

**Glenn Livingston, Ph.D.
and Steph Lowe
The Natural Nutritionist**

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Dr. Glenn: Hey! It's the very good Dr. Glenn Livingston at NeverBingeAgain.com and I'm here with a very interesting story for you from Steph Lowe from TheNaturalNutritionist.com.au. Stephanie, how are you today?

Steph: Very well, thank you, Glenn. Thanks for having me on the show.

Dr. Glenn: Oh, thanks for coming on. I was looking forward to this. I always forget if you're more comfortable with Steph or Stephanie.

Steph: Steph is absolutely fine. I think only my mom calls me Stephanie.

Dr. Glenn: Okay. I know at the moment you're doing all sorts of things and essentially it boils down to natural nutritional consulting very much targeted at athletes. Am I correct about that or do you work with other types of people too?

Steph: Yeah, so a great question. We work with a lot of athletes and I'm sure we'll dive into the approach that we take, but absolutely not just athletes. We're all about real food and we strongly believe that that's absolutely where health starts. We love to help a variety of people that



have the goal to look after their selves, look after their health with that foundation of just eat real food or JERF, as you'll hear me say a lot.

Dr. Glenn: Yeah. You know, the reason that's kind of important for my audience is because I work with a lot of people who are maybe 20 pounds overweight and trying to do a triathlon, but I work with many more people who are like 100 to 200 pounds overweight and would be happy to walk around the block. And so when I find someone who's at the pinnacle of health and performance, I always want to help them understand there are a lot of people out there that are really suffering and slipped pretty far down the rabbit hole. And so if we can figure out how to help them, reach out a hand and help pull them up also then that'd be terrific as the interview goes along.

Steph: Yeah, absolutely.

Dr. Glenn: Okay. So you're basically a real foods, whole foods nutritionist who works with a variety of people. You're a triathlete yourself?

Steph: Yeah. It's been a number of years since I raced, but I have many years of track under my belt.

Dr. Glenn: I'll give you credit if you did it once. Tell me how did this all evolve. Take me back to your adolescence or early adulthood and how did you get involved with sports, how did you get involved with nutrition, why is it important to you. Could you tell me the story?

Steph: Yeah, absolutely. It's a big one. It's a big story.

Dr. Glenn: I've got time.



Steph: Cool! In terms of where it starts, I guess personally I have quite significant memories of being 12 or 13 years of age and starting high school, and for me, that unfortunately wasn't a very fun or happy time of my life. When I look back on that age, I see myself as being quite the fat kid unfortunately. And when you go to high school and you're surrounded by other people that are thin and popular and pretty and fit, it's very easy to fall into this comparison trap.

I very much did that and I felt quite different and isolated and it really was a really unhappy time because in high school, you're judged on fitness in physical education class. And for me, I wasn't fit and I couldn't keep up with the other students. The memories aren't very happy and unfortunately, it led to quite an unhealthy obsession.

Dr. Glenn: Can I ask you a question? And I understand why it would lead to an obsession. So it sounds like it was more that you were critiquing yourself than the other kids were cruel, or was there some of both?

Steph: No, I don't remember any bullying or anyone being cruel per se, but yeah, I guess a lot of it was the stories I was telling myself as usual.

Dr. Glenn: Well, that's okay. I just think that's important for people to understand because a lot of us develop those patterns and it doesn't necessarily come from bullying or fat-shaming, just the self-comparison. So that led you to have an obsession with food?

Steph: Absolutely. I guess what I thought started as being healthy, I dived into researching more about health and how to lose weight, it very quickly spiraled to be constant calorie counting, hours at the gym after school of an afternoon, and the story that I had told myself was that if I could achieve thin or thinness that I would be happy. We know now that it's



this condition of orthorexia, which is that extreme healthy eating. This word didn't exist when I was 12 or 13, which is over 20 years ago, but I was definitely the epitome of orthorexia, taking it far too far.

Dr. Glenn: Because if you can achieve perfection then you'll finally reach nirvana and all of the unhappiness in your life will disappear.

Steph: Yeah, or apparently not.

Dr. Glenn: Yeah, or apparently not, sure. So then what happened?

Steph: So I was in this spiral of self-loathing. I did have a lot of mood challenges in terms of that overwhelming sadness and what could've been diagnosed as depression. I got to a weight of 49 kg. I'm 168 cm tall, so I was very thin. I lost my menstrual cycle, but I had this epiphany that I wasn't happy. I got to this nirvana, as you say, but nothing had changed in terms of my mood or how I felt about myself or how I was treating myself, so that was actually quite fascinating to learn firsthand because I've been striving for this goal. I've read every book on happiness. I've seen psychologists and life coaches. I've tried cognitive behavioral therapy. I've really explored how to resolve that happiness. I thought the answer was in the number on the scales, but lo and behold, it wasn't.

