

Announcer: Bulletproof Radio: A state of high performance.

Dave: You're listening to Bulletproof Radio with Dave Asprey. Today's cool fact of the day is that the debate on artificial sweeteners has been going on for 50 years and it still isn't over. That far back, the FDA in the US said there was no evidence of health hazards from cyclamates, one type of artificial sweetener, but they took it off the market anyway. Since then, a bunch of different sweeteners have become ubiquitous in sodas, low calorie yogurts and more. A 2014 study in mice said that saccharine alters the gut microbiome, and another study says artificial sweeteners in diet sodas might encourage overeating by interfering with how the brain keeps tabs on calories.

Dave: Here's why I'm talking about this, when I weighed 300 pounds, I drank five diet sodas a day, and I chewed gum that had NutraSweet in it. Since then, data's come out that says aspartame actually makes you fat. Think of how evil that business model is: Hey, everyone, you're fat. You need to eat this artificial sweetener that makes you fat. If there ever was a Darth Vader somewhere laughing about a business model, this is that business model.

Dave: Our family today uses sugar alcohols like xylitol and erythritol, xylitol from hardwood trees, or things like Stevia or monk fruit, and we don't like things that are that sweet because our palates have been adjusted. I would encourage you to just don't eat artificial sweeteners, and sugar itself isn't very good for you, but if you have a choice between fake sugar and sugar, guess what? Sugar's a better choice. If you have choice between corn syrup and sugar, sugar's a better choice. But guess what? Sugar's still a terrible choice. So don't do that.

Dave: All right, I'll get off my high horse, because I'm incredibly excited about today's guest. He is a very well known guy, at least if you are across the pond from where I am here in Canada, in the UK. Tom Watson is a British politician, a member of the parliament, and very well known for his work taking on press intrusion and abuse during the phone hacking scandal, and wrote a book about that. He's got a bit of the computer hacker in him. But, just like me, Tom was a little bit overweight, and decided in 2017 he was going to turn his life around. So over the course of a year, he lost seven stone in weight, which just so happens to be 98 pounds. He and I have lost almost exactly the same amount of weight, and he did it relatively quickly. He announced in September, just a little while ago, that he, with diet and exercise, got rid of his type II diabetes. It is gone.

Dave: He's now in a position of authority and power in the US ... in the UK, not in the US, but to see how he can fix the food supply in order to stop type II diabetes, which is costing the NHS 10% of it's budget every year. He's sitting here on Skype looking like a picture of health, not like a guy who was seven stones heavier than he was before, and we're going to talk about how he did it and what it's going to take to get the government to help all of us be a little nicer to each other.

Dave: Tom, welcome to the show, it's a great honor.

Tom: Dave, the honor is mine. I genuinely am incredibly grateful to be talking to you, because you've had such an impact on my life. You've actually sent me in a whole new direction, so I ... It's great to be talking to your listeners, because I know that they've either been through the experience that we've been through, or they're about to, and their lives are transformed. It's a great feeling.

Dave: There's so many places I want to go, but I have to ask you this: What the heck is a stone? I worked in Cambridge, England, and why do you measure stones for how heavy you are?

Tom: Well, it's irritating because you always have to go to Google to convert it to kilograms or pounds, because of course, we've got metric in Europe as well. It's 14 pounds. I've just nudged over 98, I'm on 102 pounds weight loss now.

Dave: Wow.

Tom: That triggered a thing for me, because I've got a rudimentary form of social behavior theory, that when I hit a new target I get a new piece of kit for my bike. At 100 pounds, I promised myself a new bike, so I'm looking for a good commuter bike as a special present to myself.

Dave: Well, I would say that's worth a new piece of kit, and you can afford to ride a much heavier bike and you'll still be faster because you're not carrying all the weight around on your body.

Tom: That's right.

Dave: Now, what caused you to say, "I'm going to do something radical like the Bulletproof diet?" A lot of people, when we're fat, we do the diet sodas, or try and do something. Did you have a ... hit rock bottom? What led you to do it?

