

MERYL: Hey, everyone. Welcome back to the Rebel Nutritionist podcast. I am so excited to have my son Jason Brandwein on today, and we are going to be taking this conversation in a few different directions.

And I'm really excited because we've had a few conversations about this leading up to it. And I think. You're in for a special treat. So, Jason, welcome.

JASON: Hello, thanks for having me.

MERYL: Thanks for being here. So I want to spend a little bit of time, about what it was like living in a house with the Rebel Nutritionist.

The one and only but I really want to segue into some of the conversations we've had as of late in terms of your experience in medical school and the conversations we have about. Our similarities and our differences. Cause it's, it's been fun having those conversations, but really take us back a little bit in terms of what was life like growing up in a house where you didn't know better.

Right?

Jason's story

JASON: So to backtrack for a second, for those who don't know, I am a second year podiatry student. I'm in my second year of med school out of four, and I'm in Chicago doing that. And it is cold right now, over in Chicago. But to kind of go back to that, I think growing up was very different than other people growing up. And I only say that because from my experience we've

been really fortunate enough to pretty much sit down every single night as kids and have a wonderful, beautiful family dinner and have conversation and dialogue about each other's day and what's going on and kind of the highlights of the day and you know, what you're grateful for and so on and so forth.

And it was all kind of **centered around a kitchen table**. And so my life was always centered around food, whether it was for good reason or bad just life, life was always pretty much about fueling your body with the best thing. And you know, that, I guess that is a fraction of the bigger picture, but in terms of the conversation uh, food kind of propelled a lot of things.

That that I learned about throughout the years. And

MERYL: Well it set a good a good not to interrupt you, but it set a good foundation.

JASON: Well, for sure. And that's what I'm saying. It set a good foundation, then you kind of go back and you're like, wow.

Like I really. It was doing things that I didn't even notice. I mean now to my later life, but yeah, I was pretty much the the setting point, the ground, the ground stone. So to speak,

MERYL: let me ask you a question. Did you feel like you were deprived because you didn't eat? You know, there, there was a little, we had some chips, of course they were the healthier chips, right?

I mean, no,

JASON: I never, I think deprived is not really the word I'd use. I just think like we were. We are all so hard on ourselves. So when we ate something bad, we were like, wow, this is really bad. This

is bad for you. Okay. Maybe when we were younger, we had a lot of healthy foods in the house and we had no snacks.

And then later on, we're like, oh let's rebel, no pun intended. And let's go get some fast food or whatever behind mom's back. And they'll be sneaking me in me and dad and the girls would go out, but then you realize like, first of all, it feels good for about 20 minutes and then it feels terrible.

And then you're like, well, this is probably why she was like she was right. And you know, mom's always right. You don't want to admit it sometimes, but it's true. But when you get older, you can make your own decisions. And then when you can make your own decisions, You realize that you would rather, or I would rather personally speaking make the healthier choice because I know that I'd feel better.

It's kind of like putting good gas in the car, right. You want to propel for you. You want to go forward, you want to feel your body with the best things. And I think that's just, it is, that's what it is, but you're going to have your indulgent days and things of that nature, but overall you tend to want to stay.

I mean, at least us stay on the healthy track.

Dinner isn't just about food

MERYL: So just backtrack for a second about, because for me, Yes, the food and nourishing your bodies and always providing you guys with the healthiest food and so forth was really important. And it was a tremendous priority for me, but also making sure. And you touched on it a little bit, but **making sure that we sat down for dinners at the table** family dinners and not

just Friday nights, because we did have Friday night dinners, but, during the week that everybody had busy schedules, we all have busy lives. The three of you were in different sports and all over the place, but more often than not, we would sit down for that family meal. Do you think that did for you and your **overall just creating a sense, of connectedness** to everybody else?

JASON: I think sitting down for those family dinners was a tremendous contribution to how I am as an individual today. And I don't say that because my mom's right here next to me and she's making all the delicious food. I say that because. It's very rare in today's day and age that people do that. First of all, it's rare in today's day and age that people sit down together at lunch and not look at their phone and actually have a real conversation like, Hey, how's, you know, your morning been? People are on Instagram, reading emails, Twitter, and you know what I'm not saying, I don't do that. I obviously do that. But. What has been instilled in me is that **if you're sitting down, whether that's with your significant other, with a friend, a family member, you put your phone down and you try to have a conversation.**

And I think that's lacking in today's world. And that just kind of goes back to the fact that we always had these dinners that kind of instilled in us at a young age that, Hey, that should be the standard. You know, this is a standard I'm, in front of you I have some respect and, and look at me in the eyes and let's talk and let's not be engaged on technology.

