

Michael Wilson

Michael: Michael Wilson I am 49 soon to be 50 in about two weeks, and I live in Charlotte, North Carolina.

Jonathan: Michael what has your journey been when it comes to health and wellness has it been like a straight line has it been like up and down what's it been like?

Michael: You know it's, I've never really been conscious of it, so I guess it would be more of the straight line. I never really worried too much, like in high school, I did but it wasn't something that I was really conscious of I never thought of it one way or the other you know? My biggest memory of watching declining health is watching the process that my father went through when he, you know he passed away when I was 22, but I watched his journey which would make you think that I would probably be a little bit more conscious of it but I never really...I never really was an avid you know health watcher. I was always too busy, very independent, just always moving on to the next thing and that wasn't one of them.

Jonathan: So, what then led you literally here today?

Michael: Yeah so, I was in the military for 27 years, so you know, just by nature I would do the things I needed to do to make sure that I could take care of the patients that we were actually responsible for. So, in the military I was a medical provider and then I was a medical administrator so, you know, my job was to make sure that people that were in situations that were out of their control, to make sure they got the care that they actually needed. Being in the military I had to stay fit to make sure that I could mentally and physically maintain through deployments because ever since my stint in the military I was on a number of deployments supporting patients and in all of that. So, from that sense I probably you know was more conscious of it, but it was more of a habit I think I just did it because I needed to do it. I'm near the end of my military career when I was thinking about retiring from the reserves, that's when I started noticing just more weight and less energy and the shame of that kicks in pretty quickly, you know. I always had a real strong sense of pride in doing a good job and I never really thought of it, but I did become very, very conscious of just putting on the weight and not being able to just kind

of cut back and control it. That happened right around my mid-40's, you know, within the last five years is where I really started noticing it.

Jonathan: You mentioned starting in your mid-40s when you left the military so even less of a forced environment, pounds started to creep on, but more importantly this sense of shame kick in. What was the relationship between the shame you felt and your weight?

Michael: In my mind there was a certain image of being a leader in the military that once I started getting to the end of it, I just didn't feel like I was meeting that image. Whether it's vain, or whatever...it wasn't vanity...I just didn't feel like I could maintain the level of respect that I had from people which was totally not true, it really wasn't true that people respected me, it was just something mentally that I was going through. I was just very conscious of it I didn't like the age that it was kind of putting on me and that's the truth. It wasn't because I felt horribly bad, not yet, but I had...I was scared that I was going to turn and get to the point where I couldn't get back. You can always get back, but that's where my mind was at the time.

Jonathan: So, you would mention the concept and the emotion of shame. Did you find the shame to be motivating, demotivating that it didn't move you in the right direction, that it moved in the wrong direction?

Michael: I would say shame, because you can dwell on it. You know, instead of doing something about it, it just probably...I was probably at a point where I was kind of down and just not motivated to do anything. You know, I was having a hard time passing the basic physical fitness test that you had to do every year, so that was kind of adding to the shame. I do believe you know, it wasn't because I couldn't do it, that I didn't have the physical capacity to do it, I think mentally in the shame was kind of keeping me from just like 'its 27 years it's time' which is not my nature but I do attribute you know getting to that point...it was very conscious in my mind anyway.

Jonathan: What caused the transition from feeling this sense of shame feeling like maybe you've lost control of your own body to regaining?

Michael: It didn't, it you know, really you know I didn't get that motivation to do something about it and really relearn that it's as basic as the way that I was eating,

right? You know you just had to relearn? You get in the habit of doing certain things like the potato chip bags you know it's not like I sat in front of the TV and did it, but I had these habits that were contributing to it. You know and in Brian's journey to, you know Brian's journey, Brian was at a point where he knew he needed to do the pain with his back and in the weight that he was carrying was a motivating factor and that was probably one of the big motivating factors to make sure that we did what we needed to do for him to control that way to try it because we didn't want to you know self medicate we didn't want to do narcotics we didn't want to do surgery but we had advisement that taking the weight off it would him but help so doing it together really really helped and we just rediscovered just the cleaner way of eating the way that we should have been eating the whole time the way that we should have been taught from since we were children on how to eat.

Jonathan: What was the most surprising about this this high-quality way of eating? What surprised you the most when you started doing it?

Michael: For me you know I was probably 40 pounds heavier than where I knew I wanted to be or where I know that I really felt good. The most surprising thing for me, and I don't want anybody to take away that it's going to be instantaneous for everybody because it's a long journey right I mean it takes time nothing's instantaneous, but I was encouraged at just modifying and going back to the way that you should be eating how the weight came off. I could see it in my face pretty quick you know, what I wasn't was a scale watcher. I, you know, paid attention to it but it was the transformation...and I'm careful about using that word, but that's what surprised me the most. I was like, this is what I should have been doing from the very beginning. Instead of just doing what was easy, and at the time normal. This is normal...that was not normal.

