's a simple exercise. I think it's a profound exercise. And then a second one that I do is really your eulogy test. What do you want people to say about you at your funeral? That's a very important test because Maya Angelou said, "People will not remember what you said or did, but how you made them feel." And we biohack that and optimize it too. People won't remember what you said or did, but how you made them feel, think, and act. So how do you want people to speak of you at your funeral in terms of how you made them feel, think, and act? Those two very basic tests, and there are another 23 [questions]. We've got a whole 25-questionnaire process. But those two are probably the mainstays that I use with clients with regard to them uncovering their purpose, which is a process. It's not just, "Oh, well, one day I do an exercise and then I know what my purpose is," but uncovering their purpose so that they can use it.

Dr. Jill (pre-recording) 16:24

Hey, everybody. I just stopped by to let you know that my new book, *Unexpected: Finding Resilience through Functional Medicine, Science, and Faith*, is now available for order wherever you purchase books. In this book, I share my own journey of overcoming a life-threatening illness and the tools, tips, tricks, hope, and resilience I found along the way. This book includes practical advice for things like cancer and Crohn's disease and other autoimmune conditions, infections like Lyme or Epstein-Barr, and mold- and biotoxin-related illnesses. What I really hope is that as you read this book, you find transformational wisdom for health and healing. If you want to get your own copy, stop by [ReadUnexpected.com](http://ReadUnexpected.com). There, you can also collect your free bonuses. So grab your copy today and begin your own transformational journey through functional medicine in finding resilience.

Dr. Jill 17:21

Steve, I'm just smiling so big and my heart is so full because, if you're listening, that's gold. I would encourage you right now, if you're somewhere where you can write down a few of the things he just said or come back and listen to this, [that would be great]; this will be recorded, so you can listen again. That is gold, Steve. And I'm smiling so big because I didn't know that this was something, but I have this thing called "secret days," and it's exactly what you said. It's where I have a full day, and for some reason—it's happened maybe twice a year—everything gets canceled or some big event gets canceled, so I have this secret day. No one knows! I get so excited about these secret days, and I don't tell anyone because I get to go do the

things I love—and it's usually being in nature, thinking, creating, writing, or learning about health like some of the stuff you said. And clearly, I do know my purpose, but I love that you said that because my heart jumps for joy when I have a secret day. And you are basically creating in your mind what would happen if you had a secret day. That's my definition—what I call it. But I love that so much.

Dr. Jill 18:27

So let's go into flow states because there is meaning and purpose. You can get curious. Find: What's your purpose? What's your meaning? These are the things that will maybe [help you] decide: Where do you go for flow? So I think this correlates so well because if you had that secret day, the things that you would do probably put you in at least a partial flow state of joy and happiness and what we have called a timeless, effortless [state where] time [is] standing still. All of a sudden, four hours have passed, and you don't realize it. Let's talk about flow. What's your definition of flow? How do we get more flow? What's the state of flow neurochemically?—because this purpose and curiosity can actually drive us right into flow.

Steve Stavs 19:05

Well, I've learned a lot about flow from you and Steven Kotler and Rian Doris and the Flow Research Collective because I think it's crucially important. And I think someone like Steven Kotler, [who wrote the book] *The Art of Impossible...* If anyone's listening out there, I know that he's been on the show. It's a highly recommended book that I'm listening [to]. But what I find with flow, in terms of my practice, is that people battle to get into flow if a lot of the foundational functional medicine parameters are not good. So I've looked at doing neurotransmitting. There are some tests online to see where people are dominant with regard to neurotransmitters. I'm very dopaminergic, so I'm very dopamine-oriented as well. So I'll do that test initially because I think that's very important. My wife is very serotonin-oriented as well. So I look at these processes and I say, "Okay, let's do the test." There's a brilliant little test in Ben Greenfield's book as well called *Boundless*, looking at neurotransmitters and how important that is. And then we'll structure something with regards to ensuring that that neurotransmitter is looked after—the building blocks are there. So I've realized through amino acid testing that without tryptophan, we really battle to make serotonin. So that's another test that I would look at. So when I look at flow [with] high achievers, CEOs, or people that really have the finance arm to look at it, the first thing I'll do is my functional medicine test, but I'll [also] do my amino acid test. And I love your perspective on this because I've seen a huge problem with amino acids out there with people taking



way too much collagen and filling their lives with all this proline and all this glycine, and it's causing issues.

