



Essential Alchemy

The Ancient Art of Healing Naturally

Season 3, Episode 6: Everything You Need to Know About Keto with Ben Azadi

Jodi: Hi, I am Jodi Cohen, your host, and I'm super excited about today's guest because we are going to learn all about keto, why it works, intermittent fasting, and inflammation. Ben Azadi went through a personal health transformation of shedding 80 pounds of pure fat, which if you look at him, it's shocking.

To imagine that he's ever carried more than his slim frame. Ever since Ben has been on a mission to help 1 billion people live a healthier lifestyle. He is the author of four best selling books, including his latest Keto Flex, which we're gonna dive into the perfect health booklet. The intermittent fasting cheat sheet, which is amazing, and the power of sleep, which is my favorite thing to talk about.

Ben has been the go-to source for intermittent fasting and the ketogenic diet, and he's known as the health detective because he investigates dysfunction and he educates not medicates to bring the body back to normal function. He's the founder of Keto Kamp, a global brand, bringing awareness to ancient healing strategies such as the keto diet and fasting.

Ben: Jodi, thanks for the invitation. I'm excited to have a fun conversation with you today.

Jodi: Please share a little bit about your own journey and how you initially got into keto and kind of what you experienced personally.

Ben: I mean, I followed a standard American diet, like so many who were duped by these nutritional guidelines that are actually like the opposite of what should be... what should we be doing for optimal health?

We shouldn't be eating processed foods. Growing up, I ate a whole bunch of processed foods, fast food. I was one of those kids that was pretty much left to my own devices. Parents were divorced and I hung out with the wrong crowd. So I had bad habits. And one of those habits were, of course, eating fast food, doing drugs, hanging out with the wrong crowd.

And it showed in my physical appearance, as I was a kid that was obese, bullied, picked on. So not just physically obese, Jodi, but mentally obese, mentally bankrupt with suicidal thoughts and depression. And this carried on into my adulthood. I found myself back in 2008 being a 24 year old obese man weighing 250 pounds, wanting to give up on life, looking for ways to give up on life and actually exploring that cause I was tired of being in pain and crying every single day.

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Ben: I was rock bottom at that time. Every time I explored that, I kept thinking about my mom. And the devastation she would have to deal with if I took my life, and it stopped me. Thank God I had that reason to stop me, stop myself. So I knew I had to figure things out. I knew I had to take ownership and responsibility, and that was actually the first step towards change in my life.

And I believe it's the first step for everybody is to take responsibility.

But it wasn't until I started to read books, that books actually opened up that world to me of responsibility. I started to read authors like Bob Proctor and Dr. Wayne Dyer and Earl Nightingale, Tony Robbins, all these incredible individuals.

And the books helped me take ownership and that's where it started. And once I took ownership, I started to move my body. I started to eat better. I started to make some changes, and I went through this incredible health transformation where I lost 80 pounds in nine months. Went from 34% body fat to 6% body fat. Finally achieved a physical six pack. But the most important thing that I achieved is a mental six pack and what it did for my mental health.

And that was about 14 years ago. That's what got me into the door of the health and fitness space. And ever since then, I've been a student studying and learning and teaching along the way.

Jodi: I love that. Personal responsibility is my big thing as well. You know that whole idea of you can't really help people until they wanna be helped.

Ben: It's so true, and it's such an important word to understand – responsibility. A lot of people don't even understand what that word means. Responsibility is your ability to respond to life. So for me, my ability to respond to life was poor. I was the victim. It's my genetics, my enabling family members. It's my slow metabolism.

But once you take responsibility, all that goes out the window and you become the victor of your future and your destiny, and stop being the victim of your history. So that's where it all starts – responsibility.

Jodi: I love that. So back in 2008, how did you, I mean, keto, was it prominent then? How did you kind of figure out how to lose that much weight that quickly?

Ben: So it wasn't with keto where I lost the weight, it was a learning lesson for me because I did the things that I did to lose the weight was not necessarily what I would teach today or wasn't necessarily healthy.

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Ben: It was more of like an aggressive approach of like excessive exercise, cutting my calories, the old “calories in versus calories out.” But it kick started me and it helped, right? I lost the weight, but I was still one of those sick people. I still had digestive issues and acne and brain fog. It wasn't until 2013 after exploring other diets and avenues like a vegan diet and paleo diet. I discovered keto in 2013 along with intermittent fasting, and it made a lot of sense to me that they have been around since humans have existed.

