



Transcript of “Free The Animal with Richard Nikoley”

Bulletproof Radio podcast #17



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Dave: Today's cool fact of the day is that in order to meet the U.S. recommended daily allowance for all your essential micronutrients following the USDA diet, you'd have to eat about 20,000 calories a day. The idea that you can get all your nutrients from foods following a balanced diet is a complete myth. Even following the Bulletproof Diet, you almost always need to supplement with some nutrients.

You're listening to Episode 17 of Upgraded Self Radio with Dave from the Bulletproof Executive blog.

We have a great interview today with Richard Nikoley from FreeTheAnimal.com. Richard is an entrepreneur, writer, and health enthusiast who uses Paleo nutrition and mental training to help him become a better businessman and a better person in general. Richard comes on the show to share some of his knowledge so you can become better at whatever it is you want to do well.

I'm pretty excited that Richard joined us on the show because he's one of those guys who follows a Bulletproof philosophy, one that says that if you want to improve the quality of what you do, you improve the quality of yourself across all domains, not just food, but psychology plus food plus everything else including the kitchen sink.

Co-host: Now, we're going to move on to our exclusive interview with Richard Nikoley.

Dave: Today, we have Richard Nikoley with us on the show. He's an entrepreneur, writer, and Paleo health enthusiast who runs the popular blog called "Free the Animal." I'm a real fan of his website because he's also an entrepreneur who's found some of the performance enhancing effects of this kind of nutrition. He's written almost 2,000 articles for the web, and he's been probably one of the biggest advocates you'll find out there for the Paleo diet and just general wellness.

Richard is pretty well known for his frank and logical writing. He's also known for being willing to change his mind when a new idea comes out. He joins us today on Upgraded Self Radio to help you adopt a healthier,

higher performance lifestyle, and to break through some of the barriers that's keeping you from reaching your goals.

Richard: Thank you, Dave. Just for the benefit of your listeners, I was-

Dave: Richard, welcome to the show.

Richard: ... Book and I came down with a cold, so I apologize for the raspy voice. Then if you hear me clear my throat or I sound a little bit congested, you'll know why.

Dave: Not a problem. Let's see, tell us a little bit about how you got interested in all this stuff. I always like hearing from entrepreneurs, so give us your story.

Richard: I built a company that I started in my bedroom. Typical story. Not huge. I built it up to about thirty employees, a couple locations, all with my own money instead of ... I never tried to go with outside money. At a point, I got tired of it and started to look for something else to do and I got involved with day trading, trading options, and so on.

I hired someone to run the company and I was involved into trading for a couple of years. This was from about 2005 to 2007. It was so hyper stressful, particularly with options positions that are highly leveraged. Made a lot, lost a lot, that sort of thing, but it really took a toll on me health-wise. Not just from the hours and wake up at 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning, get in the habit of getting on your computer and looking at what the markets in Europe are doing because it oftentimes prefigures what's going to happen for the day when the U.S. markets open, which for me was 6:30 on the West Coast.

I ended up becoming disillusioned with that, primarily because I just saw it as a real downward spiral of health. I supposed that a person could find out a way to do it healthfully but it just turned out to be not something I wanted, where you just obsessed about it, thinking about it 24/7, worried about stuff and so on. It was in about early 2007 when I started unraveling all my positions and getting out of it. Then I just turned to the ... "Okay, how do I ...?" My blood pressure was sky high. I

was 60 pounds overweight and just through a series of Googling around, one thing led to another.

Suddenly I got involved in the whole Paleo thing, which at the time was very ... I really was on that. Cordain had published his book, "The Paleo Diet" in early 2000s. I think 2001 or 2003, something like that. It never really took off. It just so happened that I got involved right at the time where things started taking off. At night, was able to ride the wave and be out on the front in terms of having a blog that pretty much, I think, most people in the Paleo world know about it. Whether they like it or not is another story.

The community is growing. I've noticed over the time, people come and go. We sensed that from the commenters you get. You see new faces and you realize you haven't seen some people for a long time. It's always managed to hold its own and even grow a little bit, just I think from the mass of new people coming in to the community.

Dave: I really like hearing you talk about stress. I also traded options for about five years and it's like doing CrossFit all day, every day. You don't get a break and the stress is there. Stress breaks your health and then using, we call them high-powered health techniques like the Paleo diet, right, have truly helped to reverse some of those things. I've certainly had adrenal burnout several times from various entrepreneurial efforts. Also being a Silicon Valley guy formerly, I know exactly what you're saying. I loved hearing your story in person. It's very familiar.

Richard: Sure. I've thought about going back to it, but it wasn't very intellectually stimulating for me either. One of the other things that convinced me to get out of it was reading Taleb, Nicholas Nassim Taleb or Nassim Nicholas Taleb book, "Fooled by Randomness." He also wrote "The Black Swan." "Fooled by Randomness" was my favorite because when I read that, I looked back and I'm like, "Oh man."

There's almost religious undertones or overtones when you think back and it's confirmation bias. You want your position to go one way so you start to look at events, global, geopolitical, or financial events that leads you to believe that you're thinking about things correctly. Sometimes it

works out and sometimes it doesn't. It's very fraught with that thing and when I quit doing it, it was like a big load was off my shoulders.

Dave: That load can come from so many different places including, I'm sure part of that load was that you were not eating well at the time because when you're focused on trading like that, at least when I was, as well as you're working full-time and also trying to options trade, pulling my hair out, you don't focus on the health things.

How much of your stress do you think was coming from this really high pressure trading thing you're doing versus poor nutrition and lifestyle factors? Like if you had to get a percentage there, where was it coming from?

