



The Healing Secrets of Food Revealed

EPISODE #8

TITLE: The DIET & LIFESTYLE that Prevent & Reverse Chronic Conditions

What do overweight and obesity, heart disease and stroke, type 2 diabetes, some cancers, depression, and anxiety have in common? They are all common, chronic, physical and mental conditions—with which millions struggle—that can be prevented, even reversed, with diet and Lifestyle Medicine.

TRANSCRIPT

Hello! Welcome to The Healing Secrets of Food Revealed. TODAY'S TOPIC: The Diet & Lifestyle that Prevent & Reverse physical and mental conditions--from Overweight, Diabetes, and Heart Disease, to anxiety, depression...and more.

I'm Deborah Kesten—nutrition researcher and host of The Healing Secrets of Food Revealed, and I'm on a mission: To give you the science-backed, weight-loss wisdom you need to eat less and weigh less. Without dieting.

In each episode, I'll translate cutting-edge weight-loss research into actions you can take that can make a real difference in your weight and well-being.

LET'S GET STARTED!

In my Special Series that I discussed in the last three episodes of The Healing Secrets of Food Revealed, I focused on three meta, 21st century discoveries about the power of food to (1) switch off health-harming genes so that the health problem your genes may be coded for doesn't manifest; (2) create a healthy gut and in turn, weight loss, health and healing.

Today, I'm putting these 21st century, meta discoveries about food and health under the umbrella of an even larger scientific breakthrough that not only empowers you to prevent and reverse many chronic conditions, but it also answers these two perennial questions about weight, health, and healing:

#1. What's the best way to eat to attain and maintain weight loss?

#2. Is there a diet and lifestyle that can prevent and reverse not only overweight, but also diabetes, heart disease, and other ailments; chronic conditions that have become a common part of many Americans' health landscape?

The answer to both questions is a resounding YES! Scores of studies—including research on my Whole Person Integrative Eating[®] model and program—are clear about the “best” way to eat to attain and maintain weight loss. And the medical specialty, Lifestyle Medicine, gives you the scientifically sound lifestyle—the way to eat and live—that empowers you to prevent and reverse the many chronic conditions with which millions of us struggle.

The Diet that Reverses Type 2 Diabetes

The health-and-healing success story of NYC Mayor Eric Adams is a perfect example of the healing power of diet and Lifestyle Medicine. His story answers what seems to be an ongoing conundrum and

confusing riddle about weight loss and well-being. Today, I'm here to tell you that there's nothing confusing or equivocal about optimal eating. Researchers have known about eating for weight loss, health and healing for decades.

It's not a secret. Most of us simply don't know this research. And if they do, putting optimal eating into action may be a challenge.

The title of this podcast is *The Healing Secrets of Food Revealed*. Today, the healing secret I'm revealing is the diet and lifestyle that not only leads to weight loss, it empowers you to prevent, even reverse, many physical and mental conditions with which millions of us struggle.

Telling you NYC Mayor Eric Adams's' story is a strong start.

A former NYPD captain and New York State Senator, in 2016, Mayor Adams woke up with stomach pain, dizziness and weakness in his legs, and he wasn't seeing well: his right eye was blood shot and he was blind in his left eye, Adams tells us in a piece for CNN about his health odyssey.

"I immediately went to my doctor's office," Adams writes in his book, *Healthy at Last: A Plant-Based Approach to Preventing and Reversing Diabetes and Other Chronic Illnesses*. The diagnosis: type 2 diabetes. The doctor also told him "the stomach pain turned out to be an ulcer, but my vision would probably be impaired for the rest of my life."

Adams's doctor also told him his vision loss was due to "high blood sugar [that] damaged the blood vessels behind [his] eyes." And his doctor warned that if left unchecked, diabetes could leave him visually impaired and with permanent nerve damage to his hands and feet. Then, writes Adams, my doctor "whipped out his pad and prescribed insulin along with a battery of other medications." Then he said, "You're going to have to get used to the meds. You'll be on them for the rest of your life."