Jonathan: What do you think, because it sounds like when you were in the military you your weight wasn't an issue, health was an issue because you were kind of forced to do certain things. What do you think this way of eating is actually doing in your body versus what you were doing before?

Michael: You know your body is processing the foods that it was created to metabolize. I mean, that's just right. I mean I don't know how the other way to do it so what your body's naturally doing with the whole foods and the non-processed foods that

were produced for convenience or whatever reason you go back and look at the history that's what I think it's doing in my body. You can see it, I mean you know? You can see that whatever you had stored as fat before from all the processed foods it wasn't like I was this you know just huge consumer of food but what I was eating was distributing just the way that your body's going to. I don't need all of that you know, that's what my body was saying, and I was ignoring.

Jonathan: Well it's really interesting to you because we get a lot of messages in our modern culture that we are bad or broken like you need to wear perfume or deodorant because your stinky and smelly and you're going to be fat and lazy and stupid and diseased if you don't intervene. But it sounds like what you experienced was that when you eat high quality foods this sort of high quality life and body just emerges.

Michael: Yeah, all the aesthetics outside you know, making yourself smell pretty, making your face look nice you had all those things that people can see you know, we'll try to remedy, and the way that that we eat is such a simple solution. That's the one thing that you want people to understand is you know I didn't go into it after you know trying 15, 17 or 18 other diets, that wasn't my journey you know. I didn't try all the different diets and torture myself I just I didn't feel like I needed to, but you were asking what's the most surprising thing once we did go back to eating the way that we should have been taught to eat? How fast it came with minimal exercise. Exercise is very, very important, I don't want it to come across as it's not, but your body will react to just naturally it's the truth

Jonathan: Can you give me an idea...take me through a typical day. Breakfast, lunch, dinner, snacks, desserts what do you do?

Michael: Yeah. You know this is pretty standard, you know. In the morning we do a lot of shakes. We do, you know, a lot of shakes with maybe a little bit of protein powder in it you know and that gets me sustained through the morning. Snacks, I eat a lot of nuts and I like to flavor them up with some of the spices that I like, a little Chipotle powder on them. I like to make it taste good you know, but they're all unsalted I just flavor. But I eat those maybe with some sliced turkey and I will do a little bit of fruit you know that's common you know for a snack it's not like I have to have something hot because the days of the Costco taquitos, which I'm embarrassed to say, are gone that

was a favorite go to for a while and don't miss it at all, don't miss it at all. "Linner" we use this term we use this term "Linner" and Bryan and I both love to cook so whether that's I'm blessed with that or whatever. I've always enjoyed cooking and you know we like to cook in batches and save portions for later. It's a very easy way to save time but we cook things that we like to taste good and we'll eat around three o'clock in the afternoon, a pretty healthy portion, and then you know we're not eating...and this works for us...you know we're not eating into 8 or 9 o'clock at night. I don't have a huge sweet tooth, Brian's got more of a sweet tooth, but around the 6 o'clock hour we might have something that's sweet that we make its very simple chocolate you know that type of thing.

Jonathan: You mentioned a lot of times people think I don't I don't have time for that I don't have times eat healthfully I don't have time to eat high quality foods and you mentioned the concept of cooking in batches. Can you talk about that and its relationship to time?

Michael: I'm from the South you know you can't you can't grow up without loving a good casserole so we will take and make casseroles you know, instead of pasta we'll call it lasagna it's if it's just a vegetable casserole basically but we'll you know we will make a big batch of zucchini or whatever, eggplant....things that that are traditionally in lasagnas anyway without all the noodles and we'll make big batches of those will eat one portion a healthy portion you know enough to fill you up. It doesn't take as much to fill me up as it used to that's that you guys what was surprising the amount that I have to eat before I feel satiated or I feel satisfied it's a very specific point and you just naturally don't want to go any further I don't care how taste how good it tastes but um we'll do big batches freeze them up put them in and then we we'd love to eat together as much as we can. I work from home when I'm not traveling so we have the opportunity to do that. You just pull that out of the oven I mean I'll heat it up might make a salad, we did lots of salads, make your own salad dressing with a non-flavored oil that's another thing that surprised me is how much some of those canola's and the oils flavor the dressing when you use he's non flavor like grapeseed which is very good for you and makes some of the best dressing, I coat my peanuts with it if I have to.

Jonathan: You mentioned if chocolate some and I you mentioned just a love of food there's actually been studies done that if you serve someone something and you serve

them the exact same thing and you say for example that this is a healthy cookie and this is a cookie the one that you described is healthy people will universally say tests taste worse it hasn't been your experience that eating high quality food, or it deprives you, or limits your tastes experiences?

