

Ben Pakulski: When I was a bodybuilder I was focused on being the best bodybuilder in the world and that was my focus. Now, it's different. Right now, like I said, at some point in your life, you become aware of your own mortality and you shift your focus from this thing that's very vain. It's very external, and for me, it wasn't even about vanity at all; as much as that sounds ironic. It was all about I want to prove to myself and I want to prove to the world that I can do this. So now the shift is like okay, well now I just want to live the highest quality life, and much less muscle centric, right? Much less focus on building muscle.

Announcer: Bulletproof Radio, a state of high performance.

Dave Asprey: You're listening to Bulletproof Radio with Dave Asprey. Today's episode is a special episode because it's recorded live and on video, as well as audio here at Bulletproof Labs Alpha, or Upgrade Labs Alpha I guess you could call it, on Vancouver Island.

Today's cool fact of the day is that lead performs under pressure. Lead is relatively soft, and you scratch it with a fingernail or poison yourself, and give yourself an increased risk of cancer and cardiovascular disease with it. But when you take lead and you smash it under really extreme pressures, it becomes hard and strong; in fact, stronger than steel. Scientists rapidly compressed a lead sample by hitting it with lasers at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory. Side note, I almost went to work at Lawrence Livermore many, many years ago. The pressure within their sample reached 400 gigapascals, which is one of my personal goals is to reach 400 gigapascals. Basically the same level of pressure as the earth's core. They found that it altered the lead's crystal structure, which rearranged a [status 00:01:49] of atoms, and it became a stronger metal permanently.

So understanding how substances change in response to incredible pressure matters for things like Bulletproof vests. Why should you care about lead in Bulletproof vests? Well number one, it says Bulletproof so it's got to be cool. But number two, the strength of a material characterizes how it responds to stress. Stress is just force applied over a given area. The more stress you can endure before you deform, the stronger you are. So it's just a metaphor for resilience. If you want to know how resilient you are, you can either be hard, or you can be malleable. Either one is a form of resilience, which is all built into the way that you can think about being a better human being, and hacking yourself, for sure. Relatively affordable version and here's what crazy people are doing today, that will come down in price over the next decade. It's all spelled out in a framework you can understand.

It's readable and a lot of people have now told me, "Dave, it's my favorite book so far." To me, that's really high praise and I'm grateful if you're one of the people who said that. If you pick up your copy of the book, or forward your receipt to me, instructions are on DaveAsprey.com, there are eight interviews with the leaders in antiaging medicine, interviews you cannot find on Bulletproof Radio, and you get to get those and listen to them as soon as you send me a copy of your receipt that just says hey, you bought the book. Thank you for reading the book, and yes, the audiobook is available. I recorded the entire thing. In case you want to envision things, I recorded it with my shirt

off because the audio engineers said my shirt was too rustle-y. So four days in a sweaty studio in Santa Monica so you could hear me read my book to you. It's that good.

Now, speaking of having shirts off, I'm sitting here today with a guy who would actually probably look way better than me with his shirt off. You can tell if you're watching on video because he's a wall of muscle. A recently retired professional bodybuilder, former Mr. Canada, which he's sorry about, who educates people ... I live in Canada, too. I'm allowed to make jokes about Canadians, right? All right. And a guy who's educating people around the globe on a wholistic approach to muscle building and his name is Ben Pakulski. Ben, welcome to the show.

Ben: Dave, it's truly an honor to be here. As I said, I'm a big fan.

Dave: Ben also runs the Muscle Intelligence podcast, a really good podcast, and has a best-selling muscle building program called MI40. The reason though that I had him on is not to talk about kettlebells and meat, although can we talk about those?

Ben: I'm an open book.

Dave: All right. But it's that he's got a very unique approach where he talks about mindfulness and how the mind and the body interact. Something that reminds me of a younger version of what you might have learned from Frank Zane when Frank was on the show. I was blown away because we all envision bodybuilders like Ben as basically kind of being meatheads. No offense.

Ben: You got to judge me like that, Dave, come on.

Dave: He's going to squeeze my head in his bicep right now.

Ben: No, no, no.

Dave: But this is a stereotype, and it probably comes from the 70s.

Ben: Well, it's probably real, right? At many levels, as we spoke about recently, it's just many people are drawn to this sport for particular reasons. It's maybe fear based, or it's inadequacy, or whatever it is. That tends to be people who are just drawn to what we do.

Dave: It's true. In fact, full disclosure here. We are doing a double podcast here, so Ben just interviewed me for Muscle Intelligence.

Ben: It's the best interview Dave has ever done.

Dave: I got to say-

Ben: He's great. He was really good.

Dave: If you don't hear that interview, you're actually a bad person. Is that true?

Ben: I think so, yeah. Seriously, excellent and amazing interview. Got into the Super Human book a lot, and a lot of other things that you've done that are really helping form many people's lives.

Dave: Thanks, Ben. It was a fun interview, but we talked about why someone would go into bodybuilding. It was fascinating. I said the pejorative statement, as someone who when I was younger, I spent a lot of time in the gym. I was never professional grade, but I do think that sometimes people are attracted to MMA and to bodybuilding, probably because they were bullied or they were traumatized.

They just didn't feel safe, like "If I'm a wall of muscle, maybe I'll be safer, or maybe I'll be more accepted." You're sort of saying there's some truth to that.

Ben: Yeah, absolutely. I completely agree. For myself for sure, and I see that is pretty common amongst bodybuilders. I can't speak for people who do MMA, but absolutely. For me, it was this armor that I built that I thought if I do this, I'll have this protection, as you say, against whatever was causing my fear in the past. A lot of it was physical. It wasn't necessarily physically bullied, but I was always physically afraid. I remember that as a kid, there was a lot of anxiety around authorities. So anyone who I encountered, if it was a teacher, or if it was a coach, or if it was a parent, I would freeze. I would get nervous. I would literally stutter I was so nervous.

Dave: Wow.

Ben: That was a huge amount of fear. I know where it came from, but I didn't know at the time where it came from, and I didn't know I had it. I just thought there was something wrong with me.

Dave: Where'd it come from?

Ben: A very, very explosive temper with my father. Yeah, like explosive temper. He never hit me, but like to the point where you'd come home and it'd look like the Tasmanian devil was in the house, and everything was turned upside down. I saw him do that many times. I would just stand there and freeze. I wouldn't cry, and I wouldn't let it out. I just stood there and froze, and that became kind of my default. So any time I walked into a room with a teacher, with an adult, I would feel the same way because I had that feeling coming from my parents, my father.

Dave: So fight, flight, or freeze. Freeze became your dominant pattern.

Ben: Yeah, and literally with teachers, I would get up in front of the class, or I'd speak with a teacher and I'd stutter, trying to speak and trying to get it out. I just figured that was me. I didn't know any different. That's kind of become my mission now is to, similar to you, is I want to empower people to realize that the story they tell themselves as to why they are the way they are now is not necessarily reality. It's just the way you've adapted

to your environment and your scenarios. You can change. I think that's the big messaging behind what I do is I want to empower people to change their body and change their mind, and realize that no matter what it is in this world, you can do it. You just haven't figured out the steps yet.

Dave: When you won Mr. Canada, did it make you happy?

Ben: Absolutely not. I was on this quest. You know, I started at 17 years old thinking ... I went to the Mr. Olympia contest in 1998, and New York City. I was 160 pounds, not a big, muscular guy at all. I had just started training.

I went and I said, "This is what I want to do," and I thought that stepping on the Mr. Olympia stage would be the pinnacle. You get on stage and you realize it's very much like making obscene amounts of money. It's empty. It's not what's going to fulfill you, so it was literally in that moment where I was like, "Oh, well if this doesn't make me happy, what am I doing?" I started questioning my reality and questioning this desire to accumulate things outside of myself. For me, it was muscle. For many people, it's money. Sometimes it's both, but I feel very, very blessed to have had that realization early in my life to understand that it's not the external things that are ever going to make you feel happy and fulfilled. So it's nice to have those things so you can do great things in the world, but finding that internal happiness is the ultimate goal, or that fulfillment, maybe. That will then allow you to pursue the things that you love, and help more people.