Tom: I guess I did hit rock bottom. I tried the usual advice, in fact my own government gave me, on weight loss over about 25 years, I did the low fat diets, I did calorie counting, all the things that people try. I lost a bit of weight, and then piled it back on again. Then I turned 50, and then I hit 22 stone, which was 308 pounds. My kids are quite young. I kept reading biographies of politicians who died in their 50s. That combination of not wanting to die, loving my children and wanting to live for them, and that deep voice inside finally got me to act. Of course, I became ... I was obese. I had got hypertension. I had been diagnosed with type II diabetes, which ... Then immediately, like a lot of middle aged guys, went into denial for about two or three years.

Tom: Then I knew I had to deal with it. I started to read the science of diabetes, and then I came across the research that you had read, and I came across you, I came across other ... Some people in this field like Dr Aseem Malhotra, and Michael Mosley. I read the footnotes in their books and read the scientific papers, and reached a point where I recognized that if I was to do it, I needed to make some contradictory decisions and go against the advice of the government.

Tom: Then quite literally from day one, my life just started to get better and better. Other than a little bit of sugar withdrawal on days five, six, and seven, that was it. The rest was just a joy.

Dave: What did it do for your hunger levels?

Tom: Well, I literally was hungry every single day for 30 years, and nearly every hour of every day. I used to fight off hunger pangs. Well, what I thought were hunger pangs, what I now know were huge sugar spikes on three-hourly intervals. I had been cutting down sugar before I took a big decision on nutrition and exercise. But still not enough. Sugar wants to ... Sugar is such a great drug that once you have a small amount, you need more. I woke up after about a week, and I wasn't hungry anymore. I literally wasn't hungry anymore. I've not been hungry for 14 months. I have my Bulletproof coffee on waking, I have a very good morning ritual. I don't think about food until lunch time. It's just fantastic.

Dave: I am grateful that you're saying that, because people don't believe it sometimes. I would have this constant voice in my head when I was heavy that said, "Eat that bagel, eat that croissant, the crisp," anything. If it's in the room, that little candy dish. You would just get used to saying no all the time to yourself. When it just turns off, at least for me, it freed up a lot of extra energy that I could use to do something, and that's one of the reasons I've written books and all, because I wasn't thinking about food all the time.

Dave: Did you find a shift in what you did in parliament or a shift in what you did in your personal life? Did you get a boost in energy like that?

Tom: In all areas of life. The first manifestation is the unexpected one, which is the mental acuity. It's just the brain fog, as you describe it, just lifted. On waking, for 10 years I'd woken up and the first thought is, "Which joints are arching the most this morning?" Now I wake and think, "What's happening today?" I'm straight out of bed. The energy, the tank is fuller, and it empties slower. I'm still middle aged, I still get tired at the end of the day, but there's just much more energy.

Tom: For me, I now feel sorry for the people that used to work for me because I gave up sugar. I now know that if I was taking meetings later in the day, my ability to focus and concentrate had gone. I used to drift off in a form of, what I used to think was an attention deficit disorder, if I can describe it as that. That's gone. I'm focused in meetings. I'm calmer. My recall of facts is better. I've described it as a ... It genuinely feels like greater compassion in the way I interact with people and behave cognitively. It's totally different. It's transformational.

Dave: Do you also meditate or have a practice like that of relaxation?

Tom: I've just started. For me, being a politician, I planned this. My year one program, which is much clearer. I can see, I can plan into the future more. But for me, my focus was weight loss and health. I wanted to get off my diabetes meds. Where I am is year two, is I'm trying to improve my physical strengths and my mental wellbeing. I have a period of

reflection in the morning, I try and protect my early mornings, which give me time to think and map out the day. Actually, a couple of weeks ago, I had my first ever session of iyengar yoga-

Dave: Nice.

Tom: ... which was incredibly uplifting. I'm trying to find a way of building that into my program, because I think that will be very beneficial.

Dave: You will get some of the benefits of meditation and breathing and the movement. I did it for years as I was forming my program, and didn't do it for years with kids, and in the last few months or so, I've started having a yoga teacher come to me house a couple mornings a week so my wife and I can do it. It does help the brain some more.

Dave: The reason I ask you that, is you talked about compassion that arose in you when you changed what you ate. You could say that if there was a coin, and one side is anger, and the other side is compassion, and of now believe that people are actually wired to be compassionate and kind, but that if you eat the wrong stuff or et a lot of sugar, a lot of chemicals, you'll pretty much have the angry side of the coin most of the time, and you'll never access the parts of you that are supposed to be that way. Does that describe the way you see things now that you've experienced both sides of it?