Dr. Glenn: Where was the answer for you?

Steph: For me, to be honest, it was finding my purpose in life. It might sound a little bit weird to some people, but I can now see the lessons I've learned through that personal journey absolutely planted the seed for becoming a nutritionist because I was able to learn through my journey that food is absolutely the foundation of health, but it's obviously not



about the extremes. Happiness for me came from finding what I was able to turn into my life purpose, to teach others the same in terms of the foundation of real food, but a really balanced approach that you're not that number on the scale but it is important to have that underlying health goal.

Dr. Glenn: You know, I tell a lot of my clients who struggle with negative feelings when they stop bingeing and particularly if they struggle with boredom that part of the motivation for the binge -- and I don't know if you remember, but we separate the brain into the upper and lower brain and we call the lower brain our food monster or sometimes things that are worse. Part of the food monster's motivation in bingeing is so that it can then criticize you and prevent you from finding your purpose. When you really do find your life purpose, it's much more interesting than binge food. It's like infinitely more interesting and you want to spend all of your time pursuing your purpose and helping other people in the way that you feel like you were called to help them.

So I don't think it sounds woo-woo at all. I don't necessarily think of it as much in the spiritual sense as in a very practical sense that people need a purpose like without a purpose, it's kind of hard to walk around the planet every day. And all of the processed and unhealthy foods and industrial advertising and everything that really corrupts our survival drive, what it's really doing is taking us away from that life purpose. So I'm very intrigued to hear you say that and I'm curious about at what point you decided -- like how did you find it and how did you decide that you needed to become a nutritionist.

Steph: Yeah, I'll definitely explain that part, but I just want to speak to your point. I talk to my clients about this a lot in terms of the reasons why you might be bingeing and a lot of the time, it is to fill a void, so you're



right. For me, the void that I was obviously trying to address with my food obsession absolutely existed before I had that purpose. So the story is quite interesting because back in 2005, I actually met a guy who's gone on to do a lot of healing and is very much in the health space, but this was decades ago. He and I got into discussions about the monkey mind and the sadness and the depression that I was experiencing and he literally just put this challenge to me to try going gluten-free, and I didn't even know what gluten was back then. It certainly wasn't as popular as it is now. There weren't no gluten-free options available back in 2005, but I guess I was pretty desperate.

I had a fairly good relationship with this guy and I trusted his advice. I set it as a personal challenge and found it very difficult and wished there was another way and wished that this wasn't what I had to do. I guess there were tantrums around the situation, but I suddenly realized that I was healing my relationship with food, so I was feeling happier. I wasn't needing to explore external help necessarily with psychologists or cognitive behavioral therapy anymore. It was coming from a foundation of what I see now as healing my gut by removing the inflammatory triggers and turning it into what we teach at The Natural Nutritionist in terms of whole foods as that foundation to health.

We know the link between the gut and the brain. Science is very clear on the impact of inflammation on mental health. So while at the time I thought it was quite isolated in terms of gluten-free, in hindsight I can see the foundations of how I was treating my mood challenges with the food changes I made and evolved into just eat real food. Does that make sense?

Dr. Glenn: It does. It really does and I think that -- gosh, the relationship between mood and cognition and anxiety and just that stable mental outlook on



life and nutrition is so underappreciated. You can give the example of sugar or flour, which gives you an 18-minute high followed by a crash for several hours, and people don't understand how dramatically that can destabilize your system especially as you get older.

We're rushing to put people on antidepressants or we'll put them into a five-year course of psychoanalysis, but what about just only gluten? What about just get some of these weight poisons out of your body, sugar, flour, salt, and see how your psychology stabilizes? It affects you because this stuff is becoming part of you. A lot of people think of the caloric input and say, "Well, I can afford that because I went for a run" or "I can afford that because I didn't eat that much this morning," but it's not just burning energy. This stuff becomes you and it becomes part of your thoughts. It becomes part of your mood. It becomes part of your feelings. I like the direction you're going because I don't think people pay enough attention to that, so tell me more. It sounds like letting go of gluten was a dramatic shift for you. What happened from there?

Steph: Yeah, it was an absolute catalyst. At the time, I was working as a Pilates instructor, so I was in the health space, but I certainly didn't have my nutrition qualifications at this point in time. But because it was night and day for me in terms of how I was feeling, I just knew that I had to share this with the world. I didn't want other people like you say to be put down the rabbit hole of conventional treatment without being educated on the importance of removing inflammatory foods, gut health, real food, and all the multifactorial way we shouldn't look at health.

