

Stephanie
Dodier

The Beyond The Food Show PODCAST TRANSCRIPT



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Stephanie: Welcome to Episode 41. In today's episode we have an angel with us, someone who, through her own journey of healing and surviving, is now helping thousands of other people beating down and recovering from disease that they were told by their doctor there was nothing that can be done.

Today we have the honor to have on the show Dr. Terry Wahls, and you don't want to be missing this. I mean, this woman went from a wheelchair to riding her bike every day to work. And she was told by the best doctor in the United States – and don't forget, she's a doctor herself – that nothing could be done. But she opened her mind to possibility and was willing to go where she refused to go in the past. She was willing to go to her uncomfortable zone and try things that didn't feel good at first but that unlocked health for her. So stay tuned. This is really inspiring and she's got some great insight for us.

Now before we get started on the show, I wanted to thank you, all of you listening right now, for the support of the Keto Connector launch. Now for those who don't know, the Keto Connector is my new book and program, which you can get – both of them – for \$27. I mean, you get the book, you get daily video – it's a 30-day challenge of changing the way you eat your food, the way you think, the way that you relate to your food craving – and that will help you achieve your health goal. And we have people on this program who have gone from being unable to achieve their day to day activity and 30 days later, they're not only able to achieve their day to day activity but they're happy. I mean, how much more do you want from life?

There're people losing up to 18 pounds in one month. And it's not 18 pounds of fat, people, it's inflammation, it's water retention. And yes, there's a portion of it that's fat, but what that tells me is that those people were really sick before. And by implementing the Keto Connector program, they were able to tremendously not only affect their weight but affect their health. And their body was willing to let go of all that inflammation and that water retention – some amazing results. And you've been amazing at supporting the launch, and I want to thank you.

Just a reminder, you have until April 15th to get the bonus. On top of getting the book, the daily email, the access to the community, the daily video, you can also get my healthy fasting course up to April 15, 2017 by submitting your receipt to the dedicated address. In the show notes you will get the link to go check out the Keto Connector and there will be the instruction for the bonus as well, so go check it out.

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The sponsor for today's show is FBomb, where fat is a smart source of fuel. Now, it's not low fat, because those little pouches created by Kara and Ross from FBomb are actually pure healthy sources of fat – fat on the go that you can carry with you. If you follow me on Instagram, you saw my post when I was travelling and my big order of macadamia nut butter and sea salt that I've received while I was travelling because I was completely out. I love their products and I think they're fantastic options for people on the go, for people that are travelling. So go check it out, www.dropanfbomb.com. And if you use the code beyondthefood you will receive 10% off your first order.

So are you ready to do this? Let's talk to Dr. Terry Wahls.

Our guest today is a clinical professor of medicine at the University of Iowa where she teaches internal medicine residents, sees patients in a traumatic brain injury clinic and conducts clinical trials. She's also a patient with a chronic progressive neurological disorder, secondary progressive multiple sclerosis, which confined her to a tilt reclining wheelchair for four years. But thanks to the power of the Wahls Protocol, which is based on functional medicine and the Wahls Paleo diet, she restored her health and now pedals her bike for five miles to work every day. She is the author of *The Wahls Protocol: How I Beat Progressive MS Using Paleo Principles and Functional Medicine, Minding My Mitochondria*. Welcome to the show, Dr. Wahls.

Terry Wahls: Hey, thank you so much for having me.

Stephanie: You're very welcome. It's an honor to have you here. You're a true warrior. And that's how actually you call your tribe member. As I was doing research, you call people "You're a warrior." And I'm going to have in the show notes a picture of you in your wheelchair and you in your bike. The transformation is just amazing.

Terry Wahls: And I've since had surreal photographs over time. You see the decline and the recovery. I'd say I'm still recovering, I'm still looking younger and younger every year. My hair is getting gray but my kids – and I'd have to agree that overall I still look like I'm getting younger and younger.

Stephanie: Yeah, you look like you lost ten years, it's amazing. So tell us a little bit more about your story and where you came from, Dr. Wahls.