Dave: Is that why ... You wrote a book called the ... MI40 Foundation, gain twice the muscle in half the time. Those are words that are music to my ears. You mean I can spend less time doing something I wanted to do? I kind of like that.

Ben: Sure. Yeah, I mean so as a young aspiring bodybuilder, everybody probably hears this, but I was told more so than most people that I couldn't do it. I didn't have the genetics. I didn't have the ability to build muscle. I did not build muscle easily. I'm trying to be one of the best bodybuilders in the whole world.

It was just person after person goes, "One, you're from Canada. Nobody from Canada has ever been to that level, or very many people. You don't have the structure. You don't have the ability to build muscle. You're never going to do it." So I literally tried everything, Dave, including education, including supplements, including every workout program in the world. After a certain amount of time, I kind of discovered this method that really allowed me to accelerate my progress, decrease my injuries, and really almost make muscle building kind of this foregone conclusion; because a lot of people have what they would call weak or undeveloped body parts. When you start to train correctly, as I would say training with intelligence, you realize that you can be empowered to build any amount of muscle in a short amount of time. It doesn't have to be nearly as much work as you think. It doesn't have to be in any way ... Certainly it's challenging. You certainly still want to challenge yourself, but it doesn't have to cause pain. It doesn't have to cause joint pain. It's so much more simple than we make it out to be. We just don't think about it the right way.

Dave: So give me the cliff notes. I want to gain twice the muscle in half the time. What do you do?

Ben: Well, the simplicity of it is most of the fitness community is exercise-centric, right? We're focused on things outside of ourselves, so people are focused on the exercise. They're focused on lifting more weight, they're focused on doing more reps. Those things are all external stimuli that are useful only in as much as they create an internal stimulus or an internal response.

So my focus is really shifting people's attention from the external, which is like, "I want to do a squat, or a bench press, or a dead lift, and I want to lift more weight," to realizing that the only thing that matters is if that external stimulus actually creates the internal environment that I want. So I'm having people shift their focus from the external to the internal. Now if we start looking internally, well what's the internal response I'm looking for? Well, I want to challenge a muscle. My objective then is not to lift a weight. My objective is to challenge a muscle. So how do I become more consciously aware at every inch, or since we're in Canada, every millimeter of every rep that I do? So rather than just objectively finishing a set, my objective is not to finish a rep or finish a set; my objective is challenging a muscle. So if I shift my focus to am I actually challenging this muscle at every single millimeter of every single rep? You can get so much more done in so much less time, thereby causing less sympathetic arousal, less sympathetic stress, generating greater stimulus and way less time. That's what it comes down to.

Now, that's a skill, right? Like anything in life, learning how to dribble a basketball or anything is a skill component. So there has to be this phase of I'm going to learn this skill, and that's really what I teach. Many people are focused on periodization, and they're focused on load, and they're focused on all these things that are great, and useful. I call those the Xs and Os, the things that come afterwards; but the foundation of everything we do is optimization of the skill, optimization of the execution.

If you ask anyone, "Well, how's your execution?"

"Oh, it's good. It's okay."

"Bullshit, it's completely wrong," right? Most people are terrible, abysmal usually. Even though you think you're doing it correctly if you think you're training your biceps or your chest, most people are not because the way they're taught is incorrect. Not that they're not capable, it's what you're taught in high school gym class, on YouTube, is not correct for your body. You're built very differently than me, so how can we do the same exercises and think we're going to get the same result? It's not possible. So how do you then learn to do things that fit Dave's body, and optimize stress to the muscle for Dave's body? Because if Dave does the exercises that Ben does, Dave's going to get sore back, sore knees, sore shoulders.

All these things that, "Ah, well hey man, maybe I'm just not built for it," right? Well yeah, you are built for it. You absolutely can do it if you want to. You just haven't learned how correctly yet.

Dave: That doesn't sound like a short answer. I mean you're sort of saying work with a coach, someone who's going to customize exercises for you-

Ben: [crosstalk 00:13:59] No, no, because it's actually so much more simple than it sounds. It's just most people are just looking at it the wrong way, right? We're looking at it like the earth is flat; in reality it's round. So rather than just looking at it from an exercise perspective, the simplicity of it is, Dave, you look at every muscle in the body. Let's say your physique muscles, and there's not many of them.

You look at them and go, "Okay, well this muscle has two ends." Every muscle in the body has two ends. Let's say we're looking at your pec. It's on your arm and it's on your sternum. All this muscle does is pull one end closer to the other. So how do I then forget about the exercise, and obviously the exercise matters at the end of the day, but I'm more focused on is this muscle going through its full excursion, so a full lengthening and shortening cycle under a load, under resistance the entire time? So it's really that simple. So rather than thinking about doing a bench press for chest.

Dave: Yeah.

Ben: Yeah.

Dave: Okay. Twice the muscle, half the time. I want a bigger bicep here. Okay, so there, it's fully straight. It's under tension. I did a curl here. We're doing this on video, so it was a very impressive curl with no weight. What did I wrong there? How did I not build twice the muscle in half the time?

Ben: The resistance and how it's applied against your body is variable, right?

Dave: Okay.

Ben: So if you pick up a weight, it matters where the resistance is coming from, what type of resistance it is and how you set up your body relative to that resistance. So if you lay down at a bench press, Dave, and you do a bench press with a bar on a bench, which is what many people do, you're going to get sore shoulders. Why do I know that? Because I can look at your structure and tell by looking at your structure, you're never going to build your pecs on a flat bench press. That doesn't mean you can't build your pecs. That means that you just can't build your pecs on that particular exercise because of the structure that you have.

So learning how to pick exercises that most appropriately challenge your muscle rather than this arbitrary, "Hey, I'm going to go in there and do a bench press because some guy in Muscle & Fitness, or Flex Magazine says this is the best exercise for chest."

Dave: All right, so you looked at me, and because you are someone who's spent 10,000 plus hours doing this, you train people, you run courses, you run muscle camps around the country, you have this ... I'm going to call it the Neo from the Matrix [crosstalk 00:16:00] version zeros and ones-

Ben: No, it's so simple.

Dave: How are you reading my structure then?

Ben: You just look at basic biomechanical orientation of the muscles.

Dave: Yeah.

Ben: So we're speaking about your chest. It's the orientation of your sternum.

Dave: Okay.

Ben: So if you have a flat ribcage relative to ... Let's say you're standing up tall, or even sitting, and your ribcage is relatively vertical. When you lay down into a bench press, you can imagine all of those muscle fibers are laying down against your rib cage. So if you want to get those fibers to directly oppose the resistance that's being applied in the body, so I have a weight coming down on me in this vertical plane, I need the muscles that I'm trying to train to actually oppose that resistance. Does that make sense?

Dave: Yup.

Ben: So I need them to be kind of in equal and opposite directions. So if you're laying flat on your back, the muscles in your body that are going to most directly oppose a barbell coming down on you or a dumbbell, it's going to be your shoulders just because of your mechanics. Where if someone has a slightly more ... So if I'm standing, slightly more, maybe oblique sternum, kind of like I have, I'd lay into a bench press, and if I have all these more muscle fibers laying in direct opposition to the resistance. Now, that sounds complicated, but it's so easy to see if you just look at it.

If we actually showed, if we did a video like, "Here. Here's the reason you're not going to build your pecs doing conventional exercises, but if you just shift this exercise 30 degrees in this direction, now all of a sudden you've completely empowered yourself to shift your ability to build muscle exponentially," and that's the same with every muscle.