They're ancient healing strategies like essential oils. Essential oils are also an ancient healing strategy. They've been around for a long time, so it made a lot of sense to me, and that's where I dove full on with keto and I started to really apply it and notice the benefits. And I've learned a lot of things along the way, but it was in 2013 that I discovered keto.

Jodi: And for people who are listening who may have heard of keto, can you kind of define keto and define intermittent fasting and explain a little bit about how it works with your body and why it's such a powerful tool.

Ben: There's a lot of confusion around keto. People hear it, they think it's some sort of like fad diet or some sort of weight loss gimmick. That's not the way that we teach keto here at Keto Camp. We teach it as a metabolic tool, meaning ketosis is not even a diet. Keto is not even a diet. It's a metabolic process, and we're designed to go in and out of ketosis.

All of our ancestors went in and out of ketosis, which is the premise behind my book, Keto Flex. Essentially dropping your carbohydrates low enough so you could start burning body fat. And once the body fat is being burned for energy, it's sent to your liver, your liver starts burning that energy and your liver produces ketones. That is something that a lot of Americans need because we have an epidemic of diabetes and obesity and cancer and et cetera.

And that's a result of eating too many carbs, eating too frequently, raising insulin all the time. So a lot of people could really use this metabolic process called ketosis. And fasting goes hand in hand with ketosis cause they both drop insulin in the body. Most people need to do that. They both allow you to tap into your body. And fasting. A lot of people think it's about cutting calories, but it's not. Intermittent fasting is not about eating less, it's about eating less often. You have your eating window and your fasting window, and that is the way we're genetically hardwired to function.

Jodi: Yeah, that makes a lot of sense. Can you talk a little bit about how this also lowers inflammation, which is also epidemic, and even about what you were saying, you were a skinny sick person. I think there are people that are slender but inflamed.

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Ben: So many, there's like terms for them. They call 'em skinny-fat cuz some people genetically just put on fat in different areas. Somebody might pack on fat around their arms and her legs, et cetera. Some might just pack it around their visceral fat, their belly, their organs, and you don't really see them and think that they're unhealthy, but they could be unhealthy. So inflammation is the name of the game. That's why essential oils work so great. They help lower inflammation in different ways.

But we know that inflammation is the link to pretty much every disease out there. It was on the cover of Time Magazine, and when I refer to inflammation, I'm not talking about acute inflammation. Acute inflammation would be like, sore shoulder or a sprained ankle. That is acute, your body adapts and it could potentially get stronger from that.

But I'm talking about chronic low-grade inflammation and inflammation around your cells, that's where this becomes a problem. Cuz if there's inflammation around your cells, that means there's inflammation around the membrane, that is the bodyguard of the cells. And if there's too much inflammation, it's like an interference where your hormones can't get in, nutrients can't get in, oxygen can't get in. And then a symptom manifests.

And here's where conventional medicine gets it wrong. They look at the symptom and they say, "Here is a medication, here's a surgery, here's a fad diet." But the problem is not the symptom. The symptom is far removed from the problem. For example, when I was obese and I had extra weight on my body, 80 pounds of extra weight. I never had a weight problem. Nobody has ever had a weight problem. It's a weight symptom.

If you look at the body and start getting and teaching it how to get healthy and lower inflammation, the weight comes off as a side effect, meaning the body doesn't lose weight to get healthy. It gets healthy to lose weight. So keto. When your body is producing ketones, we know that ketones signal to your mitochondria to make more of themselves so you produce more energy and it lowers inflammation at the cellular level. You pair that with the intermittent fasting, you start getting out the junk. It's a one-two punch to really combat chronic inflammation.

Jodi: I love that. So intermittent fasting helps with drainage and detoxification.

Ben: Yeah, it's one of the best ways to harness the innate intelligence because you're removing interference when you're eating all day long. It takes a lot of energy to process a meal. It takes blood flow, energy, resources to digest a meal, and it takes about 14, 18 hours to process 800 calories of a standard American diet.

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Ben: When you fast, now you have all that energy that would've been used for digestion and used to heal the body.

Of course, you activate the lymph, you activate something called autophagy, which is cellular repair and cleanup. Your body gets rid of these senescent cells. So fasting is a great reset for the body and for the digestive system as well.

Jodi: Can you talk about some of the strategies that you share in Keto Flex?

Ben: Yeah, so Keto Flex outlines my four pillars. I have four main pillars that I teach my Keto Camp Academy students, and I outline it in the book.

The first pillar is called Adapt, meaning getting your body fat adapted, getting away from burning sugar, and teaching your body to burn fat. That's the first step. Takes about 14 to 28 days. That's the first pillar.