Tom: That completely resonates with me. It's like when you interact with people, I feel now I'm interacting on a deeper level. There's more emotional stimulus, so I can ... Their body language, their own ... The way they emote. I just feel like I can register it more. I think you just think more deeply. I think you think about where people are coming from more, and you can ... you just think about them in the way you form your thoughts. There must be something about sugar. All the studies on sugar about how it lights up the brain and the energy expended seeking out your next sugar fix, I think, has something to do with the way we lose the ability to communicate and understand people and each other.

Dave: I remember when I was first getting going on Bulletproof, I came over to London, and an investment bank had hired me to teach hedge fund managers how to be smarter, how to make their brains work better so that they could get their sales people in the door to talk these billionaire types. I was talking with an office manager in one of the companies, and I mentioned Bulletproof coffee, and she called me the next day and she said, "Oh my god, I went through the office and I didn't eat any candy." This woman lived in a house with no food. She would not allow herself to have food in the house because her cravings were so strong, so at least she had to walk downstairs, cross the street and go to the Marks & Spencer to pick up a snack. That was her way of just being able to resist. She was in tears. She said, "Do you understand? I didn't eat candy today." It's that level of freedom that I felt myself. That's one of the things that motivated me to start the blog.

Dave: So you felt that compassion and that freedom from craving. What did all of the other members of the opposition party, your friends and colleagues at work, say when your personality shifted?

Tom: Well, first of all, they ... There's a process you go down in. There's still a fair amount of this now. People mock you, they mock me. Firstly the can't ... Well, if they recognize me. I've been an MP for 17 years now, and I got stopped on security into the House of Commons last week, and the security guard didn't believe I was the guy in the picture. He thought ... Which caused hilarity. Of course, trying to explain on national television what a Bulletproof coffee, and how you fats in because it helps with sugar cravings. Then you try and explain that your brain feels completely different. They look at you like you're insane. Then afterwards, they all say, "How do you do it?" "Do you blend it?" "How much butter do you put in?" It feels like ... I've got colleagues that are trying it out, and reporting that, believe it or not, they're feeling better.

Tom: You ... It's such a step change for the way people organize their private lives. The foods they put in their cupboards. The way they prepare their food. They way they organize their day. The way ... Where they do their purchasing. You really have to just really challenge all of those orthodoxes in order to get to the point where you feel this liberation. When you get there, it's fantastic. I go to supermarkets now, I just see aisle after aisle of empty calories that used to form the basis of my former self. Now they're just lost to me. I don't feel attracted to them in any way now. I feel like I'm a reformed sugar addict.

Tom: If I have to guard against anything, it's being overenthusiastic with colleagues, because I want them to be better. I want them to be well. I want them to experience the transformation I've had. Sometimes you've got to take them on a process quite gently, I think, in order for them to get there. But they're getting there. If I could get another hundred UK MPs into the place where I find myself, I genuinely think the country will benefit. I think humanity will benefit. The way we make laws will be improved.

Dave: Imagine if the leadership of the country felt 20% more energy. Would you get more done?

Tom: Yeah. Yeah, you definitely would. You'd be more productive, and you'd be able to set priorities better, and if they experience what I've experienced, they'll be able to think ahead more clearly. You're strategic thinking improves. Just in all areas of life, I think we would improve, which is why I feel so passionate about this. I feel like I've been given a new mission in life. It's changing the priorities I set in my own policy world.

Dave: Did you get angry? When I first lost this weight, I was mad for a few years, because I felt like I'd been misled. All the years of struggle, waking up every morning with parts of your body hurting and all that. I was like, "Why did no one tell me this?" I bought a book that was published the year I was born, by a guy named Robert Atkins. The first guy in modern history to talk about ketogenic diets. His diet would only get you half way there because he had you eating inflammatory fats, inflammatory proteins. Even then, the knowledge existed when I was born and no doctor ever told me. No government agency ever put this on a map anywhere. They told me to eat stuff that was literally causing all

my problems. I'm over that anger now, I understand what's going on, but did you go through that frustration, anger period?