Dave: So you would look at me and say I need an incline or a decline press, and it's going to work better for me.

Ben: Incline's not going to work. Decline's going to work better for you. Then it comes down to do I have the mobility at my shoulder to do it on a decline? And maybe you do, maybe you don't, but there's adjustments we can make to make sure you do that.

Dave: So that's really fascinating, and no one who's been on the show has ever said that; although I've had a bunch of people talk about functional movement and I've written about it in some of my books. If you're moving wrong, you're probably going to pain. If you have pain, it's going to suck your willpower.

Ben: Yeah.

Dave: Yeah, [crosstalk 00:17:49]

Ben: Exactly. I still talk about that, too, because there's ... You talk about functional movement. I believe functional movement is valuable, but again, this acknowledgement that you're built differently than me. So if we were to pick up the same weight and do it in quote unquote, what looks like the same way on the outside, we're going to have a completely different result just based [crosstalk 00:18:04] on structure.

So what I would do for someone who's looking to optimize any type of muscle building, we're just going to kind of dictate this sequence of muscle contractions. So if I want to have Dave build the chest, I need to make sure the chest is the thing working. Just because I lay into that exercise doesn't default to like, "Hey, this is going work." So, speaking of this functional term, there's function and there's isolation.

Dave: Okay.

Ben: So when you're training functionally, and I think that word is blasphemed, right? It's thrown all over the place. It's a terribly misunderstood term, but functional is what is my body meant to do and function? But when you look kettlebell, there's really nothing functional about these things. Regardless. There's function and isolation, and everybody should have a balance of both; provided you're trying to build some type of aesthetic. If you don't care about aesthetic, then this conversation is probably not right for you.

Although, there's a huge argument that I would make that says the idea of isolating muscle is by far the most metabolically efficient way to lose body fat. It's by far, I think, and we could argue about this probably, is it's vital for longevity, right? The more muscle you have, the more your body may be responsive to using glucose, and be less insulin resistant. I think there's value in that. It's all relative depending on where you start. If you have very little muscle mass, training this way is the most important way to train because you're going to train without generating pain to your joints.

Dave: Wow, there's two directions we could go with that. Let's talk about the longevity thing because I just wrote my book on it. I believe there's an inverted U shaped curve for muscle. What that means that is if you don't have enough muscle, you're screwed; and this means you're going break a hip at some point. You're going to get sick. You're going to get a virus. You will not have resilience, and you'll die. If you just follow the normal curve of sarcopenia and stem cell loss over time, you lose tissues as you age. This is one of the things that is likely to reduce the quality and length of your life. There's another set of research that shows if you're carrying way too much muscle-

Ben: Absolutely agree.

Dave: That, that's not going to work. So one of my favorite quotes, the New York Times wrote an article about Bulletproof Coffee and me a while ago.

They interviewed me and they said, "So Dave walks into the room, and he looks almost muscular."

I'm like, "Oh my god, the New York Times said I was 'almost muscular.' Bam. Anti-aging win."

Ben: Right.

Dave: Right?

Ben: Yeah.

Dave: So like I would, and I'm going to be real judge-y here. I'd look at you and say you're probably carrying a little too much muscle for the ultimate longevity.

Ben: Yeah.

Dave: But that you're way healthier and better off than 95% of the population.

Ben: Yeah, I don't disagree with that.

Dave: Okay.

Ben: When I was bodybuilder, I was focused on being the best bodybuilder in the world, and that was my focus. Now, it's different. Right now, like I said, at some point in your life, you become aware of your own mortality. You shift your focus from this thing that's very vain. It's very external. For me, it wasn't even about vanity at all, as much as that sounds ironic. It was all about like, I want to prove to myself, and I want to prove to the world that I can do this.

So now the shift is like okay, well now I just want to live the highest quality life, and much less muscle centric, much less focus on building muscle; which is why you and I are even having a conversation now is because I'm really into what does it look like minimum effective dose to maximize my longevity? How little can I train to quote unquote build or maintain the amount of muscle I have? So for me, it's not building, it's maintaining or even losing. But what's the minimum effective dose that the average person should have, and how do you then as an executive, as CEO, as an entrepreneur, make the most of every minute you have in the gym. That's my focus.

Dave: That is the right focus, I would say, because it's very easy to spend two hours a day in the gym.

Ben: Yeah.

Dave: That's two hours a day you don't get to spend with your kids.

Ben: Exactly.

Dave: You don't get to spend with loved ones. That said, you might have great friends in the gym. That's a part of community building.

Ben: That's the battle we're both fighting is we're both running businesses, we both have children. I'll tell you, most of the time now, if it comes down to ... or all of the time, I'll say, is if it comes down to working out or spending time with my kids, my kids win 100% of the time.

Dave: Yeah.

Ben: They're by far my greatest priority. I have my value system established. These are the greatest priority. If it comes down to even ... so it's family and finances and fitness in that order for me. So if anything comes down to make a decision, I have my values established. I just won't train, or maybe I'll incorporate training with them. Maybe we'll go for a walk, or we're run.

Dave: How old are you?

Ben: 38.

Dave: Your values are broken.

Ben: Are they?

Dave: Yeah.

Ben: Tell me.

Dave: Not to be judge-y even more.

Ben: Yeah.

Dave: I've had the same ... My kids are a little older than yours, another five, six years. Sort of the same stack, and I share this with my assistants, with my family. It actually comes down to health first.

Ben: Of course. Yeah, of course.

Dave: Because if you don't take care of that ... and fitness is a function of health, but it's not the only one.

Ben: So I incorporate health into family.

Dave: Okay.

Ben: I believe those ... because my health is also like my family's health. So everything I do is are we walking together, are we getting morning sunshine together? We breathe every morning together. We do the gratitude practice together. So I try to incorporate those things together.

Dave: Nice, okay. So then you've got those sort of integrated, because if your health goes because you're focused on family; you say, "Oh, I'm going to take the kids to school this morning. I'm going to go to all the school events, and I'm not going to take my supplements, I'm not going to eat right, and I'm not going to get enough sleep for me."

I've definitely cut sleep when I shouldn't have when I was younger just because I'm like, "I want to be able to put bread on the table, gluten free high protein whatever good bread, and I want to spend time and be present for my wife and for my kids." Then you find at the end of the day I didn't generate any growth hormone last night. I got crappy sleep, and I didn't do any stress reduction things. So you realize, "Oh, I can reduce more stress in less time. I can meditate faster. I can spend less time in the gym," but I found look, if I don't do that health thing first, I can't show up as a father.

Ben: Right, and you're definitely not showing up at your best. That's why this shift is happening for me is that's the realization is one of the reasons I retired from professional bodybuilding was because I wanted to be there for my kids. When you walk around that big, training as often as I did, eating as often as I did, I wasn't ... didn't have enough time. I wasn't able to be present. My energy stunk, as you'll understand as being 300 pounds.

So I was like, "Forget this. I can't do this. If I can't get down on the ground and play with my two year old daughter, something's wrong. I need to change this now." That's why all of these practices have become a huge part of my life. So I started yoga, and meditation, and just more aerobic exercise, and optimizing every state, or every system inside my body.

Dave: Why couldn't you get down on the floor? You're just too muscle bound?

Ben: Well, it's uncomfortable, man. No, I could, but it's uncomfortable. If my daughter's crawling around on the ground and she wants to play with a toy, I want to be able to sit down there comfortably. I want to be able to crawl around and chase after her, and tickle her. When you're that big, you get it, man. If you had a two year old child when you were 300 pounds, it's not easy to keep up with those people, man. My daughter's older now, but it's certainly not easy.

