

## **Jean Simmons**

**Jean:** I'm Jean Simmons and I'm 80 years old as of last Saturday, and I had a wonderful birthday party.

**Jonathan:** Where do you live?

**Jean:** Well, I live in St. Louis Missouri, actually I live in Florissant, Missouri which is a suburb of St. Louis and we've lived there for 40 some odd years I'm not sure how many now. My husband was in the Army for 22 years and his last duty station was here in St. Louis and when it came time for him to get another assignment we sat down and decided that he'd had enough time in to retire and he was ready to do that and so we retired right there in Florissant. The kids were all in school, and we had one in Rolla and so we just stayed, and we've been there ever since.

**Jonathan:** Jean what, I mean you having graced this earth for 80 years, I can imagine that your health journey has been a long and well winding and traveled the road. Can you tell us a little bit about your journey as it relates to diabetes, nutrition, weight loss, things along those lines?

**Jean:** Well as for diabetes, my father went to the hospital one night because he just conked out and it was the middle of the night and mother got an ambulance and took him to the hospital. I went in, and to see how he was doing, he was definitely in a very deep coma and the nurse said you know it really looks to me like he's diabetic and this is a diabetic coma. So, she went and called the doctor and he said she might be right and she came back and gave him some medications and first thing, you know, he started coming out of it. So that was a difficult time and a difficult way to learn that he had it. I mean there were things that they could do about diabetes even then I mean insulin and things like that, but he said okay. He had a drinking problem at that point in time and the doctor came in and talked to him and said, "George you have two choices, you can give up alcohol and start eating right, or you can die". Well, needless to say 17 years later, he had a good 17 years, but he did learn to eat properly. He was given a diet and my mother took it and arranged it kind of around what he liked and didn't like that was still healthy, and that's what she fed him, and he was good. My next experience with diabetes was my husband and that was not too long before he died. He was having heart problems and the diabetes, the sugar level, kept going up and the

diabetes was flaring and so they were working with him on that. His heart just was not strong enough to hold him up, so he passed...oh two and a half years ago and I thought here I am. We were going to die together, that doesn't always work that way, you can't always predict what life's going to do to you and all you can do is take a deep breath blow it out and go on from there and that's my philosophy of life and that's what I've done. At the point that he died we were both in a home and I stayed there for a year little over a year and they worked with me. I was having, definitely mental problems, I was definitely overweight. I was upset about the whole thing and I was scared to death that I was going into Alzheimer's because that's what my mother died of. So, we...I listened to your webinar Jonathan and was impressed to say the least. I wasn't sure that I understood it all that first time but I got enough of it to know that you were on the right track and so I checked into it and between you and Sue Johnston you came up with ways to help me become a member of SANE solution and so I did. I have never regretted it. I have fudged on it once and awhile, but I have been doing better and better and the further you go with this the better you do get at handling it. I've learned to eat things that I never thought I would, mostly vegetables because as a child I hated vegetables, most kids do. One at a time we'll try another vegetable and then I'll see one in the store and I think now what is that and what could I do with it, this is the way I have built my eating habits it's just one step at a time, and I've had trouble giving up bread but that's getting better too and I have just recently gotten everything all the ingredients that I need to make your baking flour and when I get back home I am going to make my own bread and these are the kind of things that just keep me going.

**Jonathan:** Jean, it's amazing because I hear your story and you mentioned...and I don't, I don't want this to sound like I've taken you into a dark place, I'm not. So, two and a half years ago you're in a home, your husband dies your mind is going, you feel like I've lost my husband, I'm in a home, I'm losing my mind. The woman who's sitting in front of us today is a playful jovial, literally could fall on her face literally, and get back up. I mean you flew across the country, you've been awake since what 2 a.m. this morning? How does a person lose their husband come back from possibly losing their mind being in a home...?