Adams went numb at the diagnosis and at the prognosis of taking regular insulin shots for life. His thinking: There must be another way. In *You Are What You Eat*, Adams says he chose not to take medication for type 2 diabetes and instead, met with doctors at the Cleveland Clinic, who recommended a fresh whole food, plant-based diet.

Six months after receiving a [type 2 diabetes diagnosis](#) in early spring 2016, Adams says he completely reversed the disease. Today, Adams, 63, is 30 pounds lighter; his blood glucose levels are normal; and he feels energized.

Adams attributes his dietary change from a high-meat, processed food diet—to a plant-based diet with lots of fresh fruit, vegetables, *whole* grains, legumes, and nuts and seeds—to halting and reversing his type 2 diabetes.

He says: "At the heart of all of it was my diet. My plant-based diet is the No. 1 reason that my diabetes was put into remission," he says.

Lifestyle Medicine: The Fountain of Youth

The idea that a mostly plant-based diet is linked with preventing and reversing health problems has been in the scientific literature for decades. For instance, in this century, in 2004, Dan Buettner, a National Geographic Fellow and bestselling author, identified what he calls Blue Zones, places in the world with the healthiest, longest-living populations, such as Okinawa, Japan and Sardinia, Italy. What the Blue Zones that Buettner identified have in common is a lifetime of consuming a plant-based diet, with perhaps a little bit of cheese, and a small amount of fish.

A brief aside...Here's a powerful, pivotal, key concept for you to keep in mind: I'm sure most of you have heard a lot about the Mediterranean Diet, and its many health benefits. If you think about it, the Blue Zones diet—mostly plant-based foods with small amounts of dairy and fish—is pretty close to the Mediterranean Diet—chosen #1 healthiest diet, six years in a row, by *U.S. News & World Report*.

But the real Fountain of Youth—the way to eat *and* live for health and longevity—is not only consuming a mostly plant-based diet, but also following a *lifestyle* that *includes* a plant-based diet, *plus* other key lifestyle components, especially stress management, physical activity, restorative sleep, and social support. This is Lifestyle Medicine.

I have firsthand knowledge about the healing power of both a plant-based diet and Lifestyle Medicine, which is based on the pioneering work of Dr. Dean Ornish, MD, the “Father of Lifestyle Medicine”—and which is now a certified medical specialty, like, say, cardiology, endocrinology, or oncology. I have an experiential understanding of Lifestyle Medicine because I had the honor of being the Nutritionist on Dr. Ornish’s first clinical trial for reversing heart disease with lifestyle alone; with no medication and no surgery.

During the 24 days of Dr. Ornish’s first clinical trial for reversing heart disease, the medical staff and I lived with the heart patients and trained them—and their families—in what is now the Ornish Lifestyle Medicine program for reversing heart disease and other chronic conditions. During this short period of time, as research participants got better and better at practicing the program, I observed many decreased medications for high blood pressure and diabetes; angina—chest pain caused by reduced blood flow to the heart—diminished or stopped; and most lost considerable weight.

I also know a lot about Lifestyle Medicine, the science behind it, and the health it leads to, because, for 18 years, my husband—behavioral scientist Larry Scherwitz, PhD, who is Co-founder of our Whole Person Integrative Eating model and program for eating less and weighing less—was Dr. Ornish’s Director of Research.

Given Larry’s and my hands-on knowledge of Lifestyle Medicine, I was especially excited and encouraged when I learned that NYC Mayor Eric Adams was so helped by Lifestyle Medicine—which includes a plant-based diet—in December 2022, he partnered with the American College of Lifestyle Medicine (ACLM), which invested \$44 million to bring Lifestyle Medicine training to up to 200,000 NYC health care providers—from doctors and nurses to nurse practitioners and dietitians. And there’s more: the initial phase of Lifestyle Medicine included bringing it to 20 hospitals and health systems that serve millions of New Yorkers.