Dave: That's so fascinating. I definitely noticed there was a time when I was working on losing all the weight, where I put on a substantial amount of muscle. I mean you do 45 minutes a day of weights, six days a week, you're going to have muscle underneath all that fat. I

could feel that I was stronger, but I was still highly blubbered; but yeah, there were times when I did not have the flexibility. I'm highly flexible now, and it matters.

Ben: I don't think it's a matter of flexibility. So for me, it's not even that. It's just a little bit more uncomfortable to get in those positions and stay there for long periods of time, which is part of the reason why I transitioned to yoga is because I want to be able to do these things. I love the mindful aspect of how can I stay present and calm, and parasympathetic while I'm in these ultimately uncomfortable positions when I'm that big?

Dave: There's no doubt yoga made a huge difference for me. I'm going to share a piece of advice that my wife gave me that's only a little bit politically incorrect. When I first met her, she was still in Sweden.

She said, "You should try yoga."

I'm like, "All right, I'll try yoga." This was a long time ago. Jeez, like 15 years ago. I said, "Do you have any advice for me? Should I go ... the prison style yoga, or just sweaty yoga, or whatever?" There's all kinds of different yogas. Yes, I insulted half my yoga friends.

But she said, "Here's my advice: find a really attractive yoga teacher."

I go, "What? Like what are you talking about? What does that have to do?"

She said, "Because then you'll go to yoga class." That was her whole piece of advice.

Ben: True. It was the opposite for me. The physical attractive thing would have been nice, but I actually found this guy who was a really advanced yoga teacher, probably been doing it for 50 years. He's in his late 60s. The spiritual approach that he had, the complete ... Kind of like you, Dave. Authentic, right?

Dave: Yeah.

Ben: So I come into your home, and I can see that you're living the life.

Dave: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ben: So rather than just preaching the message, he was authentic. That was the thing that appealed most to me because I knew that my journey was spiritual more than physical. So I find this gentleman, and it was the most transformative thing for me to spend 12 months with him, and just really get my mind in the right place, not only when I'm doing yoga, but then taking that away and how that transforms the rest of your life. It was transformative.

Dave: I love it that you said that because what I did is I said, "I'm just going to try a bunch of yoga classes and see what sticks." I ended up doing most of my beginning yoga training

with a guy as well because it turns out it doesn't matter how attractive a yoga teacher is. It matters how good are they at being a yoga teacher, and do they vibe with you? There's an energetic thing when they teach you breathing, or if they're adjusting you, or if they're giving you instruction. Some yoga teachers are going to sound like they're lecturing you or talking down to you. Others are going to sound like they're helping you, or they just know what to say, or how to demonstrate that.

Just like, "Oh, you turn your knee a little bit."

You're like, "Oh my god, I just touched my toes." Whatever it is, that was far more important. So I ended up spending most of my time with my favorite teacher, it was a guy. It was funny because he was ... he decided he was going to do a vegan diet. His name is Kenny. The problem was that if you're a yoga teacher and you're doing it 10 hours a day of yoga classes, like a lot of them are, that is crazy amounts of work. He was actually starting to get health problems from it, so I kind of might have made him eat some butter and a little bit of steak, and he felt much better. So we were sort of helping each other.

Ben: Yeah.

Dave: But I got so much knowledge about how my body worked, that I was just unaware of as an engineer who'd been overweight for a long time period of time, and had spent time in a gym. So I love that you're like, "Find the right teacher for you." So I was grateful for my wife's advice, because it at least encouraged me to try different teachers, but physical attractiveness-

Ben: [crosstalk 00:28:37] It says a lot about our personality, right?

Dave: Yeah.

Ben: I mean to find a secure woman that goes, "Go find a hot yoga teacher." You know you found a winner when, right?

Dave: Exactly.

Ben: Absolutely.

Dave: She was secure. All right. Let's talk about something that you've taught in your courses that I've come across. You say there's no such thing as over-training. Am I paraphrasing too much?

Ben: Well, maybe. I think it depends on who you are and where you are. If I took you in the gym right now, and you're training however many times a week you are, and I doubled it.

I said, "Dave, we're going to go train twice as much as you are now." That's over-training because your body's not capable of responding to it or adapting to it. Well, I got to a

point in my career where I was training so much, but I had my recovery so dialed in. There's times when I was training five hours a day, but I was eating enough calories. My recovery was dialed in; that my body was capable of responding and growing for me.

So if I say "over-training," well what is that based on? Is it based on my ability to get back in there, my ability to feel cognitively alert, my heart rate variability? I was able to keep all those things in a relatively healthy range because I had my recovery on point. So, that's a statement that I made probably five or six years ago that I still stand behind, but most people don't understand the context.

Dave: Okay, so what you said was, "New research shows that over-training is about as likely as winning the lottery." Did you change your mind?

Ben: Well.

Dave: By the way, I do show prep.

Ben: No, no, no.

Dave: I have my notes here. That's what I ... I can quote that.

Ben: No, so really, the likelihood of people over-training in the gym from a muscular-based stimulus, it's actually pretty low. So why would somebody who trains the way they are ... Let's say you walk in the gym right now, and without any guidance from me or anybody, you just go in the gym and train. It's not likely that the training is going to be the issue, so what would be the issue? It's the stress that exists in the rest of your life.

For most people, the training that the stress causes, or the stress that the training causes is much less than the stress that exists in the rest of their life. You get that this whole stress response is this general adaptation that the body makes. Most people have way more stress that exists outside in their life, and actually is generated in the gym. So in most people, their issue is not the training itself. If I remove the rest of those stresses in my life, and I reduce those to a level that was appropriate or even healthy, their ability to recover from that training stimulus that their body is able to generate is exponentially greater.

Dave: All right, and to your credit, this was actually in Muscle & Fitness when you said this, you also said, "As long as you're giving your body adequate rest and time to recover, over-training isn't a thought."

Ben: Yeah. I stick with that, because like I said, in this common society, the training stress is so nominal for people, right?

Dave: Yeah.

Ben: Because most people can't actually work hard enough to generate that much stress. It's just when they're going into the gym, they're already stressed. It's like digging a hole versus digging a trench, right?

Dave: Right.

Ben: They're coming into the gym, and they've already got half a trench dug. They're going to come and just throw more stress on top of that, or dig a deeper hole. That's when over-training's a problem. It has nothing to do with the training itself for most people.

Dave: So it's net total stress versus net total recovery.

Ben: Yeah.

Dave: We're actually very aligned on that. I believe that most people are under recovered. If you recover well and you feel well, your resilience, which is a measure of how much stress you can handle, is much higher. In my case, I'm so resilient now compared to any time in my entire life, and it's because of that focus on recovery. That's why Upgrade Labs exists. It's much more about recovery than it is about stimulating, but you can over-train or over-stimulate muscles.

Ben: If you're doing it correctly, yeah, of course; like at some level. I'm sure Muscle & Fitness was sensationalizing my quote a little bit.

Dave: Of course.

Ben: But it's okay, because I do believe that at some level. Like if you and I were at the gym, and I was able to control your nutrition, and your stress, and your recovery, I'm confident you would be appropriately sore and appropriately able to challenge a muscle, and get back in the gym and do it again in 72 hours, right?

Dave: In 72 hours, I'd make it, Ben. One of the reason that I'm focusing on that is a couple days ago, I said, "Let me do 90 minutes of really intensive electrical stimulation."

Ben: That's not the same, Dave. That's not internally generated stimulus. So that's the difference, right? You can never generate that amount of stimulus to your glutes.

Dave: It's true. My glutes are ... They feel like someone kicked them, and I did for 90 minutes run stimulation, like heavy duty stimulation over them; much more so than I could have done if I was consciously doing squats. I would have tapped out, but because I was providing external stimulation, I can tell you, you could bounce a quarter off my butt right now. But, I definitely over-trained it. Yesterday, I was kind of a zombie as a result of that. Almost to the point of hitting the Uncle Rhabdo level of CrossFit workout; which is like over-training at the extreme can clog your kidneys with protein from muscle breaking down that can actually put you in the hospital.