Steve Stavs 20:45

So number one, in terms of flow, and I know this is difficult for people listening out there that might not have the means financially all the time to do these tests, but I think it's crucially important to then assess yourself and see with these basic neurotransmitter tests in terms of the question: Where are you dominant with regards to neurotransmitters?—and then looking at what things help that neurotransmitter, because if you come into a deficient state, I find it very difficult to hit flow. So my best days in flow are when I've got a good neurotransmitter base. So that's the first thing that I think is crucially important. The building blocks are really, really important. So that's number one. Number two, in terms of flow, I think the distraction part I found is really problematic. So I use a technique called BrainTap by Patrick Porter. He was on my show. I get into a BrainTap situation by getting from high beta—we are probably in beta now, [our] brainwaves, or high beta—down into the alpha state. It's so quick for me with BrainTap. You can use Muse; we've used Muse in meditation. You might be a master meditator, which is great. I'm not in that space, and I find it easier to use BrainTap, Muse, or even Sensate. It just drops me from high beta down into that alpha state. When I'm in that alpha state, I then get up into that place. If anything's on my mind that's distracting, I've got this sort of distraction notebook; I write those things down, and then I get into areas that I absolutely love. So I'm a creator. I inspire and empower people. I love writing content. I love talking to people like this. So I'll get into that state there, get rid of the distractions, make sure that I've done my meditation, and then get into a process of probably about 90 minutes. That'll get me into a flow state very, very quickly to get into the alpha state or brainwave. So that's the short summary.

Steve Stavs 22:44

The reason I do that is originally from a purpose. My purpose is I want to bring the world superhuman health and make sure that they're thriving. So it's easy for me to block off these 90 minutes. It might not be easy for someone. It might not be easy for them to have 90 minutes, but I recommend 90 minutes. Or, start with 60 minutes and then use either Calm or any of these apps if you want to, or any of these devices. Non-Sleep Deep Rest—there are some tracks online that have helped. It's affordable because they're free other than your time, and you do these before you want to get into that state of flow. So I think there are many little areas [such as] walking outside in the sunshine, holding my daughter's hand before I get into these 90 minutes because of oxytocin being released. She's just an oxytocin giver.

My daughter wants hugs and kisses. So there are these different parts: Community, purpose, having the hacks in place. And I think that's probably a short summary. I've got so many different things. I mean, from an infrared sauna to doing cold plunges to exercise to weightlifting, in terms of getting my body in a space before I enter flow. I'm a person who needs some of those things before I just start working and get into a flow state.

Dr. Jill 24:02

Oh, I love, love, love [that]. [You shared] so many wonderful thoughts. I'll just share a couple of personal things like you so that if listeners want to pick and choose and find some things, [they can]. I have a V-light device. There are many, many out there, but it's a red light device to my brain. And it is [inaudible] alpha. For me, it all always goes right into the place I want to be alpha-wise. Also, the PEMF mat, which is right here next to me on level three or four, is really good for me to get into that state. And there are so many devices and things that you can do. The other thing I thought was so important is amino acids, and I love that you said that. So many athletes and people are taking branched-chain aminos or collagen, and they're forgetting that we need the full spectrum. I didn't know this years and years ago, but it was certainly after my Crohn's, which was like 20 years ago, that I started taking the full amino complex every single day for 20 years. I take Thorn's Amino Complex. There are many, many good ones out there, but I don't recommend the branch-chain amino acids unless there's a specific deficiency. Like you, I test; I don't guess. So we know exactly what we're dealing with. So I think that's so important for people to understand. You really do need those. And especially if you've had like me any gut issues where you either have trouble breaking down protein, maybe low stomach acid or hypochlorhydria, or some inflammatory bowel, IBS, SIBO, SIFO—all those gut issues that you've heard me talk about on the show, you may not be breaking down into... So basically proteins from animal or plant products can be broken down into the core building blocks, and those are amino acids. So it's the very basis. And you need all of these. Tryptophan makes serotonin. Tyrosine makes dopamine, norepinephrine, and epinephrine. So you need these bases. And like you, I actually manipulate people's neurotransmitters in a really good way, right? That manipulation is good because we want more by giving them specific amino acids. So I've been doing that for decades, just like you.