**Jean:** The main thing is having people to support you, to encourage you, to help you learn and that's what they had in the home. We had a very good physical therapist, he

worked with me on getting my physical self to a point where I could move around. He's the one that got me my first walker, but the other people there were also extremely supportive. They had an activities group of women that just came up with all sorts of things to challenge our minds and to keep us busy and to keep us laughing. We had another one that got into the exercise bit and she had tapes that she would run that had the exercises on it and we used to have the best time with that. They'd say now raise your knee, now kick your foot, we do things like that. They had in the back of the Alzheimer's ward, they had a rectangular sidewalk, and I could go out there and walk with my walker around that sidewalk and I got up to the point where I could go around about 16 times. That helped my health, my physical condition, and my attitude, and it was just sticking with it and keep doing it. With people around you that are encouraging you to do so. So, my advice to anyone who knows someone who's not up to par, maybe they're doing strange things, maybe they're saying strange things but try and support them. I'm hoping that people are getting to a point where they're not thinking of old people because too many are still thinking 'oh you're an old person we have to do this for you we have to make decisions for you' that's not what they need. They need to learn to make their own decisions, like coming to Seattle. My daughter looked at me like 'you're going to what!' but here I am and I'm having a blast and I'm learning and I'm meeting great people and it all comes from inside. You have to have a feeling that this is me and what's past is past and what's in the future is what I make it and that's what I'm trying to do.

**Jonathan:** Jean is beautiful. So just without focusing too much on the past but just to give an encapsulation of what you just said I'm going to say some things but I'm hoping you can kind of parrot them back to me if I'm understanding this correctly. Within the past two years you were in the Alzheimer's award of a nursing home.

**Jean:** Mmhmm

**Jonathan:** And you were proud, and this is not a criticism, you were proud if you were able to walk with a walker? Sixteen laps around.

**Jean:** That's right.

**Jonathan:** Today you woke up at what time and flew across the country by yourself, I mean like this is crazy!

**Jean:** Pacific time which is what we're on now I got up at 12:30 last night.

**Jonathan:** So, you got up at 12:30 a.m. this morning

**Jean:** I had a six o'clock flight in St. Louis which was 4:00 here so I was at the airport by 4:00 there which is 2:00 here.

**Jonathan:** Did you have anyone with you at the airport?

**Jean:** I called Lyft and they came to pick me up and take me to the airport. They asked me if then if I wanted a wheelchair. Thank You Jonathan for making that available, and I said how far is it and she said, "Oh couple of blocks" and I said you know what, I've got plenty of time because I'm here early I'm going to walk it and I did. But by the time I got to Seattle and they said are you Jean Simmons? Do you want this wheelchair I said yes!

**Jonathan:** Tell me a little bit about if you think about the Jean Simmons who felt like she was losing her mind in the home, what do you like most about the Jean Simmons who's sitting here today?

**Jean:** She's happy, she's living her life the way she wants to live it, she's trying to involve other people with what she's interested in. I'm trying to get involved with things that other people are interested in. I'm just trying to make the world a better place, particularly the United States.

**Jonathan:** Have you found that this higher quality way of eating has led to higher quality in other areas of your life?

**Jean:** Sure, it's made a whole new person out of me almost. I mean, the basics are still there, I'm still Jean and I still feel the same thing way about things, but I have a much better attitude and I have much more exercise, I mean much more energy and, that's the 2:00am speaking, and it's just made all the difference. I look better, I feel better because I look better, and I feel better because I'm healthier and that's important to me these days. I would you know, I would really rather just go off in a world and keel over than have to put somebody in the position of having to care for me.

**Jonathan:** Do you mind if ask what's your late husband's name?

**Jean:** Jerry.

**Jonathan:** What do you think Jerry would say if he met you today?

**Jean:** He'd love me. He loved me for 62 years, he'd still love me.

**Jonathan:** Would he notice a difference?

**Jean:** Yes, he would, and he would be very, very pleased. Oh, we had our problems through the years, but you don't live with somebody for 62 years without having a few problems, but we always met them together and went on and we had some good times.

**Jonathan:** So, let's say Jean that you're talking to someone who's not sure about making these kinds of changes for whatever reason.