Ben: But your body doesn't have the capability of pushing that far on its own.

Dave: Yeah.

Ben: So it's an external stimulus, right? That's the reality. I think most people's body will shut down and their mind will shut down well before they're able to over-train. Over-training is this repetitive accumulative stimulus. If you're going to get in there multiple hours a day, and not recover, not eat well, not sleep well, have a huge amount of stress, of course you're going to over-train. No question.

So what I'm really focused on is, is in this wholistic approach to muscle building. I'm not someone who just teaches, "Hey, go in the gym and work hard and lift heavy." It's just kind of the opposite of what I teach. If I teach anything, it's an intelligent approach to building your greatest body. There's a number of things that go into that, that people should always be considering; that I weight evenly. So I don't say training is more important than nutrition. Nutrition is the most important. I think it depends on who you are and what your rate limiting factor is. It could be your sleep. It could be your stress. It could be your environment. It could be your mindset. It could be your training and your nutrition. It could be any of those. Those are what I call my six pillars. If you're placing more weight on one, often times there's one or two you're neglecting. Those would be the ones that would be the most important for you to address in transforming your body.

Dave: If you assume that someone has proper form and they've chosen the right exercise-

Ben: [crosstalk 00:34:45] They don't. It's because you can't, and I hate making that concession because most human beings go, "Oh, I'm pretty good." You're not. You're just not. Pretty good is so far off. Let's say pretty good is contracting 10% of the time. That's average, I would say. Maybe 10, 20% of the time. Okay, now what if we can take that to 70 or 80? Well, now I can get so much more result out of so much less work.

Dave: All right. Well, let's assume that you're standing there telling me how to do it.

Ben: Got it. Yelling profanities.

Dave: Exactly, right. Right, yeah. Organic, grass fed profanities.

Ben: Right.

Dave: From a yoga perspective, right?

Ben: Sure.

Dave: So you're there guiding me on every movement so I'm doing it perfectly. I have a choice of modalities to load my muscles. I can do kettlebells. I can do traditional bars and dumbbells. I can do resistance bands. I could do the electrical programmable resistance like we're doing at Upgrade Labs; things like isochronic, but things like tonal or ARX, or things like that.

Ben: Yeah.

Dave: Which of those is going to provide the maximum load in the minimum amount of time.

Ben: Well ARX for sure. So it's isokinetic, which means-

Dave: [crosstalk 00:35:55] Okay, or tonal. Tonal, the equivalence.

Ben: I don't know tonal, but yeah.

Dave: Tonal is a similar idea, but it mounts on the wall and it's more of a home device, like a Peloton for home.

Ben: So effectively as much as I push, it pushes back against me resistance-wise; so that's called isokinetic. That allows me then to challenge a muscle exactly with how much I can push against it.

Dave: Okay.

Ben: That's the ideal scenario for all exercise. The challenge there that I find, and I've used these modalities; the only challenge I find is stability. You'll find a lot of people actually aren't able to produce enough or a lot of resistance or force because they don't have the skill of the movement. As someone gets better, and better, and better at that skill, their ability to produce force is tremendous.

Dave: Yeah.

Ben: Then you can get exponential gains, like completely like that.

Dave: Mark Bell, one of the top power lifters in the world.

Ben: Yeah, I know Mark. Yup.

Dave: He was out here. I was guessing you guys must know each other. He was out here, and I put him on the ARX, the stuff we're using at Upgrade Labs.

After six reps, he's like, "Oh my god, my pecs." This is probably one of the top point 000001% strongest people on earth, but there's a reason-

Ben: [crosstalk 00:36:57] That's amazing, right? That's the idea is because he has the ability to contract that muscle, he'll get actually much better resistance.

Dave: Yeah.

Ben: Like an average person would come in and still get great results because they're being efficient, but because he's able to do that thing so precisely, his ability to use it is going to be great.

Dave: His numbers were insane.

Ben: Yeah.

Dave: But his level of muscle exhaustion was way off the charts compared to normal.

Ben: Right. [crosstalk 00:37:19] That's the ideal scenario, right? I still believe that. The ARX is the ideal scenario for challenging muscles. If you can have something that maximally challenges the muscle at every millimeter, as I said, which is what that's doing, I still think there may be some limitations in the diversity of movements.

Dave: Yeah.

Ben: Because obviously you don't want to overdevelop certain planes of movement, but as far as the actual science of it, it's great.

Dave: You also have to do the muscles right, or do the movements right. I've had times where squats for me, I've injured my low back in all kinds of squats because I have some weakness there.

Ben: Sure.

Dave: It's probably structural-

Ben: [crosstalk 00:37:53] But that doesn't mean you can't squat, right?

Dave: No. [crosstalk 00:37:55] ... be careful.

Ben: That means you need to learn how to do it correctly.

Dave: Yeah.

Ben: Yeah.

Dave: Exactly. All right, so there's our sort of ... Well, let's do a hierarchy. So you don't have access to an ARX or a tonal, any of the isokinetic stuff like that. What comes next? Electrical stimulation, a resistance band?

Ben: It's impossible to say. It depends, and the answer is, I think all of them. I think they all provide different value. So it depends on where someone is in that continuum of acquiring the skill. If you're really poor at using dumbbells or a barbell, well it's not going to provide a stimulus to your body. You're going to have to use such a small amount of weight that it's going to be more about core and needing the skill than it is going to be about challenging the muscle.

Dave: Okay.

Ben: Which case, well then I want to balance of coordinating the skill, because I want to learn that skill long term, with then something that may be a little bit more externally stabilized that allows me to challenge the muscle directly.

Dave: Okay. You say something, in fact you say it directly, "There's no such thing as genetically weak body parts."

Ben: Yeah, so I make this statement a lot, is if you can build one muscle, you can build them all; because it's all the same internal environment. There's one asterisk that I always add there that sometimes gets overlooked is the only way, the only reason you wouldn't be able to build a body part is if you have really, really long tendons and short muscle bellies. But typically if people have short muscle bellies somewhere, they have it in most places; so that would kind of mean your ability to build muscle everywhere would be the same. So if you can build muscle in your quads, or your shoulders, or your pecs, or whatever, it's the same muscle fiber composition. It's the same internal hormonal environment, the same protein synthesis that's happening. It's just you haven't learned to direct the stimulus yet through that muscle.

So if I pick up a weight and you pick up a weight, let's say we're doing a squat. You may get lower back pain or maybe big glutes, and I may get big quads. What's the difference? It doesn't mean you can't build your quads. It just means the way your body does this exercise mechanically right now, it means I just haven't challenged that muscle appropriately. So I just have to learn to adjust it.

Dave: I see your point. You're saying if you can get a signal into a muscle, the muscle's going to grow. All right.

Ben: Exactly.

Dave: I would 100% agree with that. There are some things that I am going to call genetic weaknesses, sometimes epigenetic as well. For instance, 20% of people have spina bifida.

Ben: Sure.

Dave: At least one of the bifidas.

Ben: Right.

Dave: That was a line from a famous movie. Do you know the one?

Ben: I don't know the movie.

Dave: Oh jeez, the one with the dumb race car driver. I'm forgetting its name. Ricky ...

Ben: Ricky Bobby.

Dave: Ricky Bobby, and he's trying to impress-

Ben: [crosstalk 00:40:08] Talladega Nights.

Dave: Yeah, thank you. He's trying to impress a lady. He's, "I do some charity work."

She says, "Oh, what charity?"

He goes, "It's for one of the bifidas," because he couldn't think of spina bifida.

Ben: Right.