Terry Wahls: Sure. I'm an academic, internal medicine doc, believing in the latest technology, newest drugs, thinking that people are wasting their money when they're doing complementary alternative medicine, very, very skeptical. But God works in mysterious ways. In 2000

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I'm diagnosed with relapsing-remitting multiple sclerosis, and I know that within ten years half of those newly diagnosed with MS won't be able to work due to severe fatigue. So I decided to treat my disease aggressively and then I went to see the best people in the Midwest who were doing a research. So I go up to Cleveland Clinic, seeing those people, take the best drugs, still within three years my disease has progressed to secondary progressive MS. I needed a reclined wheelchair, I take chemotherapy, and then when it's available I take Tysabri. But I continued to decline and in fact I've declined steadily over seven years.

Now in that journey, my Cleveland Clinic doctors told me about the Paleo diet. And so in 2002, after 20 years of being a vegetarian, I went back to eating meat, but I continued to decline. I had given up all grain, all dairy, but I still declined. The next year I needed the wheelchair, the chemotherapy.

I stayed with the Paleo diet because I felt like at least I'm doing something. As I hit the wheelchair, I started reading about vitamins and supplements, and reading about mouse models of shrinking brains, things like Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, Huntington's disease, ALS. And based on what I was learning, I was adding various vitamins and supplements, which I did figure out helped with fatigue and did make things somewhat better. They couldn't recover me, but if I didn't take them, I could not function at all.

I was really very grateful for that and grateful that I was able to learn things that my physicians weren't telling me about. I was certainly getting more and more engaged. On the summer of 2007, I discovered the Institute of Functional Medicine. They had a great course on neuro protection. I took that and now had a deeper understanding of what I could do. I had a much longer list of vitamins and supplements. And there wasn't a dramatic change yet, but still I felt very empowered. I'm doing something and felt very hopeful.

And then I had this really big aha moment, like "What if I take my long list of supplements?" And I figured out where they are in the food supply and redesigned my Paleo diet to get these nutrients from the food. And so I do that and I now I call that the Wahl's diet, with various considerations there. And that really led to this dramatic change. I could tell within a month, brain fog is diminishing, energy is improving. In three months I'm beginning to walk with a cane. In six months I'm walking without a cane – still with limping but walking around without a cane. At nine months, I get in my bike and I pedal around the block. I'm crying, my kids are crying, my wife is crying, we're

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all just stunned. And this really is the first time that I think maybe restoration is possible. Who knows how well I could become?

And then at a year, I do a 20-mile bike ride with my family. And this really changes how I understand disease, it changes how I understand health, it changed the focus of my clinical practice and it changed the focus of my clinical research. And of course, I no longer think patients are foolish when they're doing complementary alternative medicine. I now think they are so on the money because it's diet and lifestyle where we create health, it's not prescription medication.

Stephanie: Yeah, I came from the same place but not as dramatic as you. I was a corporate person for 15 years, very black and white, and I had my own health issue that sent me to the hospital. And then I discovered this whole world of food and medicine, and the key thing – empowerment. I decided to take my health in my own hands and be my own doctor, and that's when things started to change with you. And I think that's an overarching principle also in the Wahl's Protocol, right?

Terry Wahls: Absolutely. I don't restore people. They restore themselves by learning how to take charge of their diet and lifestyle. I give them all the tools but I can't restore them, they have to restore themselves.

Stephanie: Empowerment is key. And for so many of the listeners listening to the podcast today, you're maybe in that place where you feel that you don't have control on your health and you're hearing that from a doctor, right?

Terry Wahls: Foolishly, yes. There are way too many conventional doctors who are just like me. I completely embraced the best medicines, the best technologies, the newest surgeries, the newest tests and these technological arms raised for medicine. And now I realize that that will never create health. It may control symptoms but the disease processes continue so new symptoms will develop, new diseases will develop and we're seeing disability rule the bell using that model.

Stephanie: And that's where your story is a proof that you can actually reverse it, reverse your condition.

Terry Wahls: Absolutely. The idea that we have incurable conditions, it is true from a conventional medicine perspective. Krabbe disease is incurable. You have to use these disease-modifying drugs to modify the speed of the decline. They don't cure anyone because all these conditions are really at the root diet lifestyle and environmental exposure to

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diseases. And that's what we have to address, that's what we have to teach people, that they are the ones who are going to have to address them.

Stephanie: And so that's what the Wahl's Protocol is about, from reading your book, those two branches. There's the diet piece, which is obviously prominent, but there's also the lifestyle, correct?

Terry Wahls: Absolutely. And then I'd say the third piece is understanding the environmental factors that contribute to this, because you want to address diet, lifestyle and environmental factors as well as we can.