Dr. Jill 25:47

One other thing you mentioned [was] Greenfield and a couple of assessments. One of the original guys, Eric Braverman, with the *Edge Effect*, has a screening questionnaire in his book. Again, I think it's been a couple of decades now. I actually

have that in my office for patients when they come in. But any of these questionnaires, if you want to know where you're at, you can take those.

Dr. Jill 26:06

I'm like you, I'm dopamine dominant, so I love that dopamine and love to support that. But we really need all of them because the flow state, if you look at it biochemically [and] neurotransmitter-wise, is the optimization of all the spectrum of neurotransmitters. So you want to have the ability to make all of those. And this is not drugs, if you're listening. We don't have a serotonin reuptake inhibitor issue. And again, not that those are bad or a problem, temporarily, but those kinds of drugs that affect reuptake inhibition are usually antidepressants or antipsychotics, and they affect these neurotransmitters. Long term, they affect your physiology because your body is really smart. When you inhibit the reuptake of serotonin, for example, and you do it over years and years, your body is like: Wait, we have a lot of serotonin hanging around; let's decrease production or decrease the receptors that are out there. So over time, if you've been on these medications for a long time, your actual production and your receptors are diminished. So then when you go off, you feel worse. And I deal with a lot of people weaning them off the medications and trying to optimize. There are ways to do that, by the way. That's a whole other topic. So I love this biohacking. I love the idea of getting into flow, and you gave us so many practical ways [to do it]. Let's talk a little bit about the diet stuff again. And we talked about how to form habits. Dealing with patients and dealing with whether they want to lose weight, optimize muscle percentage, or optimize performance, what have you found? Have you found any particular diet? Do you use multiple different types of diets? [What about] the timing of eating? What are a few little pearls on diet timing and those things that you've seen clients have success with?

Steve Stavs 27:46

Yes. And I'm going to give you the preamble to that because, once again, with all my clients, I'm always looking at purpose and community. So I think those are the greatest internal motivators and internal drivers because, as you know, for it to really make a change, it needs to be a lifestyle. It needs to continue. It can't be just for six months or nine months. So we established purpose, [which] we've spoken about. I think a community is fundamentally important. Who are the people who love you [and] accept you? Who are the people that value you? Who are the people that give you significance? I think that's crucially important to have in place because we can't do this alone. The stat that I shared on the weekend—I did a five-hour superhuman workshop—comes from Nicholas Christakos' work: If you have an obese friend, you are 40% more likely to be obese. So obesity is the most contagious chronic disease out there, and the same stat applies to depression. Now,

for you listening out there, I'm not fat-shaming you. I've been fat-shamed for a lot of my life, [up] until I went to medical school and made the changes. It was horrible, it was painful, and I'm still working through it. Many times my old school friends that I still see sometimes when we do reunions say: "Hey, Bubbles! How's it going, Bubbles, what's happening with you?" And it's difficult for that because what happens is that my identity lies in that.

Steve Stavs 29:13

So it's really important that you have multiple circles and communities that really want the best for you and can help you along your journey. So a circle of people that are runners, or a circle of... My wife does zumba dancing. She loves to dance. So she's got a community of zumba dancers. A community of people, possibly with regards to a nutritionist, that's got eight people in a group [can be helpful]. I think group therapy is so important to help you along the journey. So I could elaborate on community, and I'll leave that up to you, but purpose and community are two very strong pillars that make you thrive. I think they're fundamental internal drivers and internal motivators. Then [there are] the external motivators: How we get reward—often it's through devices. So you've got a pedometer or you've got an Apple watch, and then you look at the numbers, and then you get rewarded. So there's a fantastic medical insurance company in South Africa that rewards you when you have healthy habits or healthy food. So you go to the grocery store, you buy certain foods, and that gives you certain points. And in those points, you can do whatever—get smoothies at the gym, get cheap air tickets, or whatever there is. So now the external driver is reward. Aristotle said clearly that we are teleological. We love the 'telos'—the 'telos' is the goal—so we get rewarded with goals. So [there are] two major internal drivers and then an external driver that comes through the data. That's the framework we work on.