Here's what NYC Mayor Eric Adams said, in a press release by the City of New York, at the launch of the largest lifestyle medicine training rollout in the world. “A plant-based diet restored my eyesight, put my Type 2 diabetes into remission, and helped save my life,” he said. “Our administration has invested in expanding lifestyle medicine programming and plant-based meals at NYC Health + Hospitals, and now, we’re bringing this evidence-based model to all of New York City’s health care workforce.”

Lifestyle Medicine and Health

I’m telling you about Dr. Ornish’s Lifestyle Medicine program and its integration in NYC hospitals to highlight that there’s a real “there there,” meaning, a plant-based diet and Lifestyle Medicine are more, much more, than another simple tip about how to be healthier. Rather, since 2004, Lifestyle Medicine has been a rapidly growing branch of medicine that focuses on intensive lifestyle changes that have the power to prevent, manage, treat, and reverse chronic conditions, that often—as with NYC Mayor Eric Adams—produces dramatic health benefits. And you may also find it of interest to know that Medicare offers training in Lifestyle Medicine to people with health problems who are on Medicare.

Here's the bottom line: The success of Lifestyle Medicine is due to more than a plant-based diet and other elements of Lifestyle Medicine that put NYC Mayor Eric Adams’s’ type 2 diabetes into remission. Its success is also due to top-of-the-line research on Lifestyle Medicine that Dr. Ornish has done—published in the top medical journals, such as the *Journal of the American Medical Association* and *The Lancet*. His pioneering studies on Lifestyle Medicine show that lifestyle alone—without drugs or surgery—can halt

and reverse not only heart disease, but also prostate cancer, and most recently, Alzheimer's disease (AD). As a matter of fact, for over 44 years, Dr. Ornish has directed randomized trials (the gold-standard of research) demonstrating, for the first time, that comprehensive lifestyle changes may begin to reverse even severe coronary heart disease.

Lifestyle Medicine, Genes, and Longevity

But wait! There's more! In Episodes 5, 6, and 7 of *The Healing Secrets of Food Revealed*, I created a Special Series about three 21st century scientific breakthroughs that are so huge, they actually create a re-visioning of the power of food to prevent health problems for which you're at risk; and also to turn around—and reverse—many chronic body-mind conditions, from overweight and obesity to heart disease, diabetes, depression, and more.

I called the Special Series about food and health “21st CENTURY NUTRITION G.E.M.s.” G stands for “genes”; E for “epigenetics”; and M stands for Microbiome, your gut. The key concept: all three meta discoveries I discussed are intimately interconnected, but I told you about each independently, so you'll realize the powerful role each plays in health and healing, and what you can eat, every day, to reset your **genes** and **gut** for weight loss, health and healing.

This is relevant to today's discussion, because in other groundbreaking research Dr. Ornish has done on Lifestyle Medicine and health—in addition to showing diet and lifestyle can prevent, treat, and reverse coronary heart disease and other ailments, he also discovered that *comprehensive* lifestyle changes—practicing all four components of Ornish Lifestyle Medicine—affect gene expression, meaning, the elements of Ornish Lifestyle Medicine, when practiced together, can “turn on” genes that prevent disease, and “turn off” genes that promote cancer and heart disease.

Another groundbreaking insight into how lifestyle can help your health is its link to longevity. When Dr. Ornish collaborated with Nobel Prize winner Dr. Elizabeth Blackburn at the University of California San Francisco, he discovered lifestyle changes may begin to **reverse aging** on a cellular level by *lengthening* what are called *telomeres*, the protective ends—kinda like the end of a shoelace—of your chromosomes that get *shorter* with age and stress, and that in turn affect your health, including cancer risk.

In other words, Dr. Ornish's research showed, for the first time, that telomeres can lengthen with the comprehensive Ornish Lifestyle Medicine program; and this suggests the possibility of a longer life span.

Ornish Lifestyle Medicine & Reversing Chronic Conditions

Let's pause for a moment and consider what we just discussed about the profound impact diet and lifestyle have on health:

It put NYC Mayor Eric Adams's' type 2 diabetes in remission. It's linked with weight loss as a “natural side effect” of a plant-based diet. It reverses heart disease, prostate cancer, and Alzheimer's Disease. It switches off health-harming genes, and turns on health-enhancing genes. And it lengthens telomeres and in turn, possibly increases lifespan.