Stephanie: And so you have an entire book - and I alluded to that earlier in your book that's called beyond the food. So can you tell us about how you've used this element of going beyond the food in your protocol?

Terry Wahls: At the foundation we really want to teach people how to get the food and the eating habits under control. And then the next step is we talk about a wide range of factors, improving the quality of sleep because sleep is when we maintain and repair our bodies and too many of us have shortened our sleep so we don't have sufficient maintenance and repair time. So sleep is very, very important.

To balance hormones, which is going to depend of course on repairing the gut – we do have to take care of that. Doing that we want to repair your stress hormone levels, so some type of meditative practice, stress reducing practice, gratitude practice can be very helpful.

Then the next step in repairing hormones is physical activity. Our bodies are built to move. We have to move everyday to get our food, we have to move sometimes quickly to get away from the predators and the warring factions, and so we need daily activity. We need a little bit of high intensity activity ideally and you want to have strength training. So I talk about the components of physical activity that are so helpful and that we need these components to maintain the nerve growth factors in my brain and to maintain the testosterone and estrogen levels that my bones need and my brain needs. So that's the hormonal balance.

The next thing I talked about, I believe, was how we process and eliminate the polluting compounds that we encounter from the environment and the oxidized byproducts that we have just from running the chemistry of life. We're like every chemical factory, there's some toxic trash that we have to properly process and eliminate. Even if I lived

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in a completely organic environment, I'd still be making my own trash every day that I have to get rid of. And so there are a number of things that you can do to make that trash management work inefficiently or work very efficiently. And so I talk about how we do that with food, how we can do that with vitamins, herbs, supplements at a very targeted fashion.

And then some other very, very important issues are the social network. Am I surrounding myself with people that are helping me succeed or are sabotaging me and trying to tempt me to do destructive foods or do destructive habits? So social network can be very helpful, the self-talk can be very helpful.

Since writing my book, I've gotten more and more attuned to the issue of what I call the resilience factors – what is it that I find gives me meaning in life, my mission statement and how do I incorporate purpose into what I'm doing, what is my hero's journey – because every society has this great struggle that we're in and there's some hero who goes off and learns something very important then comes back to join the society and assists in that struggle. And so in our society, in the American society, we know that that hero's going to win and they won't die. In every other society, they don't know if their hero is going to win or die or live, but they'll still be a hero because they were engaged and they're giving back in a very meaningful way.

I tell people that my cancer patients taught me great deal, that they could see their cancer as a tremendous gift because it gave them meaning and purpose, it allowed them to reconcile with family and friends and make peace with the world, and they knew they're going to die but they felt it to be the one of the most profound gifts in life. So I challenge people to find the gift in their circumstance as it is today, whether or not they're going to recover because their life still has meaning, they still have purpose, they still have value. And to help identify what is their hero's journey – we don't know how much recovery they're going to have, but they're still a hero because they're willing to engage and willing to get back. And so going through those resilience exercises makes it much easier for people to do the work of all the other stuff if I ask them to do.

Stephanie: Absolutely. That leads me into another big area that is a passion of mine, the role that emotion plays in our disease and how not only can it contribute to increase your disease but triggering – in the case of auto immune disease there're some studies that are actually showing that emotion triggers auto immune condition.

Terry Wahls: Yeah. When I look back at our clinical trials, the years I've had with the therapeutic lifestyle clinic, the traumatic brain injury clinic, as we talk about their health timeline, I

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can identify a lot of environmental factors that set them up for being in that pro global, pre disease state. But nearly everyone had some major stressor and occasionally it was pollution exposure but the most common exposure was a major life psychological stressor – family conflict, work conflict, being the two big sources. And when we ignore it, it will show up in our health in some way. And so as uncomfortable as it is for us to deal with these conflicts, they will take a toll on us if we try and just run away from them.

Stephanie: And the ability through the tools you've mentioned, the hero's journey and resilience that will allow us to work through those emotions is as important as anything we can do with supplements or food. It goes hand in hand, am I correct?

Terry Wahls: Absolutely. I have had more and more appreciation for the need to bring these conversations about resilience and the hero's journey into my first encounter with patients. And I say, "This is the foundation of your healing because we want you to begin this – because everything else I'm going to ask you to do is hard, and for you to be willing to do this work, it will be hard to start and hard to continue, you'll be much more successful if we can address these emotional factors now."

