

Episode #12 - Is age really just a number?

Meryl: hey everyone. Welcome back to the rebel nutritionist podcast.

And today's Tuesday, June 15th. Happy birthday to me. Yes. This is my birthday podcast. I'm doing it all by myself. So here I am another year that I am blessed to be on this planet. And. I so often become very reflective while I'm reflective and introspective anyway, but even more so around my birthday, because it gives me the opportunity to really look back at the year and see what has transpired and wow.

What a year we have had. So, I often joke that my intention is to age backwards and as I have gotten older, I do get comments and people say, oh, you look so good for your age. And I'm like, what, what am I supposed to look like at this age? I really don't get that. Like, how do we know what age we're supposed to look differently or the expectations? So, I guess there is an expectation, but I just feel like, well, why can't we just say, oh, you look good. Right? Why does it matter how old we are? So, then it gets me thinking and reflecting on. What I hear people say as they get older, right? Like, oh, this is happening I'm turning 40.

And I like, everything went downhill or at 50, this stopped working and I'm thinking like, what? Like, why do we think that because we at a certain age, things go downhill and I feel like saying, no, it went downhill because your body was finally like, I can't do this anymore. And if you're not going to take good care of me, I'm going to start breaking down.

Why our bodies deteriorate -and why it's NOT about aging

So, I feel like. We think we're supposed to deteriorate as we age, but I say this all the time, we don't deteriorate because we age, we deteriorate because we don't take care of ourselves properly. Our bodies are incredibly resilient. Our bodies are all about survival. So, you could be depleting your body for years and years and years before you even realize what has been going on underneath it all.

What happens when we consistently don't take care of our bodies

o if in your late twenties, early thirties and forties, you were raising kids or you were running a business or you were building a business, or you were focusing on your career and you were only focused on those things and you were completely stressed out and you didn't take time for yourself and you weren't paying attention to how you were eating.

Or how you were sleeping and you weren't engaging in any type of healthy physical activity. Well then why do you think that all of a sudden something is wrong. No things aren't suddenly wrong. Things were starting to become out of whack way back then. It's just it

wasn't on your priority list and you certainly weren't paying attention to those what I call little whispers that our bodies. Give us, right. Our bodies talk to us. We often dismiss it and we don't pay attention to it, but I will tell you that our bodies talk to us. And quite frankly, I would probably be the same way if I didn't get sick. Right. If I didn't develop Hodgkin's lymphoma, when I was 33.

I probably would have been on that same trajectory, but there is no question right now that I feel better today at 54 and probably look better at 54 than I did at 34 or 44 or anywhere in between. why did this happen? Because at that point I was forced to look deeper, deeper than the superficial.

I struggled for a long time with my weight and with other things self-esteem issues and all of that kind of stuff. And yet the more I focused on my weight, the worse it got and the worse it got, the more obsessed I became. And then what happened when I got sick was like, boom, I was forced to deal with something that was much bigger than just my weight.

My health story

I had to deal with a cancer diagnosis. So, all of a sudden, the weight didn't matter much, but surviving was all that mattered. And so, after I was sick, I had to deal with building my immune system and had to work with building my health back up, literally from the ground up.

And once I got in touch with my own body signals, once I was able to understand the mental and emotional aspect of what I was dealing with. That was when I truly started to grasp what it meant to look at health and to look at health overweight. And once you start looking at your health in terms of balancing your body, everything else falls in line.

So, we focus on the weight part and think it's going to make us healthy, but literally it is the complete opposite. I always say weight, whether you need to lose weight, whether you need to gain weight, it is a symptom of the imbalance. That is going on in the body. And this is a really, really, really hard concept for people to grasp.

Why weight is not the real issue for most people

Why? Because we live in diet culture, we live in the culture of a trillion-dollar industry that would have you thinking and believing that it's not about your health, that the diet culture and the diet industry has you believing that it is all about weight? And people just can't get away from it. We think the more we starve ourselves or the harder a program is, or if someone else is doing you know, the bigger the reward and often the only thing that that does is drive us deeper into the abyss of confusion and defeat.

So how does this come back to aging? Cause I can totally digress on the whole diet mentality thing. But I'm not going to go there. So, I compare aging to looking at a car, right. And I use the visual of a car because sometimes it makes, it, makes it more tangible. If we can kind of make that analogy, we can feel like, okay, maybe there's a connection to what's going on inside my body.

Since you can't see what's going on inside your body. Having the visual may help it resonate. So, I'm certainly not a mechanic, but I do know a few things. I do know that if you allow your gas tank to run on empty, if you don't fill your car with fuel, your car won't run. And if you don't change the oil in the car, The car gets a little sluggish.

It's not going to operate as efficiently. And if you don't change the tires, you run the risk of skidding on the road and maybe having an accident. And if you don't check the transmission or keep up with the fluids in the car, then maybe it won't start or it just, again, doesn't run efficiently. So how is the human body like a car?