In other words, because of Dr. Dean Ornish, MD's pioneering research on Lifestyle Medicine, we now know that lifestyle is a powerful determinant of preventing or reversing disease; and that it can lead to weight-loss and wellness.

I want to highlight that these profound changes happened because people and patients made the *comprehensive lifestyle changes* that comprise Ornish Lifestyle Medicine. The operative word is “comprehensive.” Here's what behavioral scientist Larry Scherwitz, PhD, Director of Research on Dr. Ornish's Lifestyle Medicine “reversal” program for reversing heart disease for 18 years says: “One small change won't make a big difference in health, unless it's the beginning of making comprehensive healthful changes, every day, over the long-term.”

What are the small changes that don't work, to which Larry is referring? Here's a sampling: Following your personal version of “healthy eating” for a day or week. Doing a little exercise on weekends only. Not

taking time to 'chill' and relax after a stress-filled day; instead, working into the evening. And being alone and working alone and eating alone most of the time.

The Lifestyle that Leads to Weight Loss, Health & Healing

Here's a brief overview of the four components of Ornish Lifestyle Medicine; the four lifestyle changes that lead to weight loss, preventing and reversing chronic conditions, switching off health-harming genes, and perhaps living a longer—and healthier—life.

Diet. The *original* core of the heart-disease “reversal” diet is plant-based, fresh, whole-food meals. Breakfast, lunch, dinner, and snacks include lots of fresh fruits, vegetables, whole grains (such as brown rice, whole wheat, oatmeal, etc.), and legumes (beans and peas); limited, small amounts of nonfat yogurt were optional, but dairy products were excluded during the lifestyle intervention for prostate cancer because studies were beginning to suggest that conventionally processed dairy foods might contribute to the progress of prostate cancer. Alcoholic beverages, junk food, sodas, and simple sugars were eliminated.

Stress management. As part of the program, research participants were required to practice gentle yoga-based stress management techniques, which included stretching, breathing skills, meditation, visualization, and progressive relaxation. They were asked to do this for a minimum of one hour each day. Yoga was used because it had been an effective stress-management component of Ornish's heart disease reversal studies (also called the San Francisco Lifestyle Heart Trial), wherein the minutes spent doing yoga poses (asanas), deep relaxation, meditation, and more, surfaced as the best predictor of reversal of coronary artery blockages.

Exercise. Six days each week, research participants participated in moderate aerobic exercise, which typically included walking an hour every day. Exercise was included in the intervention for many reasons. A sampling: it can lower blood pressure, ward off weight gain, boost immunity, and enhance mood.

Social support. The fourth leg of the Ornish Lifestyle Medicine program is Social Support. This means research participants met for a total of four hours each week to exercise/take walks together; do yoga, meditation, and stress management; share a plant-based meal; and participate in a group support session.

During group support get-togethers, they discussed solutions to challenges; shared feelings; and they listened, carefully, to each other—without judgment or the need to “fix” a situation.

In other words, the lifestyle intervention brought the research participants closer together but it also had another possible benefit: social connection may increase lifespan. We know this because well-documented research by Stanford psychiatrist David Spiegel revealed that women with breast cancer, who participated in weekly social support sessions, survived much longer than those without strong, positive, social support.

A brief recap for you. The Ornish “reversal” program includes four components: a plant-based diet, stress management, physical activity, and social support. Since Dr. Ornish's work, the American College of Lifestyle Medicine has added two more “pillars” to its whole-person lifestyle intervention to prevent, treat, and reverse chronic conditions: *restorative sleep* and *avoidance of risky substances*.

Whole Person Integrative Eating®

The *Dietary Lifestyle* for Weight Loss & Lower Blood Sugar

Back to NYC Mayor Eric Adams, and his reversing his type 2 diabetes with a plant-based diet, and then, inspired by the healing power of food and lifestyle, he partnered with ACLM to train 200,000 NYC health care providers about a plant-based diet and Lifestyle Medicine, and bring Lifestyle Medicine into the health system throughout New York City. WOW!