Tom: Yeah. Oh, yeah. First of all, I needed to understand these remarkable things that were happening to me. Then after that, I still occasionally get spikes of irritation now, because I look at people drinking fizzy drinks with sugar, soda drinks, and I think, "Here is a global industry that are poisoning our children." Then you look at where ... I look at people lobbying in this space. We've got a lot of charities that are lobbying to reduce sugar intake, and they're arguing for government policy. I look at them and think, "They're all self-editing. They're making limited demands on government, because they realize they can only do ... They've got an incremental view of this. How do we do education campaigns to allow people to make informed choices?" Just stop putting the sugar in the products that poison people. You find yourself ... I find myself frustrated because I just think we need a massive step change.

Tom: So yeah, I got angry. You look back on a life and you think, "Those decades that I was a sugar addict, I could have done so much more." Over time you lose that, because you've got more time to do good things. It's allowed me to make clearer choices in life in the last few months.

Dave: What are you going to do ... Without getting super political on you, but what are you going to do? Because you're in a position of leadership where you can actually influence policy way more than someone like me who's outside of government. I can change demand and awareness, but then people have to push on their own leaders, but you're one of the leaders. You've felt this, you know how real it is. What are you doing about it?

Tom: Well, the first thing ... Because you should always try and do as much good as you can in the world. How do I now do things at scale? The first thing for me is, in the UK, we've got 3.7 million people identified as diabetic, 90% of those are type II diabetic. Looking at some of the research, the people you've had on your program, you look at Virta Health, who suggest that with the right combination of nutrition and exercise, up to 60% of people can put their type II diabetes into remission.

Tom: Firstly, I've set up a commission to look at this, because it seems to me that if two million UK citizens with type II diabetes can remove themselves from medication and get their lives back, control their blood sugars, what a huge impact that would be on our country. I've set this challenge ... Politicians should never set up commissions that they don't know the answer to. It's a golden rule in politics. I have no idea whether this is possible yet. I've taken a big risk. I want to answer the question, "How can we halt the projected rise of type II diabetes in the lifetime of one parliament, which is five years?" You will know, Dave, having looked at the figures, the graphs for growths of type II diabetes, globally, are the most frightening ... The arrow goes to vertical in about a decade's time. I want to do that.

Tom: Secondly, and this is still ... These are nascent ideas, because it takes a bit of time for me to formulate how to approach this. I definitely want to look at food supply and how our food production system has just ended up with everyone living in a sugar economy

where people are eating foods that aren't just lacking in good nutrients, but are actually actively making them sick. That's the bigger challenge, but that is also where there are some very powerful vested interests. If you look at the academics that are challenging nutritional orthodoxy throughout the planet, they're the ones that have literally been targeted by some of the big corporations. I need to understand how all that is going on before I come up with a public plan on that. I think that's where ... The only way we're going to sort people's health out is if we look at food supply.

Dave: As a Silicon Valley disruptive technology guy, I set out, when I decided to make products at Bulletproof, to disrupt big food. Disruption has a defined term. It was defined by a Harvard Business School professor named Clayton Christensen who helped to guide my career for 20 years when I was a computer hacker. The idea there is that a small company comes up with a new idea, but the use case is different than what the big companies are thinking about. Then suddenly, that one little idea, people start using it for a little bit more than it was originally planned. Then the big companies wake up one day and go, "What just happened to our market share?"

Dave: We've seen global shortages of grass fed butter, and we've seen the amount of junk food and the amount of fizzy sugar water that people are drinking, it's actually going down, or it's not going up as fast, depending on which company you're looking at. This is the herald of disruption. I hope that market forces can do this. If even a little bit of government approval says, "Well, we are now going to allow this, whether or not we encourage it, but at least not actively discourage it." People who have felt the change that you felt, people who have seen you and me fat and thin, and say, "I want that to happen in my life because I've been struggling for years." I think we're just going to make the companies do it, because no one will spend a pound or a dollar on stuff that isn't actually food.

Dave: How much of this is going to be solved by government and how much of this is going to be solved by people just saying, "I don't want to feel like crap anymore." Do you have a sense for what percentage?

Tom: It's got to be both. The good thing about the UK is we can ... We're a little bit more generous towards government intervention when there's a problem. You can do things by regulation. You also need ... You're right about consumer power.