Richard: One thing that really, I think, brought everything to a head is that I was doing very well for a long time. I offered to trade an account ... Well, I traded my own account and then I thought, "Well, let me open account for my company." I traded a corporate account for my company. Then I started trading account for my dad and for my father-in-law.

Now, you're trading other people's money and it's your dad and it's your father-in-law and you have a wife and the stress just ... it just became ... I would advice leave that to the professionals. Trade with your own money and leave it at that.

Dave: I'm with you there. That stress though, you're actually cranked up and so it's even more by making yourself responsible for other people's financial well-being. Was your lifestyle like 10% of your total burden on your body or were you like, "I was eating crap. I was waking up at 2 in the morning." Like I'm just trying to get a feel for when you made this big jump to the Paleo diet, how much of that came because you changed lifestyle factors other than the stress or was stress reduction a major part of your transformation?

Richard: I'd already unwrapped the position so it wasn't like there was no overlap. I was already out of it by the time I even started discovering the Paleo, but I've always been into good food and I cook. It wasn't the fact that I was eating nothing good. It was simply the fact that the stress

combined with way too much fast food. Even if you're cooking a good meal, two or three times a week, the rest of the time it's like, "Oh, I'll just run at McDonald's" or "Let's order a pizza," something like that, that sort of thing.

It's something that happens over, at least in my case, over many years. It's a few pounds a year. Five, ten pounds a year and then all of a sudden, six years later, it's like, "Wow!"

Dave: Got it. I truly hear you.

Richard: I had noticed when I was about ... I topped out, I think, around 240 pounds and this is a 5 foot 10 guy that should weigh about 170 maybe. When I hit about 210, I'm like, "Wow, I got to do something." I thought, "Well, I got a dog. Let's walk." I walked every single morning from about 2002 on, five, six years, 2001, 2002. Five, six years, I walked every morning three to four miles. It was about an hour; fifty-five minutes, an hour. Five, six years later, I'd walked 5 to 6 thousand miles and I weighed thirty pounds more. You can't exercise your way out of a bad diet and lifestyle.

Dave: Amen. I weighed 300 in my peak. I'm 6'4" and same thing. I worked out six days a week, hour and a half a day, weights and cardio, and I gained weight. It was amazing. It's like at a certain point, any rational, sane person would step back and say, "I'm doing what they said and it doesn't work. It's time to think for myself." You obviously did well, but now you're thinking for yourself, but you did this Paleo diet which cavemen aren't known for their thinking skills. You're not out there wearing a loincloth and killing your own meat most of the time. I mean isn't making that choice to just do this Paleo thing maybe not the most rational choice?

Richard: It's hard to say. It wasn't like one day I woke up and said, "I'm going to do Paleo. I found it on the Internet." What happened was that my blood pressure was super high, like 160/100, 110 every time I checked it. I did some research on that and found that heavy lifting, resistance training, is effective in lowering blood pressure. Then I reasoned that, "Well, if it's

going to be heavy, then I need to do it for less time," because intensity and endurance are inversely related.

I went to the gym and I said, "Look, I'm going to do a half an hour for two times a week." An hour total but I'm really going to make it count. I really am going to push it. Got a trainer. We really pushed it. I had this blood pressure monitoring device and had some software, so I was able to record the data and plot it out. It was phenomenal. The blood pressure just began coming down immediately, like within days. Within two weeks, I was now measuring 140/90-ish instead of 160/100, so a significant improvement. Still high, but a very significant improvement.

Anyway, I already had a blog. I blogged political, cultural stuff. I wrote a post about it. Someone said, "Wow, that intensity thing and endurance, that sounds like Art De Vany and his Power Law." I Googled that. That's where it started, there into a gradual taking on the cleaner eating. Art, at first, was evolutionary fitness and he was far more emphasis on the exercise part than the dietary part, but he had commenters that would mention Paleo.

I'm like, "What's that?" Because he struck me as more emphasis on low carbohydrate, but in a real food context and there was this Paleo thing. Through a process of time, cleaning up the diet, I incorporated that. Then later on I incorporated the intermittent fasting. It wasn't like boom, boom. It's like, "Well, this works. So what's next? This works, so what's next?"

Dave: You sound actually a little bit more like a biohacker than I really expected. I mean you're using a device to monitor your progress. You made incremental changes and experiments. Wow, that's the Silicon Valley coming through in you, right?

Richard: For instance at the Ancestral Health Symposium, my presentation was on self-experimentation. Seth Roberts, another big self-experimenter, was in the audience. He was the first one to jump up to the microphone for the Q&A. Yeah, Seth, I think, is like you in the sense that he's like insane with the way he meticulously records his data and stuff like that.

As long as it's feeling good and I seem to be getting stronger in the gym and fat is coming off, I've seen like I'm on the right track, so let's try this.

Yeah, I have done a number of things like, for instance, the cold water therapy. The San Jose Athletic Club has a cold plunge that they keep between 40 and 50 degrees. I would, after my workout, get in that and I built myself up to being able to sit in there for fifteen minutes starting out from thirty seconds. That's really amazing for ... I don't know. Doing that two or three times, two times a week after your workout, I don't know that's efficient to really turn on the fat burning.

What it certainly did that I found was aid in recovery. You really hit the weights hard, go do that cold plunge for ten to fifteen minutes and you suffer almost ... I mean you could probably work out the next day or the day after. It's pretty impressive how it helps your muscles recover faster.

Dave: We have some really cool podcasts coming up on that as well. In fact, it might be published at the same time as this where we're going to be talking with the Ice Man himself and there's really cool hormonal triggering things you can do there.