The second pillar was called Fast. That's where we start pairing intermittent fasting into the mix for the benefits that I spoke about.

The third pillar is called Face. And we were just talking offline about this. You're phasing out vegetables and antinutrients and doing carnivore for a period of time, and then once you complete those three pillars, takes you about three to four months.

The fourth pillar is called Flex. That's when we go in and out of ketosis, because I love keto, but I'm not dogmatic about it. I don't think anybody should be in ketosis long term. I think the name of the game should be Metabolic Flexibility going in and out of ketosis, which is keto flexing.

Jodi: I love that and speak more about that cuz I know a lot of people, they're all in, right? What is the benefit of kind of going in and out?

Ben: It achieves metabolic flexibility. You know, we're not designed to burn sugar all the time. We're not designed to burn fat all the time. We're designed to kind of go back and forth. 88% of Americans are only burning sugar, and that's according to a study from the University of North Carolina, chapel Hill 2018. It was a 10 year study with 8,000 people to determine how healthy or unhealthy is the American adult population, and they determine that 88% of American adults are metabolically unhealthy.

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Ben: Only 12% of us are metabolically healthy. And Jodi, that was before Covid. Imagine what happened after Covid. It probably got worse. So they're stuck burning sugar. That's not good. They need more keto. They need more fat burning. But then you have the other side of people who are teaching keto or doing keto. They're so dogmatic about it cuz it worked and they stick with it forever, for months and years. And that's also another form of metabolic inflexibility. We're not designed to burn fat all the time, or sugar all the time. We're designed to go in and out. So the goal is to be metabolically flexible to be able to do that. And that's what I teach in the book Keto Flex.

Jodi: It's like bio-regulatory medicine, right? You're supposed to respond to the stress, then return to baseline.

Ben: That's hormesis. Bio-regulatory medicine is hormesis. There's this hormetic zone. A perfect example would be exercise. There's a sweet spot of exercise. Too much, our body can't adapt and you hurt yourself – not good. Too little, you don't get a benefit, but there's a Goldilocks effect and that's exactly what you're referring to.

Jodi: I love that because that's really, you know, when you talk about ancient medicine and oils, I'm like, they don't cure things. What they do is they put your body in balance so your body can function properly, and when your body is digesting and detoxifying and resting, good things happen.

Ben: That's right. It gives it the building blocks to do what it was designed to do. We're not designed to develop disease. Dr. Bruce Lipton, who's a world renowned cell biologist, he estimates that 99% of all disease is from environment, lifestyle, and nutrition. Meaning only 1% is strictly just genetics. So we have so much control over this.

Jodi: I agree with you and I and I wanna talk a little bit more about mindset, in particular gratitude, like I love that this started with a choice to take personal responsibility. Can you talk a little bit more about some of your other mindset strategies?

Ben: I love talking about this because I believe 95% of success in all areas of life is mindset, 5% strategy, right? So when we think about gratitude, I call it vitamin G. It's the strongest vitamin in the world, the world's most powerful drug.

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Ben: It just puts your body in this healing anti-inflammatory state, and there are signs to back it up. Dr. Joe Dispenza did brain scans on individuals going through his seminars. And he observed what happened in their bodies and brains and he saw 1,200 different chemical reactions took place instantaneously that put the body in this healing anti-inflammatory state when they practice gratitude. So it's a big part of my day-to-day and what I teach vitamin G, it's simple to do, but it's simple not to do. That's one part of it, Jodi, the gratitude part.

The second part of it is you know your daily thoughts that you have each day. A psychologist did some studies and they determined the average person has 60,000 thoughts per day, and 90% of those thoughts that come in every single day are the same thoughts from yesterday, and 85% of them are negative thoughts, what I call 'stinking thinking thoughts,' and I always say, "if you're thinking is stinking, your dreams are shrinking." So when you start to change your thoughts... Dr. Wayne Doster said, "when you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change." So I believe our greatest power is the ability to change our thoughts. And it's a universal law, what you feed energy to expands. So what you think about is what you end up bringing about. So the thoughts part along with the vitamin G is very, very important.

Jodi: Do you have certain rituals? Cause I've noticed that when you give people examples, they're like, oh, I could maybe do that. Like how do you integrate positive thinking and gratitude into your day?

Ben: Good question. So practical tip for gratitude is, before you go to bed is when the subconscious mind is very impressionable. I would recommend writing down 10 things you're grateful for that happened during the day, right before bed. In the morning, same thing, subconscious mind, very impressionable. So you wanna write down 10 things you're grateful for in the morning. That right there will make a big difference.