Michael: No, no, and for me how poignantly sweet some of the good tasting sweets were and you know be able to control the amount of sweetness or sugar with them I don't miss it, I have not missed I can honestly say that. Brian says the same thing, so you know if you gave me two cookies for my experience I am very conscious of when, you know, we do make desserts like that, if we take the time to do it right I really can't tell the difference I mean that's the truth.

Jonathan: So, there's certainly people out there who are like very concerned about their health they're on a health journey a wellness journey but on 15 different things that hasn't been your experience. What would you say to people who are they haven't been like thinking about their health and their wellness their whole life, but they hit the 40, 45, 50, 55 and they haven't really been thinking about their health. What would you say to those people?

Michael: Stop, stop ignoring what you innately know. We may not have been taught these things but it's pretty basic science, we all get taught these basic concepts in school if we can remember, we may not pay attention, but stop doing the habitual. Because it's a habit, I do believe it's a habit that we've gotten into and you just got to change that habit. Do things that are just healthier for you is what I would tell don't care if you're you know this avid health you know seeker that's tried you know countless things to find the right mix you know just study a little bit. I mean you do have to read, there's plenty of books out there whether it's Keto whether it's some of these other books you know. If you look at some of them and they say it's modern science I think we knew this we knew some of the science before it's been with us I mean it's you look at in the 50s right or in the forties, 30s what the average male weight was. What it is now and now you might look at it, at us, and think I might add you're too skinny now. I feel good you know, I feel good. This is where my body's telling me I need to be and it's not like I knew what that setpoint was going to be, but just modify the way that you're eating is what I would say to people, I mean because it does work.

Jonathan: Are you surprised by how you feel as you turn 50?

Michael: I'm happy with the way that I feel because it's the way that I envision myself to feel at this point. I didn't envision you know, my grandfather I always thought my grandfather looked 50, I thought he was 50 forever right, I don't know how old he was when I thought that. But I looked at my grandfather, that's like, I don't picture myself that way as I got to my mid-40s, as I oh Lord I'm not going to realize what I envisioned 50 to be. So, I'm not surprised because that was the mental picture you know I you know. I didn't want to be, you know, this 200 pound five-foot-eight person, I just didn't. I just didn't want to do it. So, you know I'm happy, but I don't think surprised is the word. I mean does that make sense?

Jonathan: Oh, absolutely it's sounds like this, I mean, you had a vision in your mind of the quality of life you want to experience, you had veered off that path for a while but then you were able to get back on it and of course you're happy. You were surprised that

Michael: I just wish I had done it you know I just wished...whatever the reason was that you didn't. I didn't feel like I was struggling with it. I mean I could have done this a long time ago. I just wish I would have done it a long time ago, so it was a habit way before I discovered it

Jonathan: Do you see the world differently now?

Michael: I do see the world differently, so much more appreciative because I've always loved food, I've always loved to eat. I just, it's one of the things that I just love doing, I love to cook, and I felt that was going to get taken away because I was comfortable with the way that I cooked, I had my go to's you know? I just enjoyed doing it, I don't miss it at all you know. So, do I see the world differently? Like this has changed everything about my life. It's made things a lot better and a lot more comfortable and don't carry around that shame so, that has changed for me. But my passion for cooking, I don't want it to be my job, right? I don't want it to be my job but the passion I have for it was not taken away. I'm much more creative now.

Jonathan: So, it sounds like actually that pursuit of high quality food did not detract from your experience with food, but it added.

Michael: We use the term clean eating, right? People may not know, what do you mean by clean eating. It's just eating the whole foods but the way that you cook now is so much, it's less time consuming, it really is you know. To people that say that it takes a lot of time you know to do it really it doesn't. I can cook something in 30 minutes where you know I would have spent 45 minutes prep time for the same thing because I wanted to bread it and I wanted to fry it, I wanted to because that's where I thought the taste came from. So, so not true. I think I'm cooking the way that they probably teach you to in cooking school where you just keep it simple.

Jonathan: Has eating in this high-quality way changed the quality of the emotional intimacy in your life?

Michael: Yes, it has. Brian and I spend a lot of time together and we don't miss an opportunity to cook together so when we went on this journey together it changed, it's one of the most intimate things that you can do. We both enjoy it so yes, I do, that's where we spend most of our time is in the kitchen. Cooking together and then plating it up and then sit down we have our little ritual and you know it's very special, it's true. So yes, I think it did.

Jonathan: That's beautiful, and I love this kind of conversation because so much we talk about our relationships with other humans, we all talk about our relationship with food, and having those high-quality relationships in all areas of life. It does seem like a virtuous circle because it's a little bit hard to have like a deep meaningful conversation around like low quality garbage chips and you know nonsense stuff. I just I love that. So, do you do you feel like your dreams and aspirations for the future are different now?