It's interesting that you mentioned Seth Roberts. He and I spoke at the first Quantified Self Conference. He's a great guy, and yeah, I think you're on one end of it. He's on the very quantitative end and I'm probably somewhere in the middle between you guys where I'll be quantitative for the period of an experiment, but there's a lot of stuff where I get the results I needed and I'm gong to move on rather than continuing to record data just because like data for some sake is less satisfying than fixing something else you can fix.

Richard: Right.

Dave: Let's talk about mental performance. You've talked about some of the changes you've had from what you've done, just from your exercise capacity and recovery, but how is your brain working on this diet? What changes have you noted?

Richard: I think, going back, the whole fasting was another self-experimental thing. I'd already been eating a low-carb Paleo thing for some months, so I was already, I think, very well-adapted to running on ketones a lot, running on your own body fat. Last week, as I was writing the book, I was wondering, "Is there any research out there?" and I didn't really dig super deep, but I would just Googling around to see if there's any research out there on enhanced cognitive function for a fast.

Actually, what I found was exactly the opposite. It seemed like all the research I was able to find showed that there's either no effect or a derogatory effect, especially in kids and stuff like that. Then I thought, "Well, the confounders there are kids and they're growing," so fasting may not be the ideal thing for kids. The other thing is it seemed like they were just pulling people out of the population and say, "Here, let's put them on a fast."

If an average person has never gone more than a few hours hungry in their whole lives, at least in their waking hours, so they're probably not very adapted to it. Just that shock alone or just the stress of it mentally, I can see how that would degrade performance. Once you're adapted to burning your own fat, once your brain is used to using ketones for fuel, it is my subjective opinion or belief that being in a fasted state, for me, sharpens my function.

I really like to write when I haven't had anything to eat, when I'm hungry, and I like to go to the gym when I'm hungry. All my workouts are fasted, sometimes significantly like over twenty hours. I don't have any data. You'd have to sit down and do some cognitive function test when you're fed and then do it when you're fasted and compare the data. It seems to me that writing is an intellectual endeavor and I do a lot of it, and the fact that I seem to prefer doing it when I'm hungry. I actually don't like writing any time near having had a meal. Even if it's a perfectly good Paleo meal, I just don't feel like ... I more prefer sitting around and vegging or maybe reading something.

That's just my perspective on it. I think that we're designed to go hungry. It makes evolutionary sense to me that we would be adapted to states of hunger and that we would actually perform better, both

physically and mentally because you would need to, because your survival is on the line at that point in a natural environment, the natural context.

Dave: You just convinced me to ask some of my Quantified Self friends, a lot of them follow the blog, to look at fasting and mental performance. We know that coconut oil and ketones ... I mean that you poured on the show ... talking about mental performance and fixing Alzheimer's just from eating more healthy saturated fats, but I share your experience there.

When I'm fasting, you can get into the zone, especially if you add high quality coffee that doesn't give you the jitters at the same time. That's when I can crank out the most. I blog professionally for my day job too on cloud computing stuff. For me, writing productivity is terribly important. I feel the same way you do.

Richard: Yes. Yeah, yeah. Yeah. Last week, when I'm on the clockwork on this book project and when I wasn't writing, I was thinking like, "Okay, what am I going to do next?" and so on. I found it was preferable to eat a fairly calorically restricted diet for the week. I didn't want to think a lot about, "What I'm going to cook?" I just wanted something simple and fast. It was a lot of tuna and sardines and boiled eggs. Just go grab it, but just a little munching here and there when you get a little hungry but not enough to bog you down. I felt that I performed better mentally. You can just really get in the groove and you can just go and go and go and go.

The other thing, I think, in terms of cognitive performance to think about, it's not only the problem solving or the creative ability but it's also the endurance. You can function at a very high level but maybe not for very long. I found that by just eating good quality protein and some fat and keep the carbs really low throughout the week, that I was just able to function for ... I was able to endure for long periods of time, like hours, without a break, just sitting there writing, Googling, doing research, plugging stuff in, and just go and go and go and not even think about it.

Co-host: One of the things you recently did was a month-long pure Paleo experiment. A lot of people when they first hear about the Paleo diet, their face goes into a shock and they say, "What do you mean? We can't have any kind of these foods for the rest of our lives?" What a lot of people don't know, I guess, is that it's not maybe as strict as some people might believe. Could you talk about that experiment and maybe some of the results that you experienced from it?

Richard: There's a long history to this. I suffered a herniation in a cervical disc in my neck. Unknown cause. Dr. Kurt Harris actually looked at my MRIs and he said, "Well," he said, "It's normal. A person your age, there's almost everybody has a herniation in a few discs at 50 years old." It's not like, "Oh, you worked out too hard at the gym," or something. It could be, but not necessarily. At any rate, it caused me some excruciating, chronic pain for the first few months of the year, almost 24/7. I couldn't workout. I could hardly sleep, so I ended up putting on some weight.

At a point when you're suffering chronic pain 24/7, you don't care. I put on some weight. Once the pain went away, I didn't really focus in on getting myself back in shape to where I was. I thought I really got do something here, so I thought about a pure Paleo thing. There's a website called Whole9 Life or Whole9, and they have this program that they called the "Whole30." It's a very strict Paleo and not even any dairy for thirty days. I didn't quite do the whole thing because the Thanksgiving holiday came up and we were down south with friends.

I did it for most of it and I got really good results. I dropped about six pounds towards taking off the stuff that I had gained. I had a few other benefits as well. For example, I quit having any intermittent heartburn whatsoever. Sleep was really good. The most curious result is that my eyesight improved. I have farsightedness, which is stuff up close is hard to focus on. A few years back, I finally got reading glasses. I use them for a couple of weeks and then I wouldn't seem to need them for anywhere from a couple weeks to a month. Then boom, I need them again. That went on.