I want to give you one more piece of the reversing-diabetes puzzle—not only with diet, but also by replacing what I call today’s “new normal” overeating *behaviors* Larry and I identified—with the elements of our Whole Person Integrative Eating® program.

You may recall that in earlier episodes of *The Healing Secrets of Food Revealed*—especially Episode 4: ‘Lost...Now Found: The Healing Power of the ‘4 Facets of Food’—I discussed how replacing the seven, new-normal overeating styles Larry and I identified (Food Fretting, Task Snacking, Emotional Eating, Fast Foodism, Unappetizing Atmosphere, Sensory Disregard, and Solo Dining) with the seven what-to-eat and how-to-eat behaviors of Whole Person Integrative Eating (fresh food, positive emotions, mindfulness eating, heartfelt gratitude, loving regard, savoring flavors, pleasant surroundings, and social connection)—leads to eating less and weighing less. Without dieting.

Internal and External WPIE PRINCIPLES

***Internal* WPIE Principles**

Positive feelings
Appreciation
Mindfulness
Loving regard
Savor flavors
Pleasant emotional atmosphere

***External* WPIE Principles**

Fresh whole food
Pleasing aesthetic environment
Social connection

Intrigued by our findings, researchers Erica Oberg, ND, MPH and Ryan Bradley, ND, MPH wondered if the health of patients with type 2 diabetes would be enhanced if they overturned their overeating styles.

Their findings were unexpected and amazing! When they applied the overeating styles and the Whole Person Integrative Eating intervention to people with type 2 diabetes, Dr. Oberg found that reducing overeating behaviors was a stronger predictor of lowering A1C (blood-glucose) levels than what research participants ate.

Such findings prompted Dr. Oberg to state: I experienced the power of Whole Person Integrative Eating (WPIE) in my medical practice when I conducted research on WPIE with diabetic patients. When they applied the seven root causes of overeating that...Deborah Kesten and Larry Scherwitz have identified, they were transformed. Confusing, conflicted relationships with food and eating become joyful again, and emotional and physical healing occurred. Overeating and obesity simply resolved as 'side effects' of practicing Whole Person Integrative Eating, and turning to food to cope with unpleasant emotions was replaced with peace and self-compassion. [The program] shines a light on the path of self-discovery and healing.”

At the same time, co-investigator Ryan Bradley to said that “How you eat appears to be as important, if not more important than what you eat.”

Here's the takeaway. Oberg’s study with patients with type 2 diabetes has this powerful implication: overcoming *all* the overeating styles may bring better health outcomes than focusing on just one overeating style (which is typically *how much* and *what* a person eats).

This is exactly what Larry and I found on our Whole Person Integrative Eating study with more than 5,200 people: Replacing all seven overeating styles with the 7 pillars of Whole Person Integrative Eating is what led to eating less and weighing less.

Here's *the* Key Takeaway

Today, I've given all of you who are listening a lot of info about **what to eat**--as well as the **lifestyle** and the **dietary lifestyle**--that empower you to not only lose weight, but also to prevent and reverse diabetes and other chronic conditions; to switch off health-harming genes; and to lengthen telomeres and in turn, up the odds of a longer life.

I apologize if I've overwhelmed you.

Here's the two key concepts that all the studies I discussed today have in common for weight loss and preventing and reversing chronic conditions: (1) all research suggests a plant-based diet; (2) health success is strongly enhanced by making *comprehensive* diet and other lifestyle changes.