I think that's terrible, but you know what? Everyone is consumed in it. Everyone does it, whether we'd like to admit it or not. But that principle, that foundation essentially was imperative to learning because it's more so the emotional aspect, it's, **how you learn to communicate.** And if

you can't communicate with your family, You sure as heck can't really communicate with other people.

And I think that was a good foundation for me personally.

MERYL: I love that. I love to hear that. And I'm so glad and I do hope you continue that tradition on and I'm pretty sure you will, but as will your sisters so then take us from the transition from, okay. You're in high school here in South Florida.

You went to college and you know, in Florida, not necessarily south Florida right. You were in central Florida. And then all of a sudden you make the transition to Chicago. And not only did you make the transition to med school far away in a cold place, but you did it in 2020, which was of course the during COVID so speak to that transition a little bit, how the tools that were instilled in you when you were young helped you and then also what the digression, right? Because you did kind of fall off the wagon, so to speak because of the of the anxiety, because of the stress and, and again, how those tools helped you get back on

Tools to help you deal with anxiety

JASON: to kind of touch on the, how the tools helped me.

I think when I was younger, I learned **I have a bag full of these tools from when I was young from many aspects of my life from family**. And from talking with you and dad a lot and learning from you guys from my friends, also, **I'm a big advocate of therapy** as I'm sure I'll mention a couple of times here and there, but I think it's really important for your mental health.

And I've learned a lot of tools there. And I think that kind of those, that trio really helped me. Overcome certain obstacles, not only during the COVID time but throughout my entire life specifically during COVID though. I think that everyone was experiencing a sense of loneliness and a little bit of depression.

And for me transitioning to a cold environment, an environment I was not used to. So not really like hostile environment, but environment. Yeah. I wasn't really used to it. Yeah. Growing up in Florida, it's always warm rainy, but not cold and windy. So that touched on the emotional, mental, physical aspect.

Gyms were closed. Basketball courts were closed, which is something that is a big stress reliever for me. And I, and I had to kind of get in my bag, so to speak and **figure out what I can do to, I guess, alleviate the symptoms of feeling that way**. So it wasn't easy. And it took a lot, took a long time and it was a process.

And I always say, **trust the process**. And also during that time, I emotionally wasn't connected with my body, if you will. And I kind of just was eating bad. I was eating, I caught myself eating. McDonald's literally twice a week being busy in med school. You don't really have time to cook, but you know what?

It's important that you make time for that. And that's also another thing I learned, which I'll touch on, but you gotta make time for yourself. And if you don't make time for yourself, you're just going to go down this rabbit hole, so to speak. And I think that's the biggest takeaway.

Take time for yourself.

And really, really say like, don't, don't practice what you preach if you will, in that regard. So I think, I think that was the biggest thing.

MERYL: Right. But so touch on a little bit too though. Because that was it was a good few months, it was many months that you were feeling that way.

then you kind of came out of it but, the food part too, so you eat poorly and you felt poorly and kind of go back to all right. Well then what sparked that shift in you?

How did you make the shift?

So the point, I think that what happened was initially I was just. Oh, engulfed and swarmed into the trying to be perfect in med school, like trying to have that I'm going to have a perfect GPA and I'm going to have like that perfect lifestyle and reality is,

Nothing is perfect. And I was striving for being perfect. And, and I think that really backfired. And then what kind of switched it for me was just **realizing that I don't feel good**. I do not feel good. It took me about a year to realize, I don't have any problem admitting I gained like 22 pounds in a year and it took me a long time to be like, wow, I just don't even feel good.

I don't feel like myself. I feel like **my stress is taking over my body**. I'm not taking over the stress so to speak. And it kind of just brought me to this place that I've never been before. And when things started getting better in terms of COVID and I was able to. Be in person and start to really meet my friends that I can now call my friends and really have a foundation of being myself.