Tom: There's a great little campaign, I'll give it to you. I found a council in London, Southwark council. You know the whole ... I don't know whether ... I'm sure they do this in North America. Everybody does Dry January where they encourage people to give up alcohol for a month after the festivities. Well, this council in Southwark in London does a thing called Fizz Free February where they encourage everyone to give up soda, or pop, we call it, sugar drinks, for a month. Which basically takes a kilogram of refined sugar out of diet if you have a can every day. So I'm trying to scale that UK-wide. I've just put out ... I do this weekly, newsletter to my supporters. I'm trying to get people on the ground to pass motions at their local council to talk to schools, to try and get everyone to give it up for a month, which is a very big signal if you can build a campaign like that, that sugar is actually the heart of the problem.

Tom: This February, maybe I'll let you know at the end of February to see how it goes, but I think you can do popular causes like that, mobilize consumers to demand more of their retailers. But government needs to help as well. We've got kids, we've got outsourced companies that sell doughnuts to kids mid-morning in our state schools, and all that's got to stop.

Dave: It does have to stop, and kids are the ones where I have the most compassion. I look at how I behaved in school, in high school, I was a total jerk. In part because, let's just say, the average 15 year old boy is a jerk by definition, because you have hormones that are happening, and because you haven't learned a lot of things you're going to learn by the time you're 25. This is ... Even if you're well-fed, you're not always behaving in a way that you'll admire later in life. But doing it with sugar, I was a total jerk, and I recognize now that sugar made me much less able to modify my emotions, and it made me a terrible student. That ADD kind of thing. I look at giving sugar to kids, allowing pop machines in schools, handing out doughnuts and candy bars, or even allowing them to be sold on campus, it is so cruel to someone who's trying to learn. That seems like an area where government has a lot of influence. Is that still ... Do lobbyists and food companies, are they that ingrained in the UK?

Tom: Oh yeah, yeah yeah. It's deep. It's iceberg deep. You don't know where they influence and how strong they are. We introduced a sugar levy. I'm the opposition party, the government introduced a sugar levy, which for them is quite a radical thing. It led to reformulation of a lot of products where they just reduced the sugar content. Over time, I think it will save thousands of lives if you cast forward with that. But it was only the tiny ... It's tiny steps, because if you eat one doughnut ... You can't eat doughnuts in moderation. I know, if you eat a doughnut at 9AM, you need another one at midday, because you've got a massive sugar craving. Then you'll need one at three o'clock, and then you'll need one at six o'clock. It's a drug. Refined sugar's a drug. You've either ... Once you start taking it, you're on a journey and there's not a lot you can get back from. Until we have that kind of just approach in policy and in the way we run our lives, then we're not going to crack it.

Dave: If you put on your 10-year-from-now hat, and some of the things that you're proposing now really take root, what do you think the effect on the health of the UK in general would be?

Tom: Well, type II diabetes ... We have the National Health Service, type II diabetes, currently, takes up 10% of our National Health Service budget, 10 billion pounds a year. We amputate 120 feet or toes a week as a result of sugar related illness. If we don't act now, literally, our health system will collapse. The estimate's for a decade, suggest that treating type II diabetes will double in cost. That's before you look at all the associated sugar related illnesses through to metabolic syndrome and possible dementia and cancer.

Dave: If you look at type II diabetes as a risk factor, I think I wrote about this in Headstrong, it is a great amplifier of heart disease, cancer risk, high blood pressure, and Alzheimer's. All of those go up if you have type II diabetes. If you solve that problem, you're taking out probably 20-50% of those other conditions as well.



Tom: Yes, that's right. The potential benefit ... Type II diabetes makes family life harder. People ... You can't ... You get sleepy, you can't think, you're more intolerant. If you can take sugar out and turn your condition around, I think it will just improve, not just the physical health of the nation, but just improve wellbeing at scale. It will make us calmer. It will make us more generous individuals. It will make us more humane and more compassionate, which is why I see it as my change mission in politics. I see it as a ... I keep describing ... My team get worried that I'm about to retire to the country and start growing vegetables, because I describe it as my last mission. It's a mission, and I think it's a decade or even longer in its timeline, because the scale of change required is so great. I'm only taking tiny steps now. I'm still, with my own physical health, it's still a work in progress. I wanted to prove it to myself before I could go out and talk about the potential benefits to others.