And then the thought thing. Changing your environment is the first step because your environment determines your thoughts, your environment is very important. There's a video on YouTube called "Fleas in a Jar." I want your audience to all go on YouTube later and type in fleas in a jar. It's a 62 second video, but what it demonstrates is this...

They put hundreds of fleas in a jar and the jar is upside down and the fleas can't get out. They're trapped by their environment. They leave them there for hours and then come back later and they end up removing the jar. And the fleas have been conditioned by their environment to believe that they're still stuck in that jar. So even though the jar is removed, they're still flying in the same pattern.

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Ben: Nobody's escaping. But not only that, the fleas end up having offspring, and the offspring flies in the same pattern of where the jar was. That's exactly what our environment does to us. So we wanna make sure we're turning off toxic news. We're cutting out toxic people, cuz that's gonna determine your thoughts and then it's gonna be easier to change your thoughts. So your thoughts that you're thinking when you're walking your dog, brushing your teeth, those are the thoughts that you want to be aware of.

And when a negative thought comes in, let it pass. And choose a positive thought. Choose a thought that's gonna serve your health and serve your future.

Jodi: I love that. I try to do that as well, but it's so powerful. And I do think to your point of kind of supplementing beliefs in victim, I think if anything, you are an amazing example of somebody who has not only turned their life around, but is now helping other people.

Ben: Thank you, Jodi. And if I could do it, anybody can do it. I was in a dark place. If I were to express my thoughts that I was thinking back then and saying the things that I was saying to myself, if I would've said to my best friend what I was saying to myself, my best friend would no longer be my best friend. I had some really bad thoughts and if I'm able to overcome it, it doesn't happen overnight, but you know, over time you can do it. If I'm able to do it, anybody's able to.

Jodi: And you mentioned a couple books... Dr. Wayne Dyer and Earl Nightingale, Tony Robbins... Are there books that you love that you would recommend to other people who are kind of like, that sounds great, but I don't really know how to get this done?

Ben: I would recommend Bob Proctor's latest book called, Change Your Paradigm, Change Your Life. The audio version is super cool because it's more of like an interview style that they did with him, so I would recommend the audible version of it. And then Dr. Wayne Dyer has a great book called, Change Your Thoughts, Change Your Life. So those are two very, very powerful books.

Jodi: Awesome. Is there anything we didn't touch on that you'd like to share?

Ben: Just that the body is built to heal. Whatever symptoms you might be dealing with, I like to view symptoms as a good thing, as a gift. It's a gift from your innate intelligence showing you something is wrong, there's interference.

Let's open up the hood and figure out what's going on underneath the hood, right? If your check engine light went on, you wouldn't just look at that symptom and cover it up with a band aid, you would actually pull over and open up the hood. So symptoms are a gift from your body. And don't chase the symptom, look for the cause.

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Ben: It could be a toxicity issue, it could be a mindset issue, a sleep issue. It could be a nutrition issue, but there's always a cause. And if you find out what the cause is and work on removing it, the body will heal. The body is built to heal, and we have such incredible things available to us. We have essential oils. We have different biohacking devices like aura ring that I have on and continuous glucose monitors. But then you have free things like vitamin G, gratitude, intermittent fasting is free. Working on your mindset is free. So there's free things you can do, grounding, walking barefoot on planet Earth. There's so many things you can do for free, and then you can take it to another level and get some biohacking.

Jodi: And speaking of free, you're sharing a free gift, your free keto shopping guide. Do you wanna tell people where they can find that?

Ben: Yeah, I created this guide because a lot of people are... there's a lot of keto foods out there that are "keto-friendly." I'm putting this in quotation marks, but they're not health-friendly. So I put together a shopping list of... what do you eat on keto? What are healthy fats, proteins, and carbs? How do you test for ketones? And what are the optimal numbers for ketones and glucose? So it's called My Keto Camp Blueprint, and your audience could get it for free download, um KetoKampBlueprint.com

Jodi: Amazing. And if people wanna learn more and work with you, how can they find you?

Ben: My website is the best place you could find my book, my social media, my programs, which is benazadi.com. And just keep in mind, Keto Kamp – Camp is spelled with the K. So if you go to Keto Kamp Blueprint, camp is spelled with a K.

Jodi: Well, thank you. This was a lot of great quotes. I took a lot of notes. This was wonderful.

Ben: Thank you, Jodi. It was a pleasure speaking with you today. Always a pleasure.