**Jean:** I talked to people about that very frequently.

**Jonathan:** What do you say?

**Jean:** I try and impress them with the fact that it's not as hard as it sounds and with the SANE program you're doing things with support and you're doing things slowly at your own pace and it just gets easier and easier. Yes, some days you'll fall, but then if you get back up and just keep going like I said now, I'm going to learn to make bread.

**Jonathan:** Jean I know we already talked about this briefly but there's an irony in the fact that you said you fall and you get back up because today...

**Jean:** I fell.

**Jonathan:** You literally fell.

**Jean:** And that's the first fall I've had in quite some time.

**Jonathan:** And...just, the folks can't see me on camera, but you fell...you fell on hardwood on top of concrete.

**Jean:** mmhmm

**Jonathan:** There was no give and you fell from two steps flat on your face. What happened after you fell?

**Jean:** I started trying to get up.

**Jonathan:** Yup, and you started laughing.

**Jean:** I started laughing and everyone panicked. I may have a few bruises and be a little sore tomorrow morning but not the first time.

**Jonathan:** Do you see the world differently now?

**Jean:** Yes now with more hope and that's hard to say in today's world but I think my faith in God is stronger I know that he's there I've always known that he was there because he's seen me through a lot through the years but I just feel a closeness to him now and this is part of my improved attitude as well as my health and I feel like he has a purpose for me. I don't know what it is, may never know what it is, but I'm trying to follow his guidance and make a better person of myself and at the same time trying to help other people if I can do that I will be satisfied with my life.

**Jonathan:** Jean that really it resonates with me because I was raised in a very very very Catholic household and one of the things that stuck with me was that your body's a temple of the Holy Spirit and I've always, I personally have dedicated my life to trying to help people to see that their bodies, like we are so beautifully made but we don't act like we are sometimes why do you think that is?

**Jean:** I don't know. Our bodies we all know are not perfect but we all need a desire to work towards perfection as much as we can. I'll never be perfect and when the good Lord is through with me he'll take me, and I will celebrate so don't ever be sad if I die. I've had a good life. I never ever expected to live to 80. Jerry and I, well we got married when I was 16 and he was 18, so we used to oh good heavens wouldn't it be wonderful if we could live to the year of 2000 which we did. But yeah, it's been a good life.

**Jonathan:** That's beautiful. How has this new lifestyle the SANE way of living, this high-quality way of living, changed your relationships with your loved ones?

**Jean:** Well, they look a little upset with me when I tell them to stop eating all those sweets, don't drink that diet soda, it's not good for you, but I'm not trying to push them either I'm trying to encourage them to make the changes on their own and they're

beginning just a little bit to listen. So, the oldest one has given up sodas but he's still drinking drinks with sugar in them so I'm working on that.

**Jonathan:** Progress not perfection.

**Jean:** mmhmm

**Jonathan:** What being on this earth for 80 glorious years and 20, 30, 40 more.

**Jean:** Let's not get carried away!

**Jonathan:** What maybe what was what was different this time that enabled you to experience what you're experiencing now because I'm sure this isn't the first lifestyle change.

**Jean:** My attitude is what made the difference and it was something that I had to do myself. I had to change my attitude. I had to think if other people are doing this, I can do this too and if it's heading me in the way that I want to go that's what I'm going to do. I don't always think everybody agrees with me and some of them look like 'lady you're crazy' but some of them are listening.

**Jonathan:** I think I think who you are will speak louder than anything you could say because you're your example is pretty high.

**Jean:** I hope so, I hope so.

**Jonathan:** So, what are you generally eating for breakfast?

**Jean:** For breakfast, oh I have a tendency to go in the kitchen and scramble myself a couple of eggs and in those eggs I scrambled in a little cheese and I love to scramble in some diced green chili and bell pepper all three, all colors anything that's sitting in the refrigerator that needs to be used it's apt to end up in Jeans eggs. So, we don't have as many leftovers these days because I go in the refrigerator and I look around and if it's there and nobody else is eating it I don't want it to spoil and so I eat it as long as it's healthy. But frequently there'll be some roast beef leftover or some meatloaf or something and we're compromising on some of these things in the way we cook them. A lot of times when they're going to have something that involves pasta I'll have them go ahead and make the sauce for it you know, I take a little bit of the sauce out and put it on my plate and then I finish it with what I want on the pasta and then I mix it all up and

eat it and it's great, and they have their pasta and they're happy. But they're beginning to watch me a little closer and realize that this may be something.