Stephanie: It helps people moving to that piece of being empowered versus being a victim because when you are in that victim role you often don't look at your emotions, you rely on the medication or supplement.

Terry Wahls: Back at my own illness, when I was first diagnosed, I read all the literature, I was very upset, I was getting wildly agitated. And my wife said, "You have to stop reading. You have to let go. Let's get you the very best people and have them take care of you," which we did and I let go of the reading. And little did I realize I was beginning to learn helplessness because I was letting them take care of me. And then of course that didn't work out so well and I became severely disabled. And that's when I started reading and experimenting doing stuff and gradually taking more and more ownership of "I'm the one who's going to have to fix this."

Stephanie: You're a perfect example of – I have a say that I talk a lot about everything happens for a reason. And I think for you, with your education, with your skill, that condition probably happened to you for you to be our angel today and sharing your story and teaching people.

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Terry Wahls: Having MS, becoming very severely disabled taught me so much about being a [0:19:46] because I was going down that path. And then as I discovered how to recover, it has been the most incredible gift.

Now what's interesting, Stephanie, is – because I'm very comfortable talking about that as a gift that I treasure. But my two kids who are now 22 and 25, they absolutely don't see it as a gift. They still wish that I could have been out there hiking and biking and doing things when they were really young. And so I acknowledge that I got a great deal out of it. My kids probably got a great deal of maturity out of it and they'll need a few more years before they can let go of the losses they experienced because of the things that I couldn't do.

Stephanie: Yeah, but you're giving out to the world and that's a beautiful gesture.

So what are three things you would advise people that they can do – our listeners or our viewers, if you're watching this on YouTube – that you can do right now to make a difference in your health?

Terry Wahls: Well, learn a lot. One of the things you could do if you want to learn more is to get my book. I would certainly think deeply about what is your personal mission, why are you here and what could you do that gives you joy in your life right now – I call that the pleasant life – and how could you, using your unique attributes, give back to the world the meaningful life. That will give you a lot more purpose and strength to then move on to the work that Stephanie's going to teach you to do. And hopefully you learn from my book about how you can in fact get to the root cause of why you became ill and therefore begin to address that and get healthier and healthier and healthier.

Stephanie: Yeah. And when I work with people one on one, I do something you call the health line. I do a health timeline both physical and emotional and we go through all the elements in the life and we always look at working both sides like the Wahls Protocol, the diet and the emotional side so you can progress back to health.

Terry Wahls: Yeah. And I think that is a beautiful way of approaching this because we need the food as the basis, we need the emotional health to be willing to make these big changes in our diet and lifestyle. And people would be much more successful if we can address all these resilience factors which require addressing those emotional factors.

Stephanie: Absolutely. So you've mentioned your book, you have The Wahls Protocol book. It's a New York Times best seller, am I correct?

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Terry Wahls: Right. We have the hard back, we have the paperback version. I've written a new book that will be coming out April 4th, Wahls Protocol Cooking for Life, which gives an overview of the dietary programs and the way of cooking, learning that cooking doesn't have to take long, it could be simple, straightforward, delicious food that you, your kids and your grandkids will enjoy. I have my website, terrywahls.com, where we have a whole host of programs to help people in this journey. And we have a seminar every August. It's lots of fun so I encourage you to check that out, that'll be on the website as well.

Stephanie: Yeah, I saw that, August 4th and 5th. And there are some health professionals also that are listening to this podcast – there's a certification process, am I correct, on the 6th?

Terry Wahls: Yes. It goes three days to the public. We have a fourth day that goes more deep for the professionals. I test them and then we have certification listed on our website, which is very exciting because I have calls from all over the world, people trying to get seeing, so it's been very helpful to expand the number of practitioners who do all those work.

Stephanie: And you also have a foundation, am I correct?

Terry Wahls: Yes, thank you. The Wahls Foundation raises research to help fund the work that I do, because when you write grants to NIH and grants to non-profits, it's extremely helpful to have data. And so I have a big research study funded by the MS Society. And the reason I was able to do that is a part of the foundation had given us money, seed money, to conduct early pilot studies. And we got some – as you know – some very dramatic favorable results that then funded for the grants. So those grants are now funding the collection of some blood bio markers, tool bio markers in my MS population, so we'll be able to analyze that.