That's kind of when it switched for me, but I think everyone has a different internal switch. And if you're you know, your body will subconsciously realize that you either are doing the right thing, or you need to make a change, I think. And that just. Kind of taps into the whole mental, emotional, physical, spiritual aspects.

Yeah.

MERYL: And I love that. I mean, thank you for sharing that and being vulnerable because I know that's not easy to do and it's not easy to admit and you know, it, it is it's so thank you really for sharing that because that's important. And I think it's important for other people listening to know that they're not alone.

Right.

JASON: And yeah. No matter what you do, you're never alone whether you think, **I really thought I was alone**. I was like, no one else is sitting in their dorm or apartment right now, studying their butt off with no friends, no gym, none of that. And guess what half the damn country was doing that and like most of the country

and what you don't realize that when you're in it, you don't realize it.

But I think the biggest takeaway for me, Was how do I make the change? Not like, okay, it's very easy to say, Hey, I'm going to change. Like, I'm going to be better. Like, I'm going to wait.

Today's a new day. I'm going to be better, but it's not really let's do it. It's **how are you going to do it? How are you going to make the plan?**

What are you going to do? Are you going to ask for help? You're going to do some research on your own. Are you going to go seek a nutritionist? Are you going to go to the gym and get a personal tutor? Like what are you going to do? And **you have to put those words and actions together, and really implement that.**

MERYL: Oh my god. I love that. Really. I love that. That is right, because I hear all the time people say, oh, I know I need to change. Oh, I know. I need to exercise more. Oh, I know. I need to eat better. And I think if I'm correct for you, the big difference was is that **you already had those tools and strategies to pull from**, right.

Not everybody does. And so I think that. That's the key is that these things need to be instilled in us young. And if they're not, then you need to find the right person, whether it, whether it is the nutrition piece, whether it's that mental, emotional piece, whether it's the physical piece. And like, I always say, it's always these three pillars multiple pillars that you have to have all of it at some point, it doesn't mean you have to have all of it at once.

But you at least have to start with something, some foundation, some jumping-off points. So I think that that is so, so important. So as you started to come out, right, as, as we started to come back into the real world, you had said something about **being prepared and you know, in cooking your meals and preparing your meals, that, that makes all the difference.**

And we, you and I have talked about that a lot, right. Going, making sure that you have what you need at Trader Joe's and, and making a plan. Yeah. Can you talk about that a little bit?

Why you need a plan

JASON: Yeah, absolutely. First of all, it's hard. I think my mom knows whole foods blueprint in and out and she knows everything like, Hey, where'd I get this?

Oh, go down this, go to this shelf. And it's right there. And sure enough, it is. But again, not a lot of people have. The Rebel Nutritionist at their disposal twenty-four seven with a phone call away. And I'm fortunate to have that. But the thing is, going back to the tools it's literally just going back to the tool and not a lot of people have that.

there is resources that I use that for example, let's say. One of my friend's moms is, into designer clothes or whatever, I don't really know much about that. So it's going to be hard for me to figure it out. I don't have her, like at my disposal, so to speak. And I think there's like a lot of resources that you could use, like YouTube videos.

I mean, that's free. I learned a lot on YouTube and social media to whether, even though we say it's bad, but I digress. I think going back to that, I think just having that, that bag of tools and it's not really like, Hey, okay, this is cool. I have a whole bag it's really how you implement that and how to use that.

So I just think, I honestly just think that's where it comes back to it. And then, but it's not like, oh, I have it. It's, it's how to use it. Or I remember when I was younger, people are like, you should get a mentor get a mentor. And I'm like, how literally, how. Who, who do I email? Like people are like, oh, I have a mentor.

He's straight on the cool, like where do I go to? And I think it's important to do outreach and really, and if you need help, you got to get help. And it's very, with today's day and age, **it's very easy to find help** a friend of a friend and email researching on Google and really find what will work for you.

I think that's

MERYL: the big, I think having the support and the accountability, and we talk about that all the time. And I think also important to that point is that. **It's not like you're following a diet, right? You have the tools of what are the foundations of a healthy way to nourish yourself.** And there's exactly, it's a lifestyle and it's all about how do I implement.

Using understanding what, how do I put a protein on my plate and a carbohydrate and different kinds of carbs. It's not saying, oh, we have to have a low carb diet because I need a low carb diet. It's understanding how do you know there's really, really good carbohydrates, plants or carbohydrates, right?