Steve Stavs 30:47

Then we look at the individual to see where they have any ethical considerations [with regard] to diet, because one thing I've known [is that] if you try and convert someone who's already got an ethical reason why they want to do a certain diet, then it becomes very problematic. And I see a lot of patients from other doctors, especially endocrinologists, who say, "You have to do this diet." So for me, diet is based on a few pillars. Number one, does the person actually want to do this diet from an ethical and spiritual perspective? Number two, how can we work within those parameters to ensure that we can have real, nutrient-dense food?

Steve Stavs 31:26

South Africa had a podcast with Dr. Zach Bush. I highly recommend you get him on. South Africa is the number one glyphosate user in the world. The environments have not changed the laws with regard to 1961. [It's] even more pervasive than the US. I had Dr. Stephanie Seneff—another person that I think we should really have [on the podcast]—on about glyphosate, and she was talking about how pervasive it is in America. In the state of Kentucky, 75% of the air and water are filled with glyphosate. But be that as it may, we need to really work with the individual and see where they're at with regard to their own dietary plans. So real food [is important]. Fasting is probably my biggest weapon—the power of when. I think almost every person can fast, despite a few people, obviously: Possibly women with low fat percentages or thyroid issues, or those who have done extensive tests and who've got real problems with them fasting or who can't produce enough ketones. There are people with NAFLD, dirty livers, liver dysfunction, or any type of SNP that's going to cause issues. But real nutrient-dense food plus fasting are my two biggest areas within the parameters of people's ethical and spiritual pillars.

Dr. Jill 32:48

Brilliant. And you know what you just did is you gave us a framework for whether you're on the carnivore or vegan extreme. You can find a place where you can get these good [nutrients]. I love that because so many people are so hard-lined about one diet. I found in my practice too that I have to find out from the patient and meet them where they're at—wherever they're at. And I love that you talk about ethical [and] spiritual concerns because many people do have a very significant attachment for spiritual or ethical reasons to a specific diet, and we have to meet them where they're at and say, "Okay, how can we [adapt]?—because there are ways. And what we know about blue zones again is that there are definitely plans involved—you know, at some point, if possible. But there's a huge spectrum of what works and what we can make work. And if we look at the cultures around the world, the same thing holds true, right? We can have people who primarily eat yams or primarily eat the blubber of whales, and they all can have good health.

Steve Stavs 33:39

Exactly. And the framework I use—I'm a simple person—[is to] ask five questions. The 'what'; we can talk about 'what' you're going to eat. The 'when' is about fasting and looking at that process of time-restricted eating and gut risk. The 'who' is crucially important; 'who' you eat with. Eating in community has significant health benefits, with significant data [to back it up]. So the 'who' is significant. The 'how'; do you eat with gratitude? Do you eat with faith? We talk about it in spiritual circles. Do you believe this food is nutrient-dense and healthy for your body? If you don't, you're causing division within your own body and mind. If you don't believe

it's healthy for you, then it's not going to be healthy; it doesn't matter what's on your plate because that belief system is so strong. So 'how' is really important? How do you eat? How do you start? Are you mindful of the way you eat? 'How' is also the pace. In modern-day lives and Western living, we eat way too quickly. So we talk about chewing the food and there's a lot of research and data to improve nutrient absorption by about 11%—that's just to chew the food correctly.