**Jonathan:** So, when they're eating pasta and you take the sauce what do you do with the sauce?

**Jean:** Oh, I'm making my own meal with it. I take a little bit of the hamburger if it's good meat and particularly and mix things in with it avocado, boiled egg...just whatever we happen to have in the refrigerator, I can come up with some real concoctions but by golly they taste good.

**Jean:** That's beautiful so and that is that kind of the same approach you take for lunch or what do you generally eat for lunch?

**Jonathan:** For lunch have a SANE bar, I like all of them but the most satisfying and the one that will curb my hunger the best is the cashew one. I have a standing order at the SANE store for your bars and will you please quit letting them go on backorder?

**Jonathan:** That's the real reason she flew out here is "keep them in stock"! So that's lunch what about dinner?

**Jean:** Dinner I kind of work around whatever the family's eating and like I said that's when I do things my way and let them do things their way and sometimes they'll share with me and once in a while I'll share with them, but it depends on what they're having and what they're doing.

**Jonathan:** It sounds like then it's been your experience that you are able to take what the family is eating and SANE-itize it.

**Jean:** I don't have to make it totally separate that's right.

**Jonathan:** Talk about that.

**Jean:** Oh, that's right well I am taking it totally separate actually I'm just not taking all of their ingredients I'm adding my own, so you take like and my own spices and all of us like seem to like the same spices pretty much so that's not a problem.

**Jonathan:** Do you ever get kind of cravings for salty or crunchy or sweets and what do you do in those cases?



**Jean:** Eat a SANE bar or a peanut butter bar snack. Yeah or the crispies, now I've tried putting a little seasoning on some of the Krispies and then and then making them puff up and yeah, I so I'm experimenting with that a little bit at this point.

**Jonathan:** Did they give you a gift bag at the hotel?

**Jean:** Oh yes, I've already some, they have a microwave in there also.

**Jonathan:** What do you what do you do for desserts?

**Jean:** Desserts are hard when you have three teenagers in the house because there's usually a pan of brownies sitting on the cabinet there's usually apple cobbler sitting around. Our 12-year-old, my 12-year-old granddaughter, loves to cook and she's getting very good at it and she's beginning to use almond flour and coconut flour and the seasonings that I use. She still you know does her own thing but she's leaning a little more and more towards the SANE.

**Jonathan:** And Jean, we don't like to talk a lot about weight, but it is uniquely challenging for females over the age of 70 to change their bodies substantially. Would you mind speaking briefly about the amount of time it took and the amount of weight you lost and how you felt during that experience?

**Jean:** Okay, when I left the home I weighed, well when I went into the home I weighed about 202 pounds. They were working with me at eating and I was down to about 190 something when I left. A month later I had gotten into the beginnings of SANE and I went in for the regular annual physical and the doctor said you're doing really well and I explained to her what I was doing she said you just keep it up, so this kind of encouragement is what it takes to keep people going when I got on her scale that day I weighed 186 and that was in September of 16 and I hit my goal. I set a goal weight that was what I have always felt best at and so when I hit my 140 pounds and went a little less than that that's when I started talking to you and Sue about the setpoint and what do I do when I've lost as much as I want to lose. And thanks to your help I managed it fine I have been in that weight goal or less since before last Christmas.

**Jonathan:** Have you ever felt hungry or deprived or like white knuckling it?

**Jean:** Oh yes oh yes oh yes.

**Jonathan:** You feel hungry and deprived?

**Jean:** Well when I feel hungry I go eat.

**Jonathan:** Oh, okay there we go. So, you have felt hungry?

**Jean:** Oh sure okay oh sure everybody gets hungry yeah but I have learned that if instead of going in and snacking I will go in and fix myself a hamburger or a steak or a pork chop or two eggs and some veggies to go with it, salad maybe it satisfies me and so I don't feel hungry anymore and I don't have the craving anymore and that's what your bars help me with is if I'm craving then it's the safest thing for me to do is I don't have to eat the whole thing I can go in need a half a one or a quarter of one but it just takes off that edge.