Dave: But spina bifida is a condition that's partly genetic, and it's when your mom couldn't process the folic acid that the government requires be added to certain foods because of a genetic variant that a third of us have that says you need a methylated folic acid, and that normal folic acid actually can be toxic for you. So that means that your lower vertebra don't fuse completely.

Ben: Sure.

Dave: And it's harmless in almost everyone because the ... Spina bifida occulta, by the way. I have this, as 20% of people do. They don't even know it. But, there could be changes in your lower back. The other one is there's huge variety in collagen formation inside the body. So there are people, something called the RCCX phenotype, where their ligaments don't ... they're not as strong as other people, but they might be more bendy.

Ben: Sure.

Dave: So most of the guys in my family, at least on my dad's side-

Ben: I have that.

Dave: Oh, you have that? You have RCCX?

Ben: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Dave: High five. There we go. You're the only person I've ever talked to who actually knows about this on the show.

Ben: Right.

Dave: In fact, there's people with Ehlers-Danlos disease where they really can't form collagen. What ends up happening is you can pop a ligament off. So if you get a muscle too strong without strengthening the ligaments at the same time, you can have serious damage there. So there are some genetically weak body parts, but no genetically weak muscles because muscles will grow at the same-

Ben: [crosstalk 00:41:41] Well, so there's certain predispositions, that some people can have injuries. Well, if there's an injury limiting you from getting to an internal range of motion, we can't build that muscle there. If there's certain genetic predispositions that you have some spinal abnormalities, or some joint abnormalities, of course. But the point being when I say there's no weak body parts, meaning if you can build one muscle, you can build them all.

Dave: Yeah. I 100% agree with you. There's some very tiny stabilizer muscles along the spine that have nothing to do with how you look. If those stay strong as you age, you're much less likely to get injured and have all this back pain.

Ben: Yup.

Dave: Of course, how you get those is probably going to be a yoga pose, or maybe electricity; but you're not going to get that from doing a squat.

Ben: Well, maybe.

Dave: I don't know.

Ben: Right?

Dave: You know more than I do.

Ben: Yeah, so the foundation of all movement, or I believe the foundation of all progress starts with the spine. Everything should be stabilized at what I call the three hubs of stability. So the shoulder girdle, the trunk and spine, and the pelvis. If those things are not stabilized, your ability to produce force and speed at your limbs is going to be diminished. So the first thing that every program should start with is your ability to not flex out your spine. So flexation is kind of rounding of my spine, so the ability to maintain a strong straight spine as I bend over, as I add resistance.

So we can absolutely challenge those muscles. They're called anti-flexors. If my spine flexion is this rounding of my back, and I want all my erectors to act as anti-flexors, so preventing that movement, and that should be the foundation of every training program. So a kettlebell swing as an example, I think it's a bad example; but because you brought that up, it's an example, or a deadlift is an example. As long as someone's progressing the forces that they're exposing their body to, those things are very, very useful.

Where exercisers kind of get a bad reputation is saying, "Well, I'm going to go from zero to 100. I'm going to go from doing nothing to doing a ton," and then people hurt themselves, or they're doing things incorrectly, or their body's not prepared for it. That's really the foundation of what every exercise scientist should be teaching is it's not about the movement. It's about who's doing it, what's the objective, and is this exercise hitting that objective? There's no such thing as bad exercise, there's just people doing them incorrectly in the wrong context.

Dave: Okay. I like that perspective a lot. You say meditation builds muscle. How does meditation build muscle? What's the meditation that I use to build muscle?

Ben: We're going to focus on building muscle, Dave. It's all about the secret. I'm teasing.

Dave: The secret. I manifested muscle through wanting it.

Ben: Yes. That's all I ever did. I never went in the gym. Well, really. So what is most people's limitation to building muscle? One, the skill. They don't have the ability to perform the skill correctly. The second thing is most people go in the gym, and they can't focus, so their mind quits well before their body. Another thing is where their autonomic nervous system? Where most people are, especially in the current day and age, are way over stimulated, way too much sympathetic tone, so that little bit of meditation can bring that parasympathetic tone up a little bit and allow them to live in this recovery state a little more often.

So again, I don't want to get into the mechanics of the autonomic nervous system, but if we can allow our resting default autonomic state to be slightly more parasympathetic than it is sympathetic, now we're giving our body this opportunity to be able to recover and be more anabolic rather than catabolic. So this sympathetic nervous system is the, as we speak about a lot, the nervous system of catabolic. It's breakdown, whereas the parasympathetic is anabolic. It's build up. It's recovery and repair, so most people live in this high sympathetic arousal that just literally prevents muscle from building. So by meditating or breathing, or doing anything that's mindful to just increase that parasympathetic tone, even as simple as like going outside and getting a panoramic view, is very, very parasympathetic, and can contribute massively to muscle building for people who tend to be very sympathetically oriented.

Dave: Okay. So give me a specific visualization that I should do like right now, for your biceps.

Ben: There's no-

Dave: Damn it.

Ben: Visualizing, Dave. Go. We'll do it, if we both do it together, it's going to work.

Dave: I really wanted you to give everyone listening the bicep meditation.

Ben: Yes. No, it doesn't exist, but it is ... There's certainly value, I think, in believing in that you can.

Dave: Yeah.

Ben: Because when you say you can't, you certainly won't. But, this meditation of maybe picturing yourself, visualizing yourself ... I did a lot of visualization throughout my career.

Dave: Yeah.

Ben: It's very, very powerful. I think Arnold spoke about it way back in the day.

Dave: Yeah.

Ben: It's like you got to see it, and you got to believe it. If you see it and believe it, you don't realize how much it changes your mechanics. It changes your posture. It changes your belief. All these things shift, and all of a sudden, your body will develop more. I don't want to get into that kind of esoteric aspect of it, but it's certainly pretty definable that what you're thinking about and how you're thinking about it absolutely matters.

Dave: One of the easiest types of meditation to do actually is a guided body awareness meditation.

Ben: Yeah.

Dave: So imagine your toes, imagine golden light on your toes, imagine each toe. You move up through each part of the body. I used to do this actually for years because it turns on nerves and awareness. The mind will pay attention to what you want it to pay attention to, so you end up visualizing everything. When you're done, you're sort of floating somewhere and you're buzzing with energy and going, "What the heck just happened?" There's various soundtracks you can get that will do that, and then you learn how to move that awareness around inside your body. There's nothing that stops you from as you're doing that, imagining your body being twice as big as it is now. Will the body listen? Actually, I really do believe it does.

Ben: Maybe, and maybe that, if anything, allows you to connect better once you go do actually direct a stimulus through it, right? Because ultimately, we're just responding to external forces and external stressors, right?

Dave: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ben: So if I can direct that stress, now all of a sudden maybe I get a greater response. There's so many facets to how people can change their exercise. Really, my objective is to empower people to realize that they can change, whether it be children, teenagers, or anyone. That you absolutely can build the body you want. Step one is let's stop with the story that you have as to what you can't.

Dave: Okay. You've shifted from professional bodybuilder, I've got to eat all the time just to keep enough protein coming in to maintain all this muscle, to what you eat now as you're a retired professional bodybuilder. What did you do at the peak of your bodybuilding nutritionally, and how did you change it to now?

Ben: Well, throughout my career, and early in my career, I did put everyone else does is you focus on what the magazines say, or what you see your favorite expert doing, and you do that. That's just like eating as much as possible, and training as hard as possible. That's what I call just kind of a mindless approach. We're just going to go and do. Then as I evolved in my career, it really focused on learning my body, and feeling what things

felt like. So if I was really, really sore, that told me my body needed something. If I was really, really tired, I needed something else. If I was inflamed, I would look and I would feel, and I would shift that. So learning to pay attention is kind of the foundation of everything.