Dave: Any time you stand up and you can show people, "I've lost 100 pounds," if that doesn't get their attention, nothing will and you're not going to have a good conversation. Do you have advice for political leaders in other countries around the planet based on your experience losing weight and then starting to look at how do you unravel this problem in England?

Tom: Yeah. Certainly, the rarest commodity in politics is time to read. You actually rely on people to feed you your information, certainly when you're in government. I think that if political leaders had time to read some of the research that's come out in the last five or 10 years, much of which you amplify on your channels, I think they would be more open minded to reviewing how we give public health advice, how we resource healthcare, and how we regulate the food and retail sector, which obviously has so much impact on people's daily lives. It's beginning to happen. You look at some of the change ... Amsterdam as a city, their public health people collaborated to get child obesity down by 12.5% in a year and a half. Or in Chile, they've gone to town on some of the corporations that sell sugar products with the way they do their labeling and their designs. Around the world, there are pockets of changing policy, which essentially are tiny responses to sugar related illness. But if scaled, and if looked at internationally, I think could have a dramatic impact on the lives of tens of millions of people.

Tom: Political leaders are beginning to ... It's beginning to be wedged into the lives of political leaders. They're having to address it because we've got an increasingly ill Western workforce, that is making us unproductive and uncompetitive.

Dave: In my new book, Game Changers, I talked to all the people you've heard on this show and analyzed their answers about what matters most for them to perform better. Of course, food came up as a high statistical likelihood. I wanted to know, what does everyone do to perform better, not just one person. One of the laws that came out of my book is law 25, and it's 'make sure you're really hungry for food.'

Dave: There is a sugar addiction, grain addiction, biochemical problems, but there's also people who are eating because they're lonely, because they're traumatized, because they've been abused. How much of the diabetes epidemic that you're experiencing in the UK, in fact that we're experiencing globally, how much of that do you think comes from emotional eating and trauma, loneliness and filling in other gaps?

- Tom: That's a really good, but very hard question to answer, Dave. It's very hard for me because I've obviously been on a particular journey that is individual to me. I very strongly feel that it was a physical addiction to sugar that led to all sorts of wellbeing issues for me. There are people who have trauma in childhood that I think would ... The only way they could be weaned off sugar is if you address the cause of the trauma.
- Tom: Actually, in a different bit of the policy territory, I've been spending some time looking at gambling addiction in the UK. We have psychiatrists and counselors tell me that for about 75% of their patients, an off-the-shelf course of talking therapy, a CBT program, can get people off gambling addiction. For the other quarter, there's an underlying cause that requires more psychodynamic therapy that needs to get to the cause of the problem.
- Tom: I suspect the same is probably true with food addiction. We all know all sorts of ... from bulimia to all the other issues that people have in their relation to food. I think their relationship to food manifests itself in other causes. How you can ... I think you can do the most good most easily, is if we get people off sugar and sugar related products and if you do that at scale, that can have a dramatic impact and allows us to focus more on where there are deeper traumas leading to abusive relationships with food.
- Dave: The good thing is that even if someone's experiencing that relationship with food, when you get them off of sugar, the amount of mental energy they get that goes up, that can then be applied towards dealing with the trauma goes up. I had a lot of my own personal development work to do, and I just didn't have the energy to do it when I was obese, because my energy was going into making more fat, not into making more thoughts about good things. I know you've talked about that compassion that you feel now, and I've also turned that on but I like it's cruel to tell someone, "Hey, work on your relationships with other people and yourself, and here's a doughnut to power you to do it."
- Tom: Yeah. It is. It's also ... I think when you feel liberated from sugar as I do, it almost seems patronizing to say to people, "Just stop eating doughnuts. Stay away from it. One will lead you into very bad habits." One of the things I'm trying to do is find a language where I'm not lecturing people, or hectoring them, or feeling that ... Whenever we publish obesity figures in the UK, there's always some idiot politician who says, "Well, people are just too lazy." When you look at it, I just look at it and think, "The system is completely stacked against people." They don't know what's in their food. They're told to eat this and manifestly bad for them. The [inaudible 00:39:27] is so all pervasive and all powerful. What chance have busy parents got to get a good nutritional plate and do the right thing?
- Tom: If you fix all that, which I think is the responsibility of policy makers is to try to fix it, then people then can make rational choices about their lives and live in greater freedom, I think. More intellectual capacity to deal with their own family problems.
- Dave: I would hope that the politicians who call fat people lazy would get voted out of office, because having been a fat person, you are a willpower athlete. You have a mirror, you don't need a scale. You know how fat you are. Every time you pick up a piece of food