I'm working on a proposal to do a similar study in ALS patients because we've had some great favorable reports from people who adopted the Wahls Protocol for ALS who stabilized their disease and were able to get stronger. So based on that, I'm writing a protocol now for ALS and beginning to have some conversations with private donors in an attempt to get that study up and going.

Stephanie: That's amazing because you were your own self-study at the beginning of all of this. And because of your education and your background, you're now able to run a study that will impact thousands and hundreds of thousands of people in the future.

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Terry Wahls: Correct. And the TED Talk which I did in 2011 I think has had like 2.7 million views, so we've been able to educate tremendous numbers of people who then have gone to their healthcare practitioners or physicians, physician assistants, nurse practitioners to say, "Well, what about that doctor who's in the wheelchair and is biking now through food? What about that?" That has been very, very exciting.

Stephanie: I think it's beautiful. I want everyone to know about the new book so I'm going to link to your new book and your other books as well in the show notes. We're going to link to your website as well so people can, if they're interested or know somebody that could be interested in the seminar that's coming up in August. And also, I've discovered a membership option on your website, am I correct?

Terry Wahls: Oh yeah, right. So a couple more things we've mentioned, we have membership options – and this is really a great, great deal. You could have access to lectures I'm giving every month and you get a chance to ask a question, because every month at the end of the month I go through, read all those questions, answer them and then I may go into a much longer conversation about some of these topics. So people get the round-up lecture and the most recent lecture that I've done. And then for the first two years as we recruit them, we put out – they bring people up to speed so there's tremendous amount of great, great information there.

And Stephanie, one more thing, we should get links to our recruiting studies, so links for the study that we're recruiting now. And then there're studies that a colleague at Bastyr University in Washington is doing about diet and lifestyle in the setting of MS, and diet and lifestyle in the setting of Parkinson's disease. So I'll make sure you have links for those three studies as well.

Stephanie: I'll put that in the show notes for everyone. Now on closing, the Wahls Protocol is for who? Because I don't think we were clear so far on the interview about that, like who can benefit from that?

Terry Wahls: The book was written for auto immune conditions and so we have thousands and thousands of people with MS and auto immune conditions who benefitted greatly. In my clinical practice, it was a great help for people with traumatic brain injury, concussions, sports related concussions, motor vehicle concussions. Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans did very well. And we have two million concussions every year so lots of folks out there would benefit. And then in my therapeutic lifestyle clinic, we have people – the most common recent people came to see me was chronic pain. It could be from their auto immune disease, from neuropathies, from back pain, from war

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injuries, shrapnel, and we did very well at reducing pain, getting them off narcotics. Diabetes, obesity – we have regressed their diabetes and often get them off their diabetic meds. We had a heart failure who did very well. Parkinson's, early cognitive decline, early Alzheimer's also did very, very well. And people with mental health issues like bipolar, anxiety, depression, attention deficit, I've had moms tell me that their kids who had behavior problems and autism have regressed or have improved remarkably.

So while the book is targeting auto immune, we use the same protocols in our clinical practice and they did very well across many disease states. Because we're so focused on improving the health of the cells, as the cells then get healthy and rebuild the health of the organs, health improves. And when health improves, you need fewer prescription drugs, you have less pain, you're more functional. So you basically need to be alive.

Stephanie: That's amazing. So it's for anyone that has a chronic condition or any challenges. And I saw also on social media a post with you and Dr. Natasha Campbell-McBride which is – because I'm a GAPS practitioner as well so the Wahls Protocol can also apply, and it's the same condition that she's addressing as well.

Terry Wahls: Correct. There's considerable overlap with what we do. She's probably more focused on the microbiome correction, I was more focused on [0:28:27] health but because we're at the root addressing the causes, there is considerable overlap. You can easily modify her protocol to be aligned with mine, you can easily modify what I'm doing to be in alignment with hers. And so we both have immense respect for each other's personal journey and their contribution to health.

Stephanie: Amazing. I won't take up any much of your time because we're running out, but all the links of everything that Dr. Wahls talked about will be in the show notes which will be on the website. And I thank you very much for your time with me today and I hope to meet you soon. You're a real angel to me. Thank you very much for your work.

Terry Wahls: Thank you so much.

Stephanie: Bye.

There you have it. All the links of everything we talked about will be in the show notes at www.stephaniedodier.com/041. And that's where you can also pick up the transcript of the show and the link to join my community and also the link to check out the Keto Connector program.