Increasingly, I needed them. One good yardstick is the iPhone. It's pretty small text so when you're out and about, I would be able to tell how my eyesight was doing by how well I could read the screen without reading glasses. During this experiment, it actually improved to where I didn't really need them that much at all. That's quite interesting to me and I've since had people commenting on the blog say that say, "Yeah, it is possible to improve farsightedness."

Dave: In fact, I'm really stoked to hear you mention the nutritional side of that. I've done something similar but with the Bulletproof Diet which is essentially Paleo with a few less toxins taken out. There's also hormesis, like basically weight-training for your eyes which I've also done and went from 20/60 in both eyes back to 20/15 and reversed astigmatism in three months. There's a blog post or two I need to write about that, but it's absolutely a training function just like going and hitting the gym. My training regimen consisted of one hour, Saturday morning for three months. It was pretty amazing.

Richard: Are you talking about exercising your eyes in terms of focusing in on stuff at different distances or something?

Dave: Yeah. There's a whole bunch of different techniques. Some of them are pretty weird like little 3D things and making your thumb float between your fingers and spinning around in a chair actually is one of them. It seems a little weird. Some of it is actually based on really old yoga for your eyes and some of it is based on developmental ophthalmology.

Man, I actually have vision processing weirdness in my brain where I see things differently than other people. I'm 20/15 and I can read and see and all that stuff fine, but for me, it affected my overall cognitive performance as well as digital processing. I was pretty amazed by it, but just seeing the numbers change and to see the astigmatism go away was pretty cool. I think nutrition is a huge part of it. If you definitely hit on that which matches what I've seen, so I'll make sure to email you when you write that post about vision hacking.

Let's ask a little bit more on the nutrition side though, because we just talked about the strict Paleo, month you spent. What about

supplements? I mean cavemen didn't have vitamins. What's your take on supplements? What do you take? Should people think about it? What's your thinking there?

Richard: I think that a good Paleo diet that includes regular consumption of ... I just did a post this morning about the ... See, I had this cold and so I thought, "Well, let's really pack in the nutrition." I went and got liver and onions and fixed last night. It turns out that liver is arguably, if not, among the highly nutritious foods in the world.

For example, last April I did a live Internet debate with a raw vegan, a raw fruitarian vegan. Yeah, it was quite a deal. There was like a thousand people listening on the phones and a bunch of people streaming on the Internet. During that debate, I challenged him. I said, "Go compare four ounces of beef liver to the fruit you eat nutritionally." Some guy took up the challenge. It turns out that for a mixed collection of fruit, in order to get even close to the liver nutritionally, we're talking four ounces of beef liver, to get to the level of nutrition required five pounds of fruit. Five pounds, right?

Dave: There's a little bit of a fructose overhang there, huh?

Richard: Yeah. Yeah, you can go to my blog, FreeTheAnimal.com, and just search for "nutrition density" and that post will come up. It's "Nutrition Density Challenge: Beef Liver Versus Fruit," and I have a bunch of graphs and everything there. Also, when I reviewed Dr. Davis' book, "Wheat Belly," not really a review, kind of a review of a review. At any rate, I compared beef liver to a loaf of bread, so 1,400 calories of bread versus 1,400 calories of beef liver. It's just ridiculous when you look at it.

To get back to your question, the very first supplement that people should be taking is various animal organs, awful, and liver is probably the most common. You can do it in various ways. You can make your own pate from chicken livers or you can even make it from beef liver or pork liver, calf liver. Get some of that every week because it is so enormously packed with nutrition and it's a real food. Then eat the Paleo diet predominantly.

That should, in principle, take care of all your nutritional needs. However, evolution doesn't care about optimality. All it cares about is propagating the species. As long as you are attaining the age that you can father or mother offspring, that's really all that evolution is in the game for. In the search for a certain ideal or optimality, I think that there are a few supplements worth taking.

Number one would be vitamin D, because we just don't live out in the sun like we evolved. We're indoors in the house. We work in offices. We travel in automobiles, trains, or airplanes, so get sun when you can on bare exposed skin, but I think some supplementation with vitamin D is well called for. I've had great results with it over the years. I mentioned this cold I have. It's the first time I can recall being ill in three to four years and that corresponds with beginning vitamin D supplementation

If you search on the Internet or go to [VitaminDCouncil, I think, \(.org\)](http://VitaminDCouncil.com), they have a whole section there about what diseases and illnesses vitamin D is associated with. It's just about all of them. I think deficiency is epidemic and then when you throw into the mix that you have white skinned people living near the equator and dark skinned people living at high latitudes, and then you combine that with the fact that white skinned absorbs sunlight and synthesizes vitamin D far more efficiently than dark skin and that dark skin is actually an evolutionary adaptation to protection from getting too much, and white skin is so that it's more efficient because white-skinned people were living at higher latitudes. You have the Vitamin D.

The second one would be the Vitamin K2, which you find in things like egg yolks, liver, as I've already mentioned, the butter fat of cattle if you eat dairy. There's a lot of interesting research about bone health and dental health using K2. We do not convert K1 to K2 very efficiently, but ruminants do. They eat the grass, convert the K1 to K2, and then we eat them and get the K2. What the research seems to point to is that K2 works in synergy with Vitamins A and D to make calcium and other minerals go every place it should in your body such as your bones and your teeth, and no place it shouldn't such as your arteries.