So during my career, it was very much focused around writing down absolutely everything, and then measuring; like "Today, I did this amount of volume in my workout, and I had this much sleep, and I feel this way." If I'm feeling okay with those variables, now I can then progress it up. So if my training volume goes up a little bit, then I can obviously progress my calories up. So it had to be very, very calculated.

Dave: Right.

Ben: So whereas now, it's as you speak about it, it's about feeling great, performing really well, but longevity more than anything. So I'm not attached to really anything. I'm dogmatic about you need to eat this much protein, you need to eat this many vegetables, or I'm a keto, or I'm carnivore, or I'm vegan. I just really am kind of focused around for my DNA, and examine my DNA. What does my body need? Am I lacking any vitamins? Am I lacking any micronutrients? Do I feel great all the time? So I want my body in a ketogenic state sometimes. I want my body consuming carbohydrates sometimes.

Dave: Yup.

Ben: Am I training hard? If I'm training hard, well guess what? I'm going to eat some carbohydrates because I know not only are carbohydrates fueling performance, but they're also mitigating cortisol. So they're one of your body's if not best mechanism to modulate cortisol. So it needs to bring down that cortisol response. So if I'm very stressed, or if I'm not sleeping very well, well carbohydrates can be a really great tool. So now training or nutrition, because I have a bit of a knowledge base, and that's literally all I teach. I don't teach any dogma around nutrition. I just try to teach tools in the tool belt.

Dave: Yeah, eat to feel good really matters.

Ben: Yeah.

Dave: Like cheesecake.

Ben: Yeah, that makes me feel really good for about five minutes.

Dave: Exactly.

Ben: Then it's done, but you acknowledge that, right? Most people ... and I teach my kids that. I'm like, "Well, that's good for your mouth. Your mouth really enjoys that, and that's good. You want your mouth to feel good, but what are the nutrients you're eating for the other parts of your body?"

Dave: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ben: This thing in your brain really likes this, so let's eat some of that; and this thing in your muscles really like, so let's eat some of that; and this thing may be good for whatever your blood, or your skin. The kids really attach to that, and maybe parents or adults should attach to that, too; is like what am I feeding with this?

Dave: Yeah. I also, I teach my kids. I'm like, "Look, you really want to eat that? Let's look at the ingredients. Look at how much sugar's in there. Would you rather go home and eat two of these organic coconut based ice cream bars, because it's the same amount of sugar, so you can have two of those or that."

They're like, "I don't really want to eat this."

Like, "Well, okay." It's gotten to the point where it's largely self-regulating, where they say, "I don't want to feel bad. I don't like how I feel when I eat stuff like that," so they just don't eat it; because they know what it's like to eat well. Then you just, "Let's go eat garbage."

Ben: Well, you're bright enough to talk to a child in a way that is not emotional, is not like dogmatic. You're just trying to help them make the right decisions. What I find is a lot of parents just aren't, or they don't take their time, right? They don't have the ability to communicate with children, and if you can't, start.

Dave: Yeah.

Ben: As a parent out there, it's very important that you slow down and communicate with your kids, and make it their choice. You're the same way as me. If someone told me that I had to eat something, there's no way I'm doing it. There's no way I'm doing it. I literally remember leaving the dishes in the sink and my mother would yell at me like, "Do the dishes." I would leave them in the sink until she left the room, and when she left the room, I could do them; because I really wanted to be like, "No, this is my decision." I think most parents have to realize that about their kids. There's just sometimes let them make their own decisions. You just have to guide it.

Dave: It's funny. We were going to do this interview at the Health Optimization Summit in London, and we had a time zone mishap. So on that trip, this was a couple months ago from when we were recording this. In Europe, they don't spray glyphosate on their wheat. I handle that wheat much better. It's still not good for me. I know it very well.

My kids are gluten free, and I just tell them, "Look don't eat that, it's not good for you. There's all sorts of reasons not to do it." So they got a little bit dogmatic about it, and I don't want my kids to be dogmatic, or judging, or whatever else. So I said, "All right kids, we're going to get a croissant." You should have seen them. Their jaws dropped like, "What?" I'm like, "Yeah. Let's go do it."

And the, "You're joking, right?"

"No, really." This is the first time or maybe the second time I've had wheat in the last 15 years. The other time was also in Europe where like I said, this is baklava my grandmother made; and I'll take two. Like, why not? I have enough resilience to handle that.

So the kids are freaking out, and they ate it, and like, "Oh, that was really good." Then the next day, my daughter handles that stuff much better.

She said, "I want to have another one."

Like, "All right, fine."

My son says, "I don't want one." Like, "I actually was itching all last night, and I don't want it." But it was their choice. I just wish more parents would do that. Show your kids how good they can feel, and then let them wreck it; because it's amazing. Kids learn to walk because every time they fall over, it hurts. So then they don't fall over anymore, and that's how we gain an erect posture. Same thing is true nutritionally.

Ben: Tony Robbins has got the best, I don't know if you've heard his example how his mother told him not to drink, was he always wanted a beer.

So she's like, "Okay, you can have a beer. Sit down, but I'm going to give you a six pack. You got to drink them all."

Dave: Oh god.

Ben: So he ended up puking his face off and hasn't touched a drink ever since. That's ultimately what you're doing is you're like, "Hey, you can feel really good, but," and I haven't made my kids obviously force feeding themselves junk food, but ultimately, that's a great way to learn. You self-regulate, and if you feel terrible on this, just point it out as a parent. I literally did it this week with my daughter flying into Toronto. She asked if she could have a croissant, ironically.

I go, "Sure. If that's what you want, eat it." We were on the airplane coming ...

She goes, "Daddy, my tummy hurts."

I'm like, "I told you, sweetheart. It's going to happen," and she may eat it again, but she probably eats it once a year.

Dave: Yeah.

Ben: Yeah.

Dave: To treat ourselves under that same thing where I tell people when they're first going on the Bulletproof Diet in the book, I mean this is now ... because it was published in 2014, so I just say, "Look, do two weeks of eating the way I'm proposing here. You're all in the

green zone on the road map. When you do that, afterwards eat the cheesecake, eat the nachos, drink the beer, everything bad, and just wake up the next morning and see what it's like."

Ben: And look at your swollen face.

Dave: Yeah, like, "Okay, now you know;" because I think a lot of us lost that. But as a bodybuilder, all bodybuilders know this is going to make me look good, but you were never eating to feel good, right? Most of the people I've talked to, they felt like absolute garbage when they were doing that.

Ben: Yeah, that was one of the big turns, too, is the bigger I got, the worse I felt. Even the leaner I got, the worse I felt.

Dave: Yeah.

Ben: Walking on stage at 4% body fat, you feel terrible. People don't really realize that. You're walking on stage and it's really hard to do that. So you create a negative association after a while, but yeah, it just wasn't a ... I love bodybuilding and I think bodybuilding has so much value for so many people done for the right reasons and the right context. I don't think it's to ... the level that I took it to is necessary, but I think empowering yourself with the knowledge and the ability to do anything can build confidence daily. Bodybuilding took discipline. It took focus. It built character. It built confidence. I think anything that does that for people is extremely valuable, because why not ...

Our life is so easy. It's so curated as human beings right now. When else do you allow your body ... Again, any athletic endeavor I guess is ... anywhere where you can intentionally subject yourself to challenge and discipline is extremely important, especially ... Well, I would say especially young people, but really anybody. That's what bodybuilding did for me and I think it can do for so many people; which is why I continue to be an advocate in just a different way. Set a goal, set a plan, and prove to yourself; because nobody else matters, but prove to yourself that you can do it because you can. That's really the message of what I deliver in my business.

Dave: When I was creating the biohacking movement, and I chose not to trademark or copyright the name biohacking, it's because I wanted a name to pull together this community of people. I consider bodybuilders to be some of the original biohackers.

Ben: Absolutely.