**Jonathan:** So, it sounds like you've had an experience where if you eat certain foods they will cause cravings if you eat other foods yeah, we'll take away that experience a little bit?

**Jean:** Sugar I think is that it's the biggest culprit there eating sugar just makes you want more sugar eating milk chocolate just makes you want to eat more milk chocolate and I have almost completely quit eating in each milk chocolate I'm eating the dark chocolate but it gets darker and darker and I'm cooking with it and it's working it's a slow process I keep saying that it is but it's what I want so and when I pass that pan of brownies I might take a crumb and eat it you think oh no what have I done a little crumb brownies never hurt, I'm human.

**Jonathan:** How do you how do you save time during this, because I'm sure maybe you talk to people they're like oh it takes too much time to cook or to be healthy.

**Jean:** Oh, I thought that for years yes but since I've started inventing my own meals I enjoy it. I don't just take the time and I maybe I don't get all the floor swept that day or get the dishwasher and loaded that morning, but I take the time to fix myself something that I know will fill me. It does give me energy, there's no doubt about that. I had reached a point where I didn't want to get up in the morning and now I can't hardly stay asleep.

**Jonathan:** So, what surprised you the most about this journey and about where you are now?

**Jean:** The fact that I was asked to come!

**Jonathan:** What surprised you second most.

**Jean:** The joy I'm feeling in meeting people the people that I've been talking to and corresponding with through the months talking to people that understand what I'm saying because a lot of friends don't it's a good feeling.

**Jonathan:** Did the concept of the set point change the way you see yourself in your body?

**Jean:** Yeah, I think so because I know that if I start gaining weight again my setpoint is off or at least I feel it is and that it's time for me to crack down and get with it and so I don't let that happen much.

**Jonathan:** If someone were to ask you Jean, what's your secret what's your secret? What's your secret, I mean you're 80 years old you flew across the country you've been awake for almost 24 hours and you're on camera what's your secret?

**Jean:** Perseverance. I'm enjoying myself as long as I'm enjoying myself you know when I get back to the hotel I may crash and burn. I may not be ready to get up in the morning when it's time, but you know, it's been a good day.

**Jonathan:** How have your have your tastes changed during this journey, your taste buds.

**Jean:** Taste buds, quite a bit. That also is gradual because when you start trying to eat properly and you keep at it first thing you know you're really enjoying what you're eating and you don't really care to have what you used to have it's just a I don't know what it's psychological or whether it's just the body adapting to what you're doing.

**Jonathan:** Just talk about, because even when we were sitting at the dinner table you talked about how vegetables, chocolate. How have your tastes changed?

**Jean:** They had I didn't eat vegetables, or very few, and now I'm eating quite a bit of vegetables. I go to make the things I want on the grocery list and it's almost all vegetables and fruit at this point. Where before it was all good easy and chunky things.

**Jonathan:** Like what happened with your taste?

**Jean:** Yeah it did to begin...now I just accept it and think hey I've made it again yeah.

**Jonathan:** When do you stop eating?

**Jean:** When I'm full.

**Jonathan:** Is that different than what you did in the past?

**Jean:** Yeah because I was eating different things and yes, I did get full, but I still had that desire for something else usually ice cream or cake or yes but now it's not quite as hard to just get up and leave the table I'm full I don't need any more.

**Jonathan:** When you go to restaurants what do you order what do you what do you get at restaurants?

**Jean:** Well I look at the restaurants the menus very closely and I try and pick out things that I know are good for me I like to if I can get asparagus or if I can get broccoli in place of a potato, I do or roll or whatever I love to go out and have a steak because steaks always been one of my favorite things to eat and it'll fill you and it's very enjoyable.