So I went back to the university and did my postgraduate in Nutrition and that was my absolute true calling. So that in combination with the



dietary changes was how I completely overhauled my life. I was once I guess escaping in food and I had a period of time in my 20s where I was drinking and taking drugs and I just didn't need that anymore because I had found what was giving me purpose in life and that was a huge part of my health journey, as I've said.

I don't want to make it sound simple because it was certainly challenging to go back to a university as an adult and I had to obviously start to build up The Natural Nutritionist over time, but I think what I'm really good at is treating things as an evolution and I think that's really important when we look at health or we look at a career change or how someone is going to find their purpose. None of it happens overnight. It's really easy to look at someone and assume they're an overnight success when it's probably a 15-year overnight success.

Dr. Glenn: Right.

Steph: I had a role where I was lucky enough to be able to juggle study and building a business that I went from my paid role down to part-time that could then build up The Natural Nutritionist and it was a really gentle evolution to be able to step into running my company full-time like I do these days.

Dr. Glenn: How did you choose the university that you went to for the nutritional education? Did you have a particular philosophy you wanted to follow? How did you do that?

Steph: That's an interesting question because unfortunately a lot of the curriculum that we see in the tertiary education space is still very standard Australian, standard American or standard Western diet, so that was actually probably the most challenging part about the study,



was I did have to sit through some of that content in terms of what's in the food pyramid and big food. I can't say that I chose the course for the content per se. I actually knew that I wanted that qualification and then I'll be able to be a nutritionist and not be bound by the rules or the guidelines of the Dietetics Association that we have here in Australia. To be completely honest, for me it was more of that piece of paper on the wall and I've done so much more self-education and courses from there to practice holistically as I do.

Dr. Glenn: Because you really learn in the trenches. That's where you really figure it out. I certainly sat through some things in graduate school that I disagreed with wholeheartedly, so that's a very honest answer. I appreciate that.

Steph: I get asked that question almost every week though because people are coming to me and wanting to do what I do and they want to know what course I did or they want my advice around what courses to do. Obviously there's a lot more available than when I was studying in 2009. Again, I'm probably showing my age, but nearly a decade ago now, and things have changed hugely in the real food space even in the last three to five years, so there are far more options available. But I honestly think that we can probably get too caught up in that decision when ultimately, as you say, you learn in the trenches and you'll always continue to learn as a practitioner. Your clients challenge you to increase your knowledge in certain areas and I'm a big believer in never stop learning, as the quote goes.

Dr. Glenn: Yeah, life is learning. Could you tell me a little bit more about what you did learn in the trenches and how did it evolve your own thinking about your own eating and how did it evolve how you work with clients?