Root, root vegetables. We talk about those all the time and And, and the different kinds of even the good, healthy fats. Right? What, **how do you balance your plate? How do you nourish yourself?** It's not about finding one particular diet and I think that's also so important because people are looking for, oh, I have to follow a diet plan because I gained weight.

JASON: Diets are really fads.

Right. There's always, there's always something, whether it's a cookie diet or keto, right. there's always something that people are followed, but it's a lifestyle. So it's **how do you learn the lifestyle?** Well, I just say this general. If you need help. And you know, some people are going to

argue, to see someone about that is going to be so much money is going to take so much time or insurance is going to cover this.

I mean, look, **if you're spending money regardless, and you're trying to live well, it's worth it because you're investing in you.** Let's just say you bought a designer pair of shoes. Let's say you bought some Gucci shoes. I'm just throwing out an example.

Those are expensive. If you're investing in yourself. For the same amount of money, you can get so much more out of that. It's not that superficial. You could really dive in and be like, okay, I know I feel bad. Let me get help. It might be expensive in the long run, but it's cheap in the end in the sense that you're really just you're investing in yourself.

And I think a lot of people need to understand that **investing in yourself is the best tool.** It's the most important thing. I fall victim to. Oh, this diet isn't working for me. I'm doing so much cardio in the gym, but you got to come back and go and do a full circle and be like, this is a lifestyle.

This is, this has to be my life because you're going to have days where you can indulge and you're going to have your so to speak cheat days, whatever. And that's once a week, but you got to really be like, okay, if I want to make a change, I need to make a change in my life. I need to make a lifestyle change.

I need to really just grind this out because it's, it's my life on the line. It's my health.

The importance of sleep

MERYL: Yeah. And I think one of the things that you had, one of the big transitions that I've noticed that you've made is the sleeping. You used to go to sleep really late.

JASON: Oh my goodness. In college, I would go to sleep 1230-1 and I'd get reprimanded.

And I'm just kidding. Of course, you know what. That's just a part of growing up. That's just a part of under, like when you, when you kind of have stuff to do, you can't really like in college, you know? Yeah. I was, I was in some hard classes you're organic chemistry, your anatomy, but now med school is totally different.

They, they use the analogy that an undergrad it's kind of like information is like drinking out of a water fountain. But in, med school, it's like, you're drinking out of a fire hose. You're so much more, you can cover 20 chapters in a week in one class and you have five classes, so you can't be up at 1230.

Right. But that's just a part of who I become just changing. That's just kind of like, as I got older, Everyone always says, oh, when you get older, you're going to change your ways.

MERYL: don't you Notice that that makes a difference,

JASON: but it does. But that's what I'm saying. It does when, when you kind of have stuff to do and you kind of are living that busy life.

And even if you're not, let's say you're not, for example, let's just assume you're not working right now. And you're just focusing on yourself even to get up early will put you in a really good

routine. That you can have every day, if you're not doing anything and you're bored or you're lonely, just go find something to do.

Yes. You know, for me, I learned that I can't go out in the Chicago weather and just go for a run to clear my head. It's 40 degrees out and it's like that for four or five months. And I don't really want to. You know, do that, but, but how else **you got to find what works for you** and what works for me doesn't work for you or, or if it does great, but you got to find, okay, what, what really makes me comfortable?

It really kind of eases my mind and for me, and I have, I've had a lot of anxiety and stress growing up and it's just always going to add, but It's not just saying, oh yeah, I have this anxiety. It's like, how do I beat it? how do I take this and say, I'm going to own this.

Not, it's not going to own me. I'm going to figure out how to own it. So what works for me is obviously the things that I've always done throughout my entire life is either go outside go for a walk, talk to friends, talk to Family, play basketball, but those are all outdoor activities for the most part. So what was the adjustment for me while I practice a lot of self-reflection.

Not so much yoga, but **meditation to an extent, and really just focus on my breathing, focus on my sleeping**, really ensuring that I. have all those resources at my disposal. And honestly, **the breathing exercise helped me the most.** mind over matter. We always say, and it's true. You, you can control so much with your thoughts and your emotions.

And I give my mom a lot of crap for that, but it's true. Practicing practice you preach. And then you don't want to really listen to your parents all the time. You're like, yeah. Yeah, whatever. Like

for example, my dad is a podiatrist foot doctor and that's, that's the career path I'm, I'm also choosing to take.