They can reverse arterial calcification in rats with high dose of Vitamin K2, completely reverse it. That's very interesting. Weston Price back in the 30s is using a concoction of fermented cod liver oil that has Vitamin A and D and K2 from a certain centrifuged fraction of clarified butter from grass-fed cows, eating rapidly growing grass on the spring. He was able to actually get cavities to remineralize, so you can actually cure a tooth decay with nutrition. That's the second biggie.

The third one I would say is magnesium. It's involved in like 300 cellular processes and considering the depletion of magnesium in the soil, I think it's a good bet to get magnesium.

Those are my big top three. I think if you combine that with the Paleo diet, I think you're probably, you're 90, 95 percent there. I always worry about some people, they really get into it and, "I want this and this and this," and all these other things. You get to an area of diminishing returns. Fish oil is good but not a lot. I take about a gram of cod liver oil and I take a half a gram of krill oil. That's my fish oil regimen. That's about it.

Dave: It's interesting. My list certainly looks a lot like yours. Dr. Cannell from the Vitamin D Research Institute who's come and actually spoken at the Silicon Valley Health Institute, the non-profit that I run in the Bay area there, he's down on liver because of excess vitamin A, and vitamin A and vitamin D not going together. I drank a raw, lamb liver smoothie once, just to ... I'm done with raw meat. I don't regularly do it just because it's hard to get good sources of it. That was probably the most disgusting thing I've ever had in my entire life. What are your thoughts on a little too much liver not being so good for you?

Richard: I think he's full of it. I've seen his stuff. It's totally, from an evolutionary standpoint, that's something I just absolutely would dismiss out of hand without even having to think about it, because when you look at primitive peoples, the organs are prized above all because they [proved through 00:39:15], beat wisdom way back a long time. They see their own health results when they eat those things.

Look at carnivores in the wild. The first thing they go for is the insides, the liver and lungs and stuff like that. Just from an evolutionary standpoint, there's no way. I don't think you should pig out on liver but certainly eating it once or twice a week or even once every couple of weeks is no problem.

Now, as far as the Vitamin A being antagonistic to D, I don't even buy that on the merit. In fact, Stephan Guyenet at Whole Health Source has a couple good posts on that if you ... WholeHealthSource.org, if you check that out. Also Chris Masterjohn at the Western Prides, he's also blogged about it. Yeah. Long story short, on this issue, I like Cannell and a lot of great stuff, but I think on this issue, he just simply doesn't know what he's talking about. Sorry.

Dave: It's true that there are people who, "everything looks like a nail when you got a hammer."

Richard: That's right.

Dave: He's a pretty impressive guy, and certainly, for a while I cut vitamin A out. I do use vitamin A, particularly if I'm getting a cold which is opposite of what you'd recommend, but I found that if I would take high Vitamin D levels in my blood levels are 90, but I found that adding a little bit of A does seem to improve immune function, which is the opposite of what you'd expect. I think there's more work to be done there.

Richard: It's pretty interesting. In fact, in Stephen's post that I mentioned, the way it works is that ... a Vitamin ... Here's how it is. I'm pretty sure that people can show signs of vitamin A toxicity, certain symptoms or whatever, but it's not really a Vitamin A toxicity, it's actually Vitamin D deficiency because A and D work so synergistically together.

Co-host: Richard, one of the things that I really enjoyed that you said on another interview once was that the Paleo diet was a diet of no diet. I was hoping you could explain that to our listeners and what that means.

Richard: Right. Well, yeah, that was on ... I think that might have been on Angelo Koplo's, one of his podcasts. Here's what I've always said is that I don't necessarily agree with the low carb or the moderate carb or high carb paleos. I don't agree with the zero carb folks. I don't agree with anybody who says Paleo is this because the way I view it, we evolved and we migrated to every corner of the Earth. What I like to say is that Paleo is equator to arctic and sea level to 16,000 feet and everything in between.

In all of those environments, there's massively different both micronutrients and nutrition available as well as macronutrients. Someone who evolved in the tropics, for example, might be far more adapted to a lot of fruits, a lot of tubers in their diet than say someone who evolved in what is now Norway or evolved in a place like where they live at super high altitudes in the Himalayas and then everything in between. When people ask me do you need zero, low, moderate, or high carb, my answer is yes.

Then I ask, "What meal are you talking about? What day are you talking about? What week are you talking about? What month are you talking about?" I eat many meals that are zero carb meals or I might sit down and eat two sweet potatoes with some cinnamon and butter on it. Eat something like that. This idea that you have to eat this certain macronutrient ratio every time, I just think is ridiculous. I think that, again, through the self-experimentation route, you can find the mix that works for you. I think probably your best bet is to try not to go with any specific thing.

Sit down and have that steak and only the steak sometimes, or sit down and have a potato sometimes, and in between, the steak and salad or maybe some starchy vegetables like squash or something like ... Mix things up. I think the more that you mix things up, the more that your body will likely be just fine because you're not doing the same thing over and over all the time. That's why I mean the diet of no diet, so it's a framework. It's really a framework. It's an evolutionary framework within which you create your own diet.

One of the things that I've been thinking about writing a book for quite a while, but this whole concept ... Because people expect with a book that

it's going to give you the formula. I've said many times, everybody wants to write a diet book, nobody wants to write a million diet books. Because that's really what it takes. It's really more about principles of framework, of real food framework.

Kurt Harris, Dr. Kurt Harris, Archevore.com, he's famous for saying, "Paleo is proscriptive far more than it's prescriptive." In other words, one way you look at Paleo is a diet of avoidance: Avoid the grains, avoid the sugars, avoid the processed foods in general, and avoid the industrial vegetable seed oils. What does that leave? It leaves real food: meat, fish, fowl, vegetables, fruits, nuts. Dairy if you tolerate it.