that you don't want to eat and you end up eating it, you have exhausted your willpower telling yourself no until there's a biological level, you say, "All right, I'm going to eat it," and it's not a moral failing. It's not a weakness. It's not being lazy. It's biology. When some person who's probably never been fat, but certainly is a jerk, is going to stand there and judge someone who's obese, who's never dealt with it, has never clinically dealt with it, has never been a doctor, never been a nutritionist, at that point, they're just unkind. I like to think we don't vote for people like that, but apparently sometimes we do.

Tom: I'm afraid we do. There are a number of obese politicians who judge the obese, and they are the worst form of politician. I'm going to either try and get them off sugar, or get them voted out of office.

Dave: That is the right approach. I've seen Mark Hyman who has been on the show several times, a dear friend and director of functional medicine at the Cleveland Clinic here in the states. He got the entire board of directors to go on his diet, which has a lot of similarities. We're both zero sugar, avoid the inflammatory grains and things. He got these doctors, some of whom were fat, to give this a shot. You know what? They all felt very different over the course of two weeks. There may be a role for a challenge where like, "All right, you think it's about lazy? Let's have a little bit of a public demo. You show me how easy it is." I'd love to see a challenge that says, "Just lose one stone. Come on. I lost seven. Come on, I know you can do one." I know you guys can be pretty tough in the UK in your debates on all this stuff, so I would encourage you to just challenge them. "Hey, maybe I just have more willpower than you. I did it."

Tom: Yeah, well, the temptation to gloat is great, but I do resist it. I do resist it.

Dave: That's probably for the best, but man, I would just love to see you stand up and say, "Come on. Come on. Money where your mouth is."

Tom: Yeah, that would be great.

Dave: One can always be hopeful.

Dave: Well, Tom, I have to ask what your biggest concern is in government. You have this plan, but what is the number one thing that could stop the reformation of people's food?

Tom: I think the global sugar lobby is very powerful. I suspect that the people who run the corporations that trick our minds into wanting to eat more with all the sugar reactions that give you a [inaudible 00:43:01] level that isn't high enough, or give you a buzz because there's enough sugar in the right places. I suspect they know that the global health crisis is related to the work they have done in producing these products, and they will attempt to buy time in the public policy space. So their strategy is to hold up change. We saw it when we introduced the sugar levy in the UK. There were all sorts of threats about job losses, about lawsuits, about human rights, about government interference. There were political campaigns about the Nanny State, and taking choice away from consumers. In the end, the government just did it and the lost companies cut

the sugar down to the level that they would be taxed that they not done so. There will be tension in the system in the years ahead, and the biggest threat to that is the political will of our elected leaders.

Tom: First of all, I think we need to explain the story of sugar, and how our lives can be transformed if we reduce that in our daily diets. I think it's really important that people are exposed to the new research and science that comes out every day, and has been coming down in the last five or 10 years. Then there's no excuse for politicians not to act. We need a combination of public pressure. The people that listen to Bulletproof have made these rational choices at depth in their lives, they can help scale this message, but the real fight will be with the global sugar lobby. It will be brutal because some senior executives' livelihoods are under threat. They will spend a lot of their shareholders' money to protect their position. But that's where it's heading.

Dave: They will do that, and along the way, the more people understand what we're talking about here, the more people read books and listen to shows and all, they'll simply vote with their dollars or their pounds. What will happen is, they'll have less money for lobbying because people just don't want to buy it. That, in combination with pressure from the government, I think this isn't a 25 year problem. I think this is a five to 10 year problem. Maybe I'm a little aggressive. I certainly haven't been in government, but I'm seeing the change. I'm seeing it on the shelves in grocery stores. I'm seeing it with what people want to buy. I've never been more hopeful than in my entire life. I hope you are too.