For instance:

- Research on the Mediterranean diet by the Mayo Clinic states that the many health benefits linked with the Mediterranean diet is due to the Mediterranean *lifestyle*--which includes a predominantly plant-based diet, but also strong social connection and enjoying food and fellowship.
- NYC Mayor Eric Adams put his type 2 diabetes into remission by replacing a meat-and-processed-food diet with a plant-based diet.
- All four elements in Ornish Lifestyle Medicine--food, stress, exercise, connection--are statistically significant and linked with preventing and reversing chronic conditions.
- Patients with type 2 diabetes in Dr. Erica Oberg's study lessened their blood sugar levels and lost weight when they replaced *all 7* overeating styles with the 7 elements of Whole Person Integrative Eating (WPIE).
- Research participants in Larry's and my study on Whole Person Integrative Eating ate less and lost weight when they replaced *all 7* overeating styles with the 7 pillars of WPIE.

The bottom line: Twenty-first century, state-of-the-art science has revealed what to eat, and how to eat--and live--to prevent and reverse most chronic conditions. However, I understand that making such comprehensive changes in diet and lifestyle isn't easy, especially because much of what we've discussed today is the complete opposite of how most of us eat and live.

This is why I created The Healing Secrets of Food Revealed. In this episode, and in each episode, I'll give you step-by-step, in-action steps you can take that lead you closer to optimal eating and a lifestyle that nourishes 'all of you'--physically, emotionally, spiritually, and socially. One meal at a time.

To paraphrase Dr. Erica Oberg: My intention is to shine a light on the path of self-discovery and healing.

YOUR IN-ACTION EXERCISE

SELF-INSIGHT REFLECTION

'In-Action' Ideas to Try

A tip, step, or reflection that can contribute to your success.

So you can reap the rewards of what you're discovering today about optimal eating, I close each episode with an '**In-Action' Idea** for you to try. This may be a **Quick-Tip** about how to implement the healing secret we just discussed; or a **Practical Step** you can take, such as ordering a size-down of your favorite coffee concoction. Or perhaps I'll suggest a **Self-Insight Exercise**, an internal-reflection that can lead you closer to achieving your food-related health goals.

I offer an In-Action Exercise at the end each episode that can contribute to your transformation from today's, 'new-normal' way of eating--which leads to overeating and overweight--to Whole Person Integrative Eating--which I describe as your scientifically sound, personal guide to eating less and weighing less. Without dieting.

Consider keeping a Healing Secrets of Food Revealed journal to write about your experience with each In-Action Exercise.

Today's In-Action Exercise is a **SELF-INSIGHT REFLECTION** that explores your thoughts about diet, lifestyle, health, and healing.

SELF-INSIGHT REFLECTION

Here are the six pillars of Lifestyle Medicine. Numbers 1-4 comprise Ornish Lifestyle Medicine.

#1. A mostly fresh, whole food, plant-based diet

#2. Stress management

#3. Physical activity

#4. Social support

#5. Restorative sleep

#6. Avoiding risky substances

For your consideration...

Q1. What are your thoughts about Lifestyle Medicine and its link to preventing and reversing chronic conditions?

Q2. Look closely at each element. How would you describe your lifestyle--right now--in terms of:

(a) what you typically eat;

(b) whether you're often stressed--or not;

(c) regular physical activity;

(d) connection with family, friends, and/or coworkers.

Q3. Would you benefit by making some changes? If "yes," write down one change--in diet, decreasing stress, moving more, and/or connecting with others--that you can do--starting TODAY or THIS WEEK.

Thank you...

If you would like a summary of today's In-Action Exercise, please visit HealingSecretsPodcast.com. Then look for the yellow light bulb next to the "In-Action" CTA. At HealingSecretsPodcast.com, you can also listen to this episode again, read the transcript and also read a blog article about optimal eating and lifestyle that I've written. And, please consider joining The Healing Secrets Podcast Community—where I'm looking forward to meeting you.

I want to thank you for joining me today on The Healing Secrets of Food Revealed. With each show, I'll share step-by-step, science-backed insights you need to nourish 'all of you' – body, mind, soul, and social well-being – each time you eat. So you can thrive.

I'm Deborah Kesten, host of The Healing Secrets of Food Revealed.

Until next week, BE NOURISHED.

Disclaimer: This transcript is for informational purposes only. This transcript is not intended to be a substitute for professional health or weight loss advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of your health professional or another qualified health provider with any questions you may have regarding your condition or well-being.