Steve Stavs 34:50

So we've got 'what,' 'who'—why we eat is a big one. I ask this question, and no one gets this. Why do we eat, Dr. Jill? We don't eat to survive, which is what people think [we do]; we eat to thrive. We are eating to treat our bodies, our minds, our emotions, and our spirits so that we can add value to the world, to ourselves, and to our communities through our purpose, which we've now clearly defined. So eating and those parameters are based on community and purpose. If we can put those things in place, then sustainably, people can often hold on to their transformation. And then, what would be the last question? Where? I think 'where' is fundamentally important because people are eating on the run. They're not being mindful. They're not sitting down. So what happens is that it becomes a quick process and not a ceremony to sit down. So every single night, probably 95% of the time, we as a family sit together [with] no devices, no interruptions. We look at each other, eye to eye. Load sharing is a problem. We've got power cuts here in South Africa, so often there's no signal, no cell phones, no Wi-Fi, and it's an incredible place where you can sit and connect with people, which I think we've lost the art of connection.

Dr. Jill 36:11

I do too. Again, another set of amazing pearls. I love this so much. You're giving so much practical advice for the listener and for those out there looking to change. And I love that—back to the family, [sitting at the] dinner table. I mean, there are studies on that and how powerful it is in children's lives and them finding meaning and purpose and them doing well in school, and of course, [it helps form] lifelong habits. So I love that because it can still happen. Parents, if you're out there, you're like, "There's no way my kid would put down their phone," well, maybe you need to try it. Maybe try for 10 minutes and then extend the time. I love this, Steve. You have just packed this episode full of great practical information, and it is, as always, such a delight to talk to you. Where can people find out more about you if they want to know what you do? Where can people find you?

Steve Stavs 36:58

Three websites. I think that's probably the easiest: SteveStavs.com and then RegenerativeHealth.co.za. That is my practice website. And then MadeToThrive.co.za. We're big on Instagram @stevestavsza. On LinkedIn: Steve Stavs; we're pretty active there. So those are probably the two biggest areas. Made To Thrive is a health optimization company. I've got eight consultants online. So we've got breathwork coaches. We've got human coaches. We've got consultants to mitigate against electromagnetic radiation, [and we have] biohackers. So we've got a lot of products from infrared saunas, like [those] from SaunaSpace and the FlexBeam, which is our portable infrared and red light device, which I think you would absolutely love. [We also have] KAATSU, which is blood flow modification at another level. All my patients that can afford KAATSU over the age of 50 get KAATSU. It prevents sarcopenia. They maintain muscle mass, which is so important for longevity. It helps BDNF and helps vascular endothelial growth factor. So KAATSU and blood flow modification is, I think, probably the biggest missing part of exercise in people's repertoire. I just absolutely love it. You can take it anywhere.

Steve Stavs 38:12

So yes, I love Made To Thrive. We now downloaded the show. The podcast that I'm going to have you on and release your book that I'm so excited about is the Made To Thrive show. We are in 133 countries, in the top 1.5% of all podcasts worldwide. So I'm just excited about health. I've never missed a day's work in [my] 24 years at the practice to sickness or [to] heal health, not a single day. I had the delta variant of this—supposedly—virus. It was one day. That's what it was that affected me. So, mind, body, soul. I love what I do. Thank you for having me. I love your heart, and I love collaborating with you. But for people listening out there, [it's about starting with] small incremental steps. Many of them are basic. Many of them are free. One of them is called sunlight. It is free as you can get. I could carry on talking and talking and talking to this lovely lady, Dr. Jill, but I know she's wrapping up. So thank you so much. It's a privilege to be absolutely thriving, loving life, and changing people's lives.

Dr. Jill 39:15

Oh, Steve, what a great finale. Oh, [there were] so many pearls again. By the way, I love blood flow restriction. I have my bands over there. Absolutely. I completely agree with you there. Thank you again for being here today. It was an absolute pleasure.

Steve Stavs 39:30

Thank you, Dr. Jill; all the best. I declare to you, as I always do, favor and blessing upon you because you're changing so many people's lives. You have a heart for connecting with people. And I absolutely love it when people are so benevolent. There are so few benevolent people out there. You want the best for your patients. You want to see them live out the very calling and purpose that they were called to, so thank you! Thank you so much. Hopefully, I will be in Boulder, Colorado, one day and give you an oxytocin hug—the African oxytocin hug—to fill you, so that you would be pleased.

Dr. Jill 40:05

I love it. Oh, my heart is full, Steve. Thank you again.

Steve Stavs 40:09

Thank you, Dr. Jill.