Dave: It's funny. It sounds so simple when we talk about it now. My first book is coming out from Wiley actually next year because it's now just the end of December. It's about nutrition before and during pregnancy and it's very Paleo friendly, but it's based on biochemistry findings and all. It took six weeks to build the Bulletproof Diet diagram from all of that research in order to try and tell people that, "Yes, those are the basic categories but if you're going to eat all raw spinach, your kidneys are going to be unhappy. If you cook your food wrong because you're deep frying all of your animal pieces, it doesn't work."

Building the nuances in, I think, is one of those examples of lifestyle practice and like you said, a million diet, seeing what works for you.

Richard: Right, right.

Dave: What are the most underrated parts of health in general aside from just nutrition here that you see in people or that you come across? Where do people not pay enough attention?

Richard: Where do you start? That's a hard question to answer because I think where people don't pay enough attention is that they've gotten away from the idea that they're ultimately responsible for their own well-being. Of course, that is encouraged by the political elite who want you to look to them for everything as well as the various institutions, I'm talking about Diabetes Association, Dietetics Association, all these experts that are funded by the big food manufacturers and so there's all

this you get it from the government. You get it from the news media. You get it from all of these institutions.

There's a big interest in keeping people in a state of constantly looking for some external authority to tell them what to do rather than thinking for themselves, putting some logic and thought to it and say, "Does that make sense?" They look around them and people are getting ... It's been forty years now that we have the diets for all Americans or for all citizens of earth, whatever. People are getting fatter and fatter and sicker and sicker. Heart disease, cancer, diabetes, all of them going up and up and up or at a minimum, not going down.

The quick objection to that is, "Well, that's because people aren't following the guidelines." Well, perhaps they're not, but what they are following is the experts and when you have the experts, then the food manufacturers go right in. As soon as they have these guidelines, then all the products come out. It's low fat this or there's no trans-fats or even it's low carb this, but it's otherwise garbage. They take the fat out and add sugar. They do all this.

Yeah, people aren't directly following the guidelines. They're simply eating the food that's available that's on the shelves because they see on the label, "Oh yeah, and I heard the news, yeah, I'm supposed to be eating low fat, or it's low in fat or there's no fat," or whatever. They're following the guidelines by proxy because that's what the food manufacturers are making.

I don't know if that answers your question or not, but yeah, I think essentially people's biggest problem is that they seek authority. They seek to be told what to do and they have basically defaulted on their own responsibility to see to their own health and well-being.

Dave: I would translate that as mindfulness. You say you need to be aware of what you're doing to your body, so that you can be responsible for it. By the way, big pet peeve there. Gluten-free waffle is still not something you should be put in your body if it came in a box. I see so many people who are really authentically trying just to handle their health. They go out and spend extra money and they're so proud they're doing gluten-

free stuff covered in syrup. It doesn't work and they get discouraged. It just drives me nuts. How do you feel?

Richard: Yeah. For example, we have every example of this same phenomenon, I mean with the low fat. As soon as you shouldn't be eating fat, well, there's all these products that are low fat. Just going back to what I said. That's what the experts say so that's what the food manufacturers are going to put on their boxes so that people go, "Oh wow, all I have to do is buy this and I'm doing what I'm supposed to be doing."

Then you have the low carb craze. I think low carb is a valid diet particularly for reducing weight. It's very effective because it replaces the sugar with fat and it's more satiating. It keeps your baseline insulin levels lower so that your fat can be released from cells, so that it improves your satiation so that you eat less and lose weight. What happens then?

All right, so back with original Atkins, if you wanted to do low carb, you ate meat and eggs and salad. There was no restrictions on vegetable oil type stuff, but still pretty effective in terms of weight loss. Then what happens, and even the Atkins Company or whatever they are themselves, they start producing a bunch of garbage in a box and cans, bars and everything that is filled with all sorts of crap, but it's low carb. It's the same thing.

Now, this is why I like using ... This is one of the reasons I stuck with this whole Paleo thing is because I think it has a protection against that to some extent. I mean, so far, the worst I've seen is packaged beef jerky and stuff like that, but then you look at the ingredients. You cannot truly say something is Paleo if you look on the back and it's full of a bunch of preservatives and dyes and flavor enhancers or whatever, the big long list of things. That's one reason why I'm very enthusiastic about Paleo is because it seems to have a built-in protection, especially if you look at it as a framework of real foods along with, like I said, being proscriptive in things to avoid.

Dave: I love those comments. It makes so much sense and you hit it right on the head. Low fat or these low carb, processed foods are still processed

foods and they don't work and they're not Paleo. They're not Bulletproof. They're not going to help you achieve your health goals.

Richard: Yeah. Usually, a lot of times when I say processed foods, I say industrial processed foods, because when you go to the store and you buy a pound of ground beef or buy a roast or something, you come and put ... do whatever you do to make a nice, integrated meal of meat and vegetables and so on, you are processing but you're doing it at home. You're doing it with care. Yeah, you're processing your food, but it's a far cry from the processing that goes on in an industrial setting. Yes, make your nice fancy meals with your sauces and your homemade bone broths and all of that stuff. Technically, it's processing but it's a totally different kind of processing.

Dave: It is indeed. We're getting towards the end of our interview. I have a few questions for you. The first one is can you just tell us a little bit more about where people can learn about your book, your blog, and about maybe when you would expect your book to come out?

Richard: Yes. The blog is FreeTheAnimal.com. There's probably somewhere around 15 ... I started the Paleo thing in the spring of 2007 and started blogging about it. Then I believe it was just about a year later, sometime in the summer of 2008, where I shifted over to being exclusively about Paleo diet, health, fitness. There's lots of food examples there. You could go click on the category called "Food Porn" and I do lots of photos. I don't do a lot of really detailed recipes. It's usually simple.