Tom: Yeah, I'm hopeful. I'm hopeful because I've been liberated and you're helping me with that. I just feel I need to really ... I try and recruit more people to the cause. I feel very responsible. It almost feels like a duty, that now that I've done this to myself, I need to make sure that other people can benefit from it. Picking a fight with global corporations, I've done it before, some people say that I'm a reckless politician, the very act of having the fight, I think, will be educational to many millions of people. That in itself is important. It's unpleasant when you're in the fight, but you're right, because we do want people to make personal choices, but we need to get the system right for them at the end of the day.

Dave: Tom, if someone came to you tomorrow and said, "Based on your career in government and what you've learned in your life outside of government, I want to perform better at everything I do as a human being, tell me the three most important things you've learned."

Dave: I know you know this question was coming, because you've listened to the show, and maybe you're prepared for it. Three most important pieces of advice for a human.

Tom: Do you know, that's such a pressure question, particularly when you're a politician. Obviously I hear ... Some of your listeners get ... Your subjects get stumped when you throw in this question. My problem was narrowing it down to three. You tend to focus on what people have learned personally in their lives.

Tom: For me, I think you need to retain a curious mind. The beauty of serendipitously finding a book because you've been in a conversation with someone and recommends it. So for example, you mentioned Clayton Christensen earlier. You mentioned him on a program about five weeks ago and I got his book and it's fascinating.

Dave: Oh, great.

Tom: Retain a curiosity, because that's how the world solves its problems, is one.

Tom: I've got to say, remove refined sugar from diet in all its forms. I know that's a physical issue, but I just think that will build humanity in all sorts of ways we can't imagine. The other for me, is really to say, if you have one hour a week to do any form of physical exercise, start weight training, because the benefits of slow movement weight training for me have been transformational. The hormonal changes, the brain clarity, all the biology behind it. It's transformational.

Tom: I know these are more self-help tips, really, but curiosity, sugar and training, which I've classed in one. Then I would say, the third one, because I've lumped those last two as one, is always focus on kindness. Try to think about where you can exercise kindness. Because I think that itself is a reinforcing idea that just makes you a better person incrementally.

Tom: I know it's very hard in a busy world, but if you can liberate yourself from sugar, if you can be Bulletproof, then we can build a kinder world, and that's something that we should all aspire to.

Dave: Wow. I love that you called out kindness. I don't think in 500 plus episodes anyone has just straight up said, "Kindness." But that's what it comes down to, end of the day, the people who are kind generally perform a lot better, and they like their lives along the way better. Thank you for putting it so succinctly. Good thing you've had some practice putting things succinctly in your political life.

Tom: Well, I've been ... I've actually had a practice listening to Bulletproof. I've been through your entire back catalog.

Dave: Wow.

Tom: Actually, all the people you interview, Dave, they do exercise kindness. They come on your program because they want to share their intellectual strengths and experiences with others. That, I think, in itself is a form of kindness. They give their time because they want the world to be a better place. That's a great aspiration for us all to go for.

Dave: It is definitely what fuels me. I can see that that's what fuels you. Thank you for doing it for the 17 years you've done it, and hopefully the next 17 or more.

Tom: Well, what actually fuels me is brain octane oil, but ...

Dave: Yeah, you and me both.

Dave: Wow. Well, Tom, it's been an honor to speak with you today and to hear about your success and to know that Bulletproof has played a little role in that. It truly warms my heart to see the weight you've lost and the energy you've gained. Because that's why I do what I do, and seeing that you've done that, and now you can use that to help millions of people. There's no greater leverage that I can [inaudible 00:51:28] that, so thank you.

Tom: Dave, thank you. Thanks for giving me my brain back.

Dave: You got it.

Tom: Take care.

Dave: Take care.

Dave: If you liked today's episode, you know what to do. Next time you get to vote in the UK, vote for Tom, because he's an awesome guy. And if you're not in the UK, or even if you are, and you decided you wanted to pick up a copy of a new book, my new book Game Changers is out, and you can pre-order it today. I'd appreciate it if you ordered it before it hit shelves because that always helps all the book order people know that I'm doing my job right as a New York Times author, and it is worth your time because it distills the answers like the one you know heard from Tom into actionable advice for you.

Dave: Have a wonderful day.