And when you're younger and he's like, oh, you have this toe problem. You're like, no, I don't, I don't believe you. And sure enough it is, but it's your dad. You don't really want to listen to the same kind of concept here. But yeah, that's just kind of there's so much you could do, and there's so much out there and just be vulnerable and seek help because it will really just help you as a person.

MERYL: Yes. So in that segue to the whole med school piece and what you and I talk about because I think you just came off of a class where you had a basically know every drug on the planet still in it. Right. So But I love our conversations because we get to talk about biochemistry and you had learned about methylation and some of the stuff that I'm doing in terms of that.

Western vs. functional medicine

But, and, and trust me, we're not getting into any of that, but what I like is now you get to see. You know, looking at Western medicine, traditional medicine, and now you get to see sort of that juxtaposition of what I do, which is really more functional and integrative and how we kind of weave in and out of that.

Right. That, that granted I'm always a bigger proponent of, we don't really need to use, or let's try not to use medications. Clearly medications are indicated in acute conditions and they're life-saving for sure. But. metabolic conditions like cardiovascular disease and diabetes, and even hypertension and, obesity.

And **a lot of these conditions can be mitigated through lifestyle, through nutrition, through exercise** and all that. So. What, how do you see the distinction or the similarities? You know, some of the similarities and differences now that you're sort of in it and you have come from this world as well.

JASON: I have a good example is Sharon.

I think it to resonate with what you were saying. As podiatrists, a big Population of patients are diabetic care patients and diabetes as just as a general concept diabetes, isn't always a good thing. Right. But I try to put it lightly, but it's never really a good thing, but it could be managed holistically.

And I say holistically, and I mean, conservatively, not in the integration of allopathic medicine where you're using. And I'm not saying that that type of Western medicine is wrong. I'm just saying that **there are ways to just not put a band-aid over the problem**. When I say bandaid, I mean to cover up, why is this really happening?

So a lot of people get prescribed these drugs and they're like, oh, I feel sick. I feel this. I feel that they take a drug. **They feel better, but it's not really curing why they were sick**. And. So this patient comes in and his hemoglobin A1C, which is an indication of diabetes and measuring of no sugar in the blood.

Right. And It was really high for this particular patient. And they made a couple of lifestyle changes and all of that, not only did his lab work reflect a healthier lifestyle in the sense that his fasting glucose was lower and his A1C was low, but he also had psoriasis that was gone. He had all these other auto-immune problems that were slowly, slowly fading away.

And the only thing that he did was change his lifestyle. And I don't say that to say, oh, you only need to change your lifestyle because it's different for every patient. But I'm just saying that. It really can show you that conservative treatment or going the holistic path to really make a difference.

And when my worlds collided, I realized that some of these doctors are really wrong, but then sometimes the really right like there are times where I'm like, wow, that's, that's a really good point. But other times I'm like, well, why the heck are you doing X, Y, and Z, when you could just have them, do you know, ABC, so to speak like it's just, it's how you approach, **but I don't think.**

It should be one versus the other. I think it needs to be incorporated together. I think that doctors need to learn how to use together. Nutritionists and clinicians and healthcare providers **need to learn how to use it together, cohesively in a manner that will ultimately be beneficial for the patient.**

Like, you know what, I understand you still need to take this drug, but let's try these three things conservative treatment before you get back on that you know, whatever drug you're doing for diabetes or heart, or for your cardiovascular and things of that nature. So it goes hand in hand and that's kind of like what I've learned.

And my mom alluded to the fact that. I'm in a class that I have to memorize all these drugs, which is pharmacology, and it's all these mechanisms actions, and we're not gonna get into. But basically what it's saying is that there's a reason why there's over 500 drugs for pretty much the same nine systems, right?

Like you have 3 million drugs for your kidneys, 8 million for your heart, and they all do the same thing, but the. For the most part, but let's try a conservative approach before we get into that. Right.

MERYL: And that's, that's what, right. Like it is, we can, most of these things, 30 to 40% of those conditions out there can be mitigated through lifestyle.

I also, maybe I was being conservative on that. Yeah, there's definitely, I'd say for the most part, a lot of the conditions that we deal with are metabolic in nature and like you said, it could come back to some of the nine systems, right?