A lot of times I just say there's this and this and this and go through the cooking process because I want people to really get in and experiment with cooking. Don't be afraid. How do you learn to do anything? You just get in there and do it. If you're not afraid to fail or ruin a dish, then get in there and you can start turning other recipes into Paleo versions of those recipes.

There's also a lot of success stories. You can find that category and look at some of the success stories. Some of them are in pictures. Some have stories with text and there's also some video interviews with people who have done that.

In terms of the book, I struggled about that for a long time because I wanted to write a book going way back and I already discussed the idea of one diet book versus a million diet books. I eventually settled on something where ... There's a lot of readers at Free The Animal; a 100,000 or so visits a month and 200,000 page views. I didn't want to write ... There's already a bunch of Paleo books out there. I didn't really want to write up a book for my readers per se. I wanted to write a book so that my readers could say, "Hey, mom or dad or brother or sister or friend or co-worker, you know what I've been saying all this time? Here's something you can read in two to three hours."

It's a short book. It's about 100 pages, about 25,000 words. A hundred pages if on a regular whatever 6 by 9 book format, about 65 pages or so in a 8 and ½ by 11 format. It's an eBook. It's going to be on Kindle, the Barnes & Noble Nook, and the Apple's iBookstore as well as on ... The publisher is Hyperink and it's also going to be on their website in PDF. A little higher price point because that one is going to come with some extras as well as lifetime updates.

As an eBook, I can update it anytime I want. I just have to share a Dropbox folder and I put my updates in there, and boom. They change it and it goes out. I plan to do that quarterly so that I don't have feel like I have to keep writing books. I'll just update this and expand it overtime and make it better and more concise and more integrated. I'm sure there's probably some errors in it.

As far as when it will be out, there is a couple posts on my blog about that recent post that you can look at. Essentially, what I'm being told, we just wrapped it up last Friday afternoon. I had two editors and a journalist working with me. We used Google Docs. Amazing collaborative tool. We could all be working on it at the same time and texting back and forth within the document and putting notes and having threads. It was quite an amazing experience.

We wrapped it up. They are telling me it should be out before the holidays, so I'm really looking forward to it. What it is, is it covers everything that I think is important and nothing that I don't think is important. I wanted it to be something very simple and basic for people

who don't already know about Paleo diet, fitness, exercise, the fasting, the supplements, the food, the saturated fat con, the cholesterol con.

Everything I think is important is in that book that a beginner can read it and immediately, within a few hours, know what they should be doing. As an eBook also I use in-line hyperlinks to my other blog, my own blog posts, blog posts of others that I've referenced over the years, original research, secondary sources for research, articles and newspaper, magazines. Actually someone who really wants to get in to this, they could spend three days on the thing or more by just running down all the rabbit holes from the links. There you have it.

Dave: Wow. That's going to be a really sweet book and your publishing counter is amazing compared to the two year traditional New York publishing when I'm going down.

Richard: I'm just too impatient for that. Besides, you're probably aware of Seth Godin's project with Amazon and how he's totally gone the other route. He said no, right? I think a lot of people are unaware of is when you go through a bookstore and you see all these books, the reason they're typically a minimum of 200 pages, somewhere between 2 and 3 hundred on average, is because those are the economy's scale when you are going to print something and distribute it. You have to have that kind of a length, but you haven't that length.

You have no such restrictions in eBooks. The thing that I wanted to always have in my mind as we were writing this is I want to write a book that people actually read. You're an entrepreneur, Dave. I can say this for myself. I have bought many, many, many business books over the years and they're all 2 to 3 hundred pages, but what I often find is I read the first forty to fifty, I'm like, "Yup, I got it," and I don't finish it. You know what I mean?

Dave: I thought you were supposed to just buy them to have them in your office to look important?

- Richard: Yeah. A lot of times you get a book and I read the introduction, which summarizes the book and I'm like, "Yeah, I got it. Okay, yeah. Makes sense. I got it. Interesting."
- Dave: Cool. We're down to the end of the show and the final question which is going to be our closing question for all of our guests from here on out, and it's what's your one sentence, maybe two if you need them, answer to the question of what are your top three all time recommendations to improve someone's performance across all domains? What are the big guns?
- Richard: Diet, real food. I mean I just think that nutritionally dense Paleo diet. That's 80% of it right there. Then secondarily, I think, some sort of fitness regime where you're pushing, pulling, lifting heavy things, run fast every once in awhile is part of that. Then finally adapt yourself to being able to go hungry for a while. It's good for you. We didn't get into the whole autophagy thing where you cleanse the cellular level when you fast. Maybe another time, but those would be the big ones.
- Dave: I love your list, so real nutrition, heavy things with lifting, and occasional fasting.
- Richard: Yup.
- Dave: I do all of the above and I think those are excellent. I'd love to have you back on the show in a few months maybe to talk specifically about fasting. That would be great.
- Richard: Sure will. Yeah, I've done every kind of regime and the fasted workouts and so on.
- Dave: Thank you so much for being on the show, Richard.
- Richard: Thank you, Dave.
- Dave: Now, I'd like to remind you that you can find links to everything we talked about in the show notes that we're going to be posting at BulletproofExec.com. We go through the trouble of making a full transcript of the entire show, including the interview, so that it's



Bulletproof Toolbox Podcast #17, Richard Nikoley

searchable and you can find anything we talked about here on the show. It's actually a huge amount of work. We put all these up. We don't charge anything for them and we appreciate that you come and you learn.