Michael: Oh yeah, I do I think that, you know, everything that I envision going into you know 50 and 60, the travel that I want to do, I was real conscious about not being able to enjoy that because I felt that I was going to be deprived. I've often felt like when you travel you don't experience where you're going to experience the food in the way it's prepared in these it's always it's a big thing you know if I could go on these food tours and cook in everybody's kitchen I would love that because that's just how I feel, like I learned cultures you know, through food and the way that people share food and I thought that adopting...I don't want to say adopted, just eating this way you're going to deprive yourself of some of those things you don't because a lot of them are cooking

that way anyway I mean you know so does that answer the question of you know my dreams and aspirations? I mean it's going to make what was envisioned in my head much more possible, you know, because I'm not carrying around that shame that I had before. I know I said that a lot, but for me that was a big deal.

Jonathan: Has eating in this way limited you or restricted you in any way?

Michael: Not at all, not at all. In fact, it's opened me up to being more creative you know? I'm not a trained chef, I mean everything was kind of self taught and just watching and exploring that, it's just me by nature. I didn't realize how set in my go to ways that I was, you know? It's like I learned to cook five or six things really well that just were crap, I mean they tasted good, but they just were they just weren't quality much more quality. I don't make the same thing twice. I'm always exploring with something different so that in itself just kind of opens up that truth. I mean it's a great question thank you for asking it but it's true.

Jonathan: That's beautiful. It almost seems like there's a sense of accomplishment that you feel by experiencing this and living this way. Is that, is that what I'm sensing? There's like a sense of pride or accomplishment or empowerment.

Michael: It was you know. I mentioned feeling shame and just not feeling generally good about myself because I was disappointed in myself and changing in eating in this way gave me an accomplishment that I just was ignoring for a long time. I mean I really didn't go into it and set 'this is where I want to be, this is what I want to do' it just kind of happen naturally for me you know. Brian was a little bit more regimented with it so I kind of went on for the ride but when I saw what was happening then I started getting more goal oriented with it to where you get this little sense of confidence so yeah, of course I do feel a huge sense of accomplishment. It's habitual and it's been maintained so yeah.

Jonathan: You mentioned the concept of setpoint. Can you talk a little bit about what the setpoint is?

Michael: Okay so the concept of the set point to me, the set point is where your body kind of strives to go back to or stay, the healthy way. That to me is a set point and I knew where I felt my best in the past right, but my body was fighting and I guess

readjusting what a set point was based on, what I was eating you know, so it was really encouraging for me to start eating whole foods, eating the way that that your body is telling you you're supposed to eat. My body just kind of got to where it is now and it's...I don't have to do anything, I'm not trying, it's not like I have to fast for seven days to stay at this point.

Jonathan: What has been your experience of the relationship between the quality of food and your set point, so like quality goes up, set point goes where, quality goes down, setpoint goes down?

Michael: Yeah quality to me quality goes up setpoint goes down. To me because it's easier to maintain what that set point is. The junkier your set point goes your weight just goes up is what I think you're asking. So, you know, the more processed the food is, the more that your body has to store. Wherever it stores it, like for me it's right here you know and so the I think there's a correlation between the quality in your setpoint going higher.

Jonathan: Do people try to tell you that you're just fooling yourself about any aspect of this?

Michael: Well I've not personally had anybody say that to me that 'you're fooling yourself'. You know, you can't argue with the science though I mean whether we call it modern science, whatever, it's not modern science it's how the bodies are designed you know, unless you've got something health related that's causing your metabolism, there's conditions like that. So, no, I've not had anybody tell me that I'm fooling myself. They're skeptical 'it will never work for me' you know 'I could never be on that diet'. I feel compelled to tell people well you know the way you eat is a diet you know? That's what the term diet is. But it's not a diet, it's not something that...it's a way of living, it's a way of life. It's just the way that we eat, and you can make those choices, to feed your body what you need to feed it. I don't care if that sounds cruel, I don't...want to come across this, whatever people think you are I've never had anybody say that to me, but I have people say 'no that's not going to work, I can't do this I have kids, I can't do it because I have kids'. I'm like, that's the best time to do it so they get started off right it's the best thing you can do for them.

Jonathan: Do you think any of the following is an oversimplification, and if it's not an oversimplification say it. High quality food causes a high-quality life.

Michael: It is not an oversimplification you know because when I was eating and getting to the point that my quality of life personally was deteriorated I just was conscious all the time, that I was not where I wanted to be. The shame that manifests in different kind of ways for different kinds of people. There're all kinds of things that it can manifest into, but you know, feeling good about yourself is a component of being healthy you know? There's going to be other parameters that might cause the mental, you've got to balance it all out, but it's not an oversimplification. To think that eating the way that you're supposed to eat whether you call it high quality, it's just what you should be eating, does increase your quality of life.