Well, if our bodies came with an instruction manual, the first thing you need to do. Is to give it fuel, right? And you may not even need an instruction manual. I mean, that's common sense. You got to fill a car with fuel. Well, you have to fuel your body. It is no different. And what is fuel food? Real food, unprocessed food, food that is not fast food, food that is not out of a box or at a PA out of a package.

And food that has not come from, from a manufacturing plant. If it came from a factory, chances are, it is not real food. Real food comes out of the ground, comes out of the ground. It's grown from a tree it's grown from a vine. I mean, we can get technical, but food comes from mother nature. That is what we need to operate our body.

Why your body is just like a car

So just like the engine of a car. Our body is composed of thousands of thousands of chemical reactions. And a car has to run through many, many reactions to make it run. And so literally our bodies are one big biochemistry set and each reaction depends on a host of other or a host of different nutrients to function properly.

So, it's vitamins, it's minerals, it's antioxidants, it's things called bio actives. All of these things are required to make our body. Run properly. So, if we don't pay attention to how these systems interact and how they function and what our bodies need to keep them healthy and balanced, then we notice things happening.

Right? We get symptoms in our bodies and being on some crazy diet or following some fad doesn't make us balanced. As a matter of fact, most of the diets that people follow are so restrictive, they actually accelerate the aging process and. In some cases, make us more unhealthy because they include a whole host of processed foods or chemicals that are replacing important and vital nutrients that our bodies so desperately need.

So. The other part of it is we don't see the damage we do too. Our system from ingesting toxins from thinking negatively, we don't see the impact of that has because our bodies, like I said, are all about survival and our bodies are resilient. And so, the bodies will compensate no matter what. So, these imbalances.

Manifests slowly over time. And if we aren't keeping all of our systems in line, so to speak, then things start falling apart. But somehow, we don't link it back to the fact that we have completely depleted our bodies. Instead, we go to a doctor who doesn't look at why you're

out of balance. They just give you some medication usually to fix it, but are they really fixing it?

What is aging, anyway?

No, they're simply managing a symptom. And they're not going back to identify how this all started in the first place. So, if we really took a moment to understand aging and not succumb to the myth that it is our destiny, we might take a totally different approach to our health. And yes, things do change as we get older hormones do shift and things do happen, but.

For the most part, if we keep on top of that, if we are measuring our imbalances and I don't mean just an annual blood test, if we're really looking at nutritional deficiencies, if we're really looking at the health of our entire microbiome, which is our gastrointestinal system, and if we're really looking.

Under the hood, we will paint a very different picture. And there's lots of research, tons of research about the aging process and that aging is really driven at the cellular level. Right. And that it slowly accumulates with age. We also know. There are many mechanisms involved and there's external factors.

Things like stress, things like toxic exposure. Right. But we also know that there's a huge variation in the health among older people. So. We've they've done studies on 80-year-olds who have the same mental and physical capacity of a 20-year-old and vice versa. They've done studies on these 80-year-olds where, or, or people younger and their decline in physical and mental capacity happens much earlier on.

And, and we don't that look, there are many, many theories, but. The one thing that we do know is that the underlying cause is mainly due to the accumulation of unrepaired molecular damage. What does that mean? That means we are literally killing ourselves because we are not taking care of our body. So, what does that tell us?

It essentially says that the body has a tremendous adaptive ability to repair itself, but. The process requires support. And if we don't give the body the support, then it's just not going to work optimally. So, we can take any chronic disease, especially the ones we see frequently, like obesity, like diabetes, or even pre-diabetes cardiovascular disease, hypertension, all of these kinds of even an imbalance in our gut microbiome.

What does that mean? That means. Anything in our digestive system and you don't have to be symptomatic to have imbalances these things start early on. So, if we are not paying attention, then, then we're certainly. Not going to understand the symptoms that are associated with that. So, for anybody who thinks that I am lucky, or I am blessed with good genes, you could not be farther from the truth.

Like seriously. All of this has taken work. It takes effort. It takes consistency. There just is no magic pill. Unfortunately, newflash. So, for me, I am totally blessed to have my work be my passion, my passion, my work, and really, I have for the last 25 years, been in the unique

position of using myself as my own and have one write my own experiment, but through my own experience.

And of course, the research that I do and the education and the knowledge that I have gotten outside of my own. Body. I have been able to take all of that and teach others along the way and help others reach a state of balance and health that they had never experienced before. And it's because I'm constantly educating myself and looking to stay relevant.

Because science changes constantly. So, my job is to take that information and interpret it in a way that has a positive impact on someone's health and subsequently someone's life. So again, taking it outside of that diet mentality, it is not just about weight loss. We have got to change and pivot on this paradigm of the diet culture, because that has set us up.

For aging that sets us up for illness. So, if there's one thing I have learned over time, it's that we are given one unique gift. When we are born, we are given the gift of an amazing body that has the ability to support and sustain us as we live out our lives. And we are given the opportunity and the choice.

To take care of that one gift we are given. What I am asking you is to take a good long look at how you are taking care of and honoring that wonderful gift that you have been given. And with that, I will sign off on my birthday and wish you all health and wellness. Always. Thanks for joining us until next time.

Your rebel nutritionist signing off.