You talk about gut health. We talk about inflammation. You talked about autoimmune diseases. I mean, let's even talk about that. We all say, oh well, auto-immune diseases cannot be cured, but we can certainly, there are ways to put them in remission with the right lifestyle, with the right diet.

And it's not just medications that ultimately have really bad side effects.

JASON: So in my gap year, which is the year I had off from undergraduate to med school, I worked with a cancer doctor at Jackson over at UM and the Sylvester cancer center over there. And. Oh, and a lot of the treatment plans.

Yes, of course it was chemotherapy. Sometimes it's non-negotiable or chemo that, and you can kind of speak on that as well, that you need that to get better and it's unfortunate, but you know what, you're going to deal with the side-effects, but ultimately it's going to help you, but I digress a lot of. Probably about, I would say also 30 to 40% of those treatment plans was, let's try this conservative treatment first because it literally can't hurt.

It can't hurt to just naturally holistically get better. And I think a lot of doctors are starting to realize that that is the case and there's, I'm sure there's going to be a lot more research coming now from now in the next decade that there are certain ways. To fight and treat these things without the use of 100% drugs or anything like that.

I think it could be a 50/ 50, 60/ 40, 70 /30 balance.

MERYL: Well, especially when we get their genomics right now, we can look at your nutrition and you can look at your genes and say, what is your predisposition? You know, people are. Afraid I had a client today. You say, well, I don't want to know my genetics, cause I don't want you to tell me I'm going to get cancer.

I'm like, no. It's just the opposite. Exactly. **If we see that your genes are leading you in the direction that you may end up getting cancer, because you had issues in ABC areas, I can look at that.** We can look at that and say, oh, well you have issues here. **Let's figure out how you do not end up expressing that.**

Yeah. And so the work in the genetics is just mind blowing because we really, really can now look at someone's trajectory, for expressing a certain condition, a certain illness. And how do we prevent that? So I think this, it's just, this is just the tip of the iceberg, but I love the conversation.

I love that you were so open and willing to share because. It's an important conversation to have, I think other people, especially your age, right? You're young. I mean, you, you just turned 25, right? And we expect to hear these things out of someone older. And I think it just speaks to the fact that there are so many people, younger people out there suffering too, and younger

people who need help, who need guidance in all areas, in the nutrition, in the lifestyle, in the mental, emotional aspect that.

Yeah. If there's one thing that this podcast can do to help it's helped bring that to light and just share shared the experiences and why having that, that foundation is important no matter when you start with it. So I, I thank you for joining us. I thank you for this engaging conversation and any, any last thoughts?

JASON: I would just say, I think my final thoughts would be to just figure out what, what could work for you. And I say that in, in how, and however, however, you can get these resources, **whether you can get them for free on YouTube, or if you need a little bit more, really seek some guidance, seek some help, whether it's with a nutritionist or a clinician or a physician, and kind of just figure out.**

You know, I really need to make a change and I need to do better and really seek that help because you're just at the end of the day, investing in you. And that's the biggest thing you could do. And that's the biggest thing that we can do as the human population is just kind of invest in yourself, health as well.

And you, it in lifestyle lifestyles,

MERYL: medicine, absolutely. Yet food is medicine. Absolutely. Yeah. So if you're out there looking for somehow we have amazing programs, I am going to plug it a little only because **we've got great foundational programs our new normal program that, that does help you set the stage.**

Foundationally teaches you what protein carbs fats. How do I organize them in my day? And it's a self-paced course that you can do. We've got **our rebel kitchen. Which is all about teaching you meal planning** and there's videos and there's resources. And these things are priced at like they're ridiculously low, especially now during the holidays, we're going to be doing specials on all of them.

And we're going to have our **Rebel Nutritionist 30 day your way meal planner. It's going to be a 30 day simple, easy meal planner.** And of course always our regular meal planner that we've got online. So take advantage, take a look at these things and know we'll always do a free 15-minute complimentary consultation to help you out and get you started.

Should you need it? So. Seek us out as a resource. If, if you are looking for that we are definitely at your fingertips and as always loved the engaging conversation, I'm sure Jason will be back at some point down the road, share more of his great knowledge with us. In the meantime, this is your Rebel Nutritionist signing off make it a great day, everybody.