Dave: You talk about people who are saying, "I want to make my body do what I want it to do, and I'll find every tool out there, and if I have to inject this, or I have to hang upside down from this, or whatever. I don't care. I'm going to do it." It was such a rebellious disruptive attitude. It was in your face against medicine. I've always respected bodybuilding as a discipline because it's a physical embodiment of meditation. What a meditator, an advanced guru does, I have a full control over my mental cognitive

processes. I know exactly where my mind's going, and my mind will stop when I want it to stop. It will go where I want it to go. All right, and I've gained that level of self-mastery. Physical self-mastery, body building, deep sea diving, world's fastest runner, all of those things like that, those are manifestations of this ability to make what we will with our life.

So I love the way you share your mindset on that, whether it's from food or from anything else, because you said, "I'm going to own it," and then you did. It's pretty remarkable.

Ben: Yeah, and bodybuilding's one of these unique things that's 24 hours a day. When you're aspiring to do something, there's no turning it off.

Dave: Yeah.

Ben: There's no like, "Yeah, I played a basketball game today, and I can go out and have some food with my buddies," or if I'm stressed and I'm tired, I can go out and take a day off." It doesn't happen, and that's why I think it may be one of the most unique sports that exists. Not to put any other sport down, but just bodybuilding is ... there's no time off. You have to sleep tonight. I can't miss a day. I have to train tomorrow. I have to eat this way, or I guess I should say "I get to," but if I really want to succeed, it's very all in. It's all or nothing. That in itself is character building, and I hope everyone realizes who's out there aspiring to build a great body, that it's such a great opportunity to develop character. Even if walking into a room, you see someone who trains and looks great, they automatically get your respect and your, I guess your admiration.

I think that's powerful, and I think everyone should realize that every opportunity in life, whether it be training, whether it be what you're eating, is an opportunity to become the greatest version of yourself. It's always a decision. Am I going to choose something that my tomorrow self, my self of tomorrow is going to thank me for? Or, am I going to choose something that maybe is in some way negative to my body, and if I can choose things that my tomorrow version of myself is going to love, then I'm doing myself a justice. I think that's the big message.

Dave: That is an awesome message just to share as we wrap up the show; but I got to ask you another question, man. You've talked about your shift from how I look to how I feel, and even to how long I'm going to live. On Muscle Intelligence, your podcast, you talk about longevity a lot these days. How long do you think you're going to live?

Ben: Well, it seems like all my, everyone in my family lives to be at least 100 to 102, so I've got good genes backing me up, Dave.

Dave: All right.

Ben: So what do you think I can do?

Dave: Well, that's your floor then, right?

Ben: Yes.

Dave: I figure 102, 104 is minimum.

Ben: Okay.

Dave: I just want to make sure that I can still ride my bike and have great sex when I'm 102, so that's why I'm reading your books.

Ben: Well, let's think about it. We got 62 more years until you're 100, right?

Dave: Yeah.

Ben: That's kind of interesting to think about it like that.

Dave: Yeah.

Ben: I've actually never said that out loud, because that's not that long, is it?

Dave: Well, let's go back 62 years.

Ben: Where was I?

Dave: No.

Ben: In the world?

Dave: Look at the state of what we could do, what we knew 62 years ago. So that's 1960.

Ben: 1960.

Dave: Okay.

Ben: Very different, wasn't it?

Dave: Yeah. We did have antibiotics for 15 years.

Ben: Yeah, we didn't have much, though. It would have been a very different reality.

Dave: Yeah, right.

Ben: Yeah.

Dave: We had just invented plastic foods, margarine and things like that. Actually, that was invented by Napoleon, but it was popularized. Margarine became healthy in the 60s and 70s. But we were, let's see, we were driving cars that had no electronics in them. I have a 1969 Pontiac Bonneville convertible outside. It's amazing. You can see what everything

does. It's entirely mechanistic. We didn't really have much in the way of epidemiology. We didn't understand mitochondria. We didn't understand DNA. We didn't have the ability to share information the way we do.

Ben: There's an argument that, that's what's going to kill us, ultimately, right? There's a flip side of every coin.

Dave: Oh, artificial intelligence is going to-

Ben: I don't know about artificial intelligence, but all the technologies we're exposed to, right? The blue lights, the EMFs, the curated life, right?

Dave: Yeah. I'm less worried than you might expect.

Ben: Yeah. Well, you're out here. Not everyone's living-

Dave: Now, keep in mind, I started a company that very carefully, we had a patent, so my name on them, about blocking certain frequencies of light to improve sleep. This is True Dark, the company, the glasses I'm wearing. So these are problems. However, the ability to harness electrons and to share information is overwhelmingly powerful. You look behind you, and this is a video thing, so if you're watching the YouTube channel, you'll see this. There's a piece of technology from 1885, which is the world's ... It actually won the world's best filing system from 140 years ago. Now, on your phone, you have access to more information than the president of the United States had. This is in your lifetime, okay? This is the most powerful guy arguably in the world with armies of research scientists around the country, could not access what you can access for free in your pocket. That is why the net balance of are EMFs bad for you? Of course they're bad for you, right? But can also EMFs be good for you? Yeah, I have a machine right over there, something from Upgrade Labs that uses EMFs to drive bone density.

So they're not good or bad, they're simply tools that can be applied for good or for bad. We have the ability to identify challenges and overcome those. That's what we've always done. I look at the benefits versus the risks. We really need to fix our lighting so it's compatible with our circadian biology. I have a company whose mission is to do that. There are others who are working on it as well. By the time 25, 30 years from now, our street lights at night, they'll be red; because we realized that we're destroying insect population of the planet that we needed with our bright lights. Oh, and we're ruining our sleep and increasing depression, and all sorts of stuff. We'll fix it. It'll be okay. It's just a matter of having a long enough lens.

So I just remind people, and you specifically, go back to how little we knew, how little control we had, the barbarism of medicine back then. I look at the knee surgery that I had just 30 years. Oh my god, was it 30 years? No. Yeah, almost. It was incredibly, incredibly barbaric; and now they can go in and people are walking the next day. So we're continuing to improve and improve and improve, and the rate of improvement is going up and up and up.

That's why when I look at what's it going to look like for you? As long as we don't destroy our top soil and we're right now, over the next five years, everyone is starting to fix that. We'll fix the oceans. We'll start incinerating plastic instead of trying to somehow put it in landfills where it will never break down. We'll clean the smoke as it comes out. All of this is fixable, getting fixed, and the world's getting more educated. We're about to add several more billion people to the internet, so the people who are not educated will become educated for free. So all of this is happening in the next 62 years for you to live as old as your grandfather. If that can't give you another 40 years, it's because either a comet hit the planet, or a truck hit you.

Ben: Right. Yeah, I don't disagree, man. Rather than focusing on how long, I'm just focusing on how well. I can't control if I get hit by lightning tomorrow, or whatever, drop a dumbbell on my head, right? But I can certainly control this moment.

Dave: There you go.

Ben: And I can control being present with my family and with myself, and with my loved ones, and with anyone I meet. That's really my focus is rather than ... Again, I want to optimize every minute of my life, both physically and mentally, so that I can live to be 180, and you and I can be neighbors, and share our bio dynamic vegetables and organic gardens, and animals, and stuff.

Dave: I'll trade you some broccoli for some cauliflower.

Ben: Done. I'm more of a broccoli guy anyways.

Dave: Nice. You've been listening to a podcast, Bulletproof Radio, with Ben Pakulski and look at his podcast, Muscle Intelligence; BenPakulski.com. It's been a pleasure, thanks for coming up to my house on Vancouver Island. I appreciate you.

Ben: Dave, likewise. Beautiful place. You've done an amazing job, and Dave is truthfully a man of his word living an authentic life; so it's truly an honor. As I said when we started, I'm a fan.

Dave: Thanks, man.