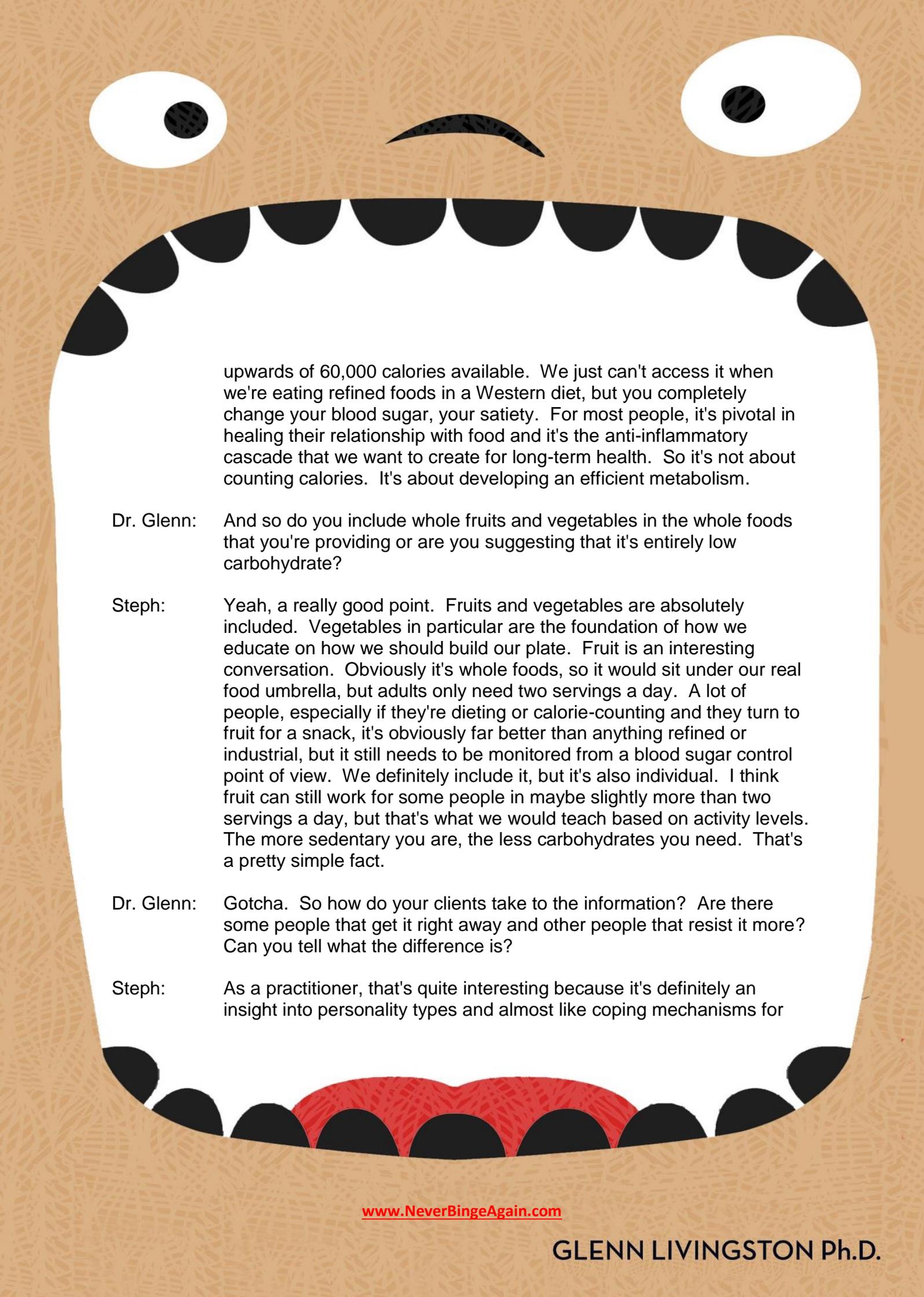


Steph:

Yeah, for sure, and this is a really great topic because my own personal experience was around calorie counting and I cut out basically all fat because back then we had deduced human physiology to that equation, eat less, move more, which is obviously hugely disapproved in the literature now, but it's taking a long time to undo the calorie fallacy because most of us, that's all we know. That's always been taught if we've gone to different dieticians and practitioners over the years and it's certainly where the health space was stuck for decades, but what we know is it's not about calories in, calories out because obviously broccoli has a different effect on human physiology as does refined sugar and refined flours and refined seed oils and all the inflammatory foods that we know have huge health ramifications.

So what we really set out to do at The Natural Nutritionist was dispel that calorie fallacy and what we teach our clients to do is to develop metabolic efficiency. The other term that is used to describe this in literature is metabolic flexibility and here's why. When you eat refined flour and refined sugars and you follow a Western diet that is upwards of 400 grams of carbohydrates a day, you burn sugar and that is all you can do. You have one fuel system to rely on. It's inefficient. Obviously, sugar is that inflammatory cascade and that blood sugar roller coaster that you live on perpetuates food choices, cravings. I'm a big believer that it's a part of the bingeing cycle. You're on that roller coaster and that vicious cycle continues, whereas when you change what goes on your plate and we can keep it as simple as real food, you develop the ability to also burn fat for fuel. That's what we call a jewel fuel system.

So you can still access glycogen in the muscle if you need to for things like high intensity exercise, but when you've got that ability to burn fat for fuel, it's extremely efficient because even the leanest individual has



upwards of 60,000 calories available. We just can't access it when we're eating refined foods in a Western diet, but you completely change your blood sugar, your satiety. For most people, it's pivotal in healing their relationship with food and it's the anti-inflammatory cascade that we want to create for long-term health. So it's not about counting calories. It's about developing an efficient metabolism.

Dr. Glenn: And so do you include whole fruits and vegetables in the whole foods that you're providing or are you suggesting that it's entirely low carbohydrate?

Steph: Yeah, a really good point. Fruits and vegetables are absolutely included. Vegetables in particular are the foundation of how we educate on how we should build our plate. Fruit is an interesting conversation. Obviously it's whole foods, so it would sit under our real food umbrella, but adults only need two servings a day. A lot of people, especially if they're dieting or calorie-counting and they turn to fruit for a snack, it's obviously far better than anything refined or industrial, but it still needs to be monitored from a blood sugar control point of view. We definitely include it, but it's also individual. I think fruit can still work for some people in maybe slightly more than two servings a day, but that's what we would teach based on activity levels. The more sedentary you are, the less carbohydrates you need. That's a pretty simple fact.