What We Cover

1. How did you get interested in ancestral dieting and health?
2. Richard, if you aren't wearing a loincloth and clubbing small animals to death, aren't you a total hypocrite? Isn't a diet based on what our ancestors ate kind of stupid?
3. How has eating paleo allows you to perform better at work and as a human being? (Richard founded Provanta Corp, he's an entrepreneur)
4. Do you think eating paleo improves mental performance as well as physical performance?
5. You recently completed a month long "pure paleo" experiment where you ate almost all paleo foods. Did you see any improvements?
6. Speaking of puritanism, what do you think of supplementation? Do you take any supplements, and if so, why?
7. Is it okay to still seek information about health from non-paleo bloggers? Or should we write them off if we don't agree with everything they say?
8. You once referred to the paleo diet as a "diet of no diet." Could you explain what that means?
9. What are the biggest changes you've mad to your diet/lifestyle since starting paleo? How have your ideas evolved over time?
10. What are your thoughts on n=1 testing in general?
11. Who are your favorite paleo bloggers, and what are your absolute go-to sources of information about health and fitness?
12. What are some of the best ways to convince others to at least try paleo?
13. Are there any tools you use on a daily basis for cooking paleo foods?
14. What are the most underrated parts of health? (Sleep, mindfulness, stress, etc.)
15. Could you tell the audience what will be included in your new Free The Animal Book?
16. Where can people learn more about you?

Links From The Show

Featured

FreeTheAnimal.com



[Free The Animal](http://FreeTheAnimal.com) (the book)

Food & Supplements

[Upgraded Whey Protein](#)
[Bulletproof® Upgraded™ Coffee Beans](#)
[Vitamin C](#)
[Vitamin K](#)
[Selenium](#)
[Iodine](#)
[Fish Oil](#)
[Krill Oil](#)
[Bentonite Clay](#)
[Activated Charcoal](#)
[Lindt 85% Dark Chocolate](#)
[Kerrygold Grass-Fed Butter](#)
[Grass-Fed Meat](#)



MCT oil
Magnesium Citrate (Natural Calm)
Hydrolyzed Collagen Protein
Digestive Enzymes
Glutamine
Ox Bile Extract
Probiotic Ultra Blend
Cod Liver Oil/Butter Oil Blend
Diatomaceous Earth
RealMilk.com (sources of raw milk near you)

Gear

Reverse Osmosis Water Filter
Oxygen Tank
I3 Mindware IQ Upgrade Software
HeartMath emWave 2

Books

[Free The Animal](#)

Listener Q & A Summary

1. What do you take for an upset stomach?
2. What's the problem with garlic?
3. Does the Bulletproof Diet make you constipated?
4. Is cognac and/or brandy Bulletproof?
5. Does the antioxidant content of alcohol matter?
6. Is coffee bad for your teeth?
7. What is the best type of water?
8. Do Brita filters do anything?
9. Which is worse: eating grain-fed meat or being vegetarian.
10. Should everyone eat 4000-5000 calories a day?
11. Why is yogurt and cheese bad?
12. What do you do if you can't find raw dairy?



13. Is raw dairy illegal?

Biohacker Report

“Efficacy of oral magnesium administration on decreased exercise tolerance in a state of chronic sleep deprivation.”

“Direct Effects of Caffeine and Theophylline on p110 β and Other Phosphoinositide 3-Kinases – DIFFERENTIAL EFFECTS ON LIPID KINASE AND PROTEIN KINASE ACTIVITIES”

“Srf-Dependent Paracrine Signals Produced by Myofibers Control Satellite Cell-Mediated Skeletal Muscle Hypertrophy”

Updates

1. Upgraded™ Whey Protein is now available. Click [here](#) to check out the highest performance whey protein powder in existence.
2. The new Bulletproof Diet Shopping Guide is now available. Click here to get free instant access to the complete list of foods you can eat to stay bulletproof.
3. We are going to be releasing Upgraded Chocolate and Vanilla powder soon. Click [here](#) to sign up to be notified when they are available.

Questions for the podcast?

Leave your questions and responses in comments section below.

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[Facebook](#)

Listener Questions

Ron

What do you take for an upset stomach?

Reka

What's the problem with garlic, besides destroying social life?:)

User666

Is it easy to find yourself constipated while going on the bulletproof diet ?

Maxim

1. What do you think of cognac / Armagnac brandy? 2. Do you take antioxidant activity into account. Mark Sisson places whiskey and brandy above vodka, gin and tequila specifically for this reason.

Rehanastormme

Doesn't coffee take a toll on your teeth eventually?

Money Chhim

Which kind of water do you recommend and what is the best packaging?
And what do you think about Brita-filtered water?

Alexandra

What's worse: Eating a paleo diet based on grain-fed meat and low quality vegetables or sticking to a vegetarian diet with lots of nuts, fruits, etc. Currently I live on a college campus where you are required to have a meal plan. I've been avoiding the low quality and anti-biotic filled meat. I compensate by drinking whey protein and taking supplements. Any suggestions?

Kent

I'm assuming it's fair to say that we should not be striving to have 4000-5000 calories like you do, but to eat the right kinds of food until we feel satisfied. Everyone's metabolism is different so is there a need to force extra butter down if you are energized without it?



Elizabeth

Why is cheese bad? Where does yogurt (the kind you'd buy in the grocery store) fall? And what are you supposed to do if you don't have a farm nearby giving you access to unpasteurized milk? (and even if you do have that farm nearby, they're not really supposed to be selling raw milk, it's illegal, right?)

Don't forget to leave a ranking in [iTunes](#). It helps more people find our show.