Dr. Glenn: Gotcha. So how do your clients take to the information? Are there some people that get it right away and other people that resist it more? Can you tell what the difference is?

Steph: As a practitioner, that's quite interesting because it's definitely an insight into personality types and almost like coping mechanisms for



some people as well. So we see, as I mentioned at the start, we see a wide range of people. In the athlete space and certainly with the real food movement that we've seen over the last three to five years, I definitely have clients that are very well educated that are already across real food. They might probably have started experimenting with lowering their carbohydrate intake, so they're really coming to see us for fine-tuning or to go through their labs because we do blood testing, or they might want to explore their gut health with me as a practitioner. That's one I guess type of client, but then there absolutely are people that come to us at the start of their journey and that usually involves more I guess barriers to break down.

As you probably know, bread is very addictive and people don't like to learn that perhaps it's not the best food choice when we're talking about general health especially when we've got a weight loss goal because we know bread is made of refined flour and refined sugar and it spikes the fat storage hormone insulin. I'm not saying that you can never have bread, but a lot of people are very attached to that food, or it might be pasta or some other addictive carbohydrate and there is definitely a resistance when it comes to those foods. So for me, it's just about meeting the client where they are. As I said, I don't believe that they have to cut it out completely although I think when we move closer to building our plate from food that comes off a tree, out of the ground or from an animal, our results are going to be far greater than if we're still including those refined foods, which again are addictive. They're a drug.

Dr. Glenn: Got it. What are you most excited about today in your work? What's your latest thinking and where do you see this all evolving to?



Steph:

We still always have that foundation of teaching the world about the benefits of real food because there is obviously a real food movement, but you're kind of speaking to the choir most of the time, so it's about getting that wider community aware of these conversations and making the changes with their health and their family's health, but from the athlete space, we're very passionate about educating athletes on the ability to become metabolically efficient, which for endurance athletes means staying away from products like Gatorade or using sports gels and needing to rely on sugar to fuel their athletic endeavors. So we're moving into that space with an online program called LCHF Endurance, which is launching in the next couple of months, so I'm really excited about that message as well.

We've also got the podcast, which is The Real Food Reel and that covers a really wide range of health topics. I think we're really used to looking at one cause of disease or one cause of unhappiness or one cause of bingeing, but we know that health is multifactorial and we need to look at food first, but we need to explore gut health. It's really important to look at blood tests to optimize your pathology, so you catch things like whether it's nutritional deficiencies or the early stages of inflammation. I think it's important that we look at our health early before we get these signs of disease where we know that the pathway to health is I guess way further down the track to disease than it should've been if we have explored our health earlier.

Dr. Glenn: Very good. Steph, is there anything that I should've asked you that I didn't ask you today?

Steph: Good question. I think it's really important just to summarize where someone would probably start. As you said earlier, you've got some people that are maybe quite unhealthy and then hearing that they need



to cut out all these foods or they need to just eat real food can be I think probably quite overwhelming. Would you agree?

Dr. Glenn: Oh yeah.

Steph: Yeah. So I think in terms of where I would encourage someone to start would be absolutely to address their breakfast because I know we always hear about it being the most important meal of the day and what I will say is that you definitely don't need to eat first thing, but I think the choices that you make for that first meal is so important as it completely shapes your ongoing food choices and cravings and your relationship with food.

So if the one thing you would do is to move away from refined carbohydrates for breakfast and maybe throwing in a frittata that you've made on the weekend or you make an omelet or make a smoothie -- and I'm happy to share some simple recipes where someone might like to start -- that is one of the most powerful places to start from health and wellness.

Dr. Glenn: What's your favorite smoothie for breakfast?

Steph: I do a berry smoothie with healthy fats from avocado and almond milk, some greens, from spinach, some cinnamon. And depending on the day, I might throw in some pea protein powder or some raw protein powder if I feel I need it, chia seeds, just beautiful whole foods and it's sweet enough for me with the berries.

Dr. Glenn: Very nice. Well, Steph, for people who want to find out more or read your materials or come for a consultation, where would they go?



Steph: Thank you very much. Our online home is TheNaturalNutritionist.com.au. We have Skype and phone consultations available, as well as face-to-face. You'll be able to book a complementary 50-minute consultation there if you'd like to meet me virtually and have a chat about where your health goals are going and how we can help. And then we're very active on Facebook and Instagram. Both of those handles are The Natural Nutritionist.

Dr. Glenn: Very good. Well, Steph, thank you so much for your time. This was fascinating. Thank you so much for being so impersonal and revealing about your past. That always makes it more interesting to people. If there's anything else that we can do to help you at any time, please don't hesitate to ask.

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