

Dave Asprey: If you're a regular listener you've heard me share my list of top 10 bio-hacks. Let's talk about number nine. Fun hacks for the Bulletproof mind. It may sound weird, but hanging upside down is a great way to hack your brain. Regularly inverting trains your brain capillaries, making them stronger and more capable to bring oxygen to your brain. It's pretty straightforward, more oxygen in the brain, means better performance. I get my daily stretch and my dose of oxygen with my Teeter inversion table. Which is so essential for optimum focus, concentration, and mental energy. That full body stretch elongates the spine and takes the pressure off the disks so they can plump back up. Less pressure means less pain.

If you have back pain, even if you've been lucky enough to avoid it so far. You really want to Teeter to invert every day to keep your back and joints feeling great. For over 35 years Teeter has set the standard for quality inversion equipment you can trust. My friends over at Teeter have decided to show some love to Bulletproof listeners. For a limited time, you can get the Teeter inversion table with bonus accessories and a free pair of gravity boots so you can invert at home or take the boots with you to the gym. To get this deal, which is a savings of over 138 bucks go to GetTeeter.com/Bulletproof. You'll also get free shipping and a 60 day money back guarantee and free returns. There's absolutely no risk for you to try it out. Remember you can only get the Teeter with bonus accessories and a free pair of gravity boots by going to GetTeeter.com/Bulletproof. G-E-T-T-E-E-T-E-R.com/Bulletproof, check it out.

Speaker 2: Bulletproof radio, a state of high performance.

Dave Asprey: You're listening to Bulletproof radio with Dave Asprey. Today's guest on Bulletproof radio is none other than John Mackey, the CEO of Whole Foods and author of a brand new book called surprisingly, The Whole Foods Diet. John may not need an introduction. You might not know that in 1980 he started Whole Foods. They're now almost a 16 billion dollar Fortune 500 company, with 460 stores and almost 90,000 employees. One of the 100 best companies to work for according to Fortune. John's been recognized as one of the world's 50 greatest leaders. Barron's called him the world's best CEO, Fortune's business person of the year and Esquire's most inspiring CEO. John my first question is how did you feel when you were in Esquire?

John Mackey: I like the Esquire because they made me look good. They had their hair stylists and they were making me look super hip and cool. Which I've never been able to replicate ever since.

Dave Asprey: It's one of those things is you're in Esquire. You're like, "Now I've made it [crosstalk 00:02:49]."

John Mackey: I actually, believe it or not got letters after that came out. I got a letter from a woman in Australia saying, "I look like a really interesting man she'd like to meet. Could I get together with her next time she's in Austin." I didn't respond to that one.

Dave Asprey: Yeah, I could see why you wouldn't want to do that. There's a lot of cool stuff we can talk about. What the main focus of our conversation today is your new book. The Whole Foods Diet caught my attention because you went around and you talked with a bunch of different experts. You talked about your own evolution with food and you wrote it with two physicians. What made you, I think the technology term is a very accomplished CEO decide to write a book on food?

John Mackey: I've been studying it my entire adult life. For 40 years I've been studying healthy eating. I've had my own internal journey. Imagine for a second Dave that you believe that you know the solution to the health crisis in America. America is 71% overweight. It's almost 38% obese. The two leading killers are heart disease and cancer. Diabetes is becoming almost pandemic. You know what to do about it. It's almost an ethical compunction to write a book about it. It was a bucket list thing for me. I had to write this book. I had to communicate it. I meet people all the time. I feel like I know how to help them, if they would just change their diets they could reverse a lot of these problems and their diseases. What Whole Foods Market did, we have a program called the Total Health Emersion.

We take our sickest team members, those who have heart disease. Those who are type 2 diabetic. Those who are obese. Those who have terrible biometrics, extremely high cholesterol, high blood sugar levels. At the expense of the company, we will send them. It's voluntary, we don't force anyone to go. The cost is about \$4,000 to send them to a one week medically supervised Total Health Emersion. In that one week they're eating The Whole Foods Diet. They are being intensely educated about healthy eating, about exercise, about how to live a healthy lifestyle. The results have been astounding. We sent again over 4,000 people through that program now. I've seen so many people reverse their type 2 diabetes in less than four weeks. I've seen heart disease reversed. I've seen hundreds of people lose over 100 pounds of weight. It's so quickly. The human body is actually quite resilient. It wants to heal itself. If we stop poisoning it, it heals pretty quickly. That was my big take away. I was like, "We've got to get this information out to a much larger audience."

Dave Asprey: You've sent 4,000 employees?

John Mackey: We've sent 4,000 through now, yeah.

Dave Asprey: That's millions of dollars that you spent on doing this.

John Mackey: On the other hand, think about it. That's a win-win strategy for us because we pay ... We're self insured, meaning we pay most of the healthcare cost of our

team members. How much do they spend on me? Nothing. About 15% of our team members we spend about 85% of our total healthcare dollars. If we can get our sickest people healthier, that's good for them. It's also good for our company. It's a win-win-win strategy.

Dave Asprey: Now that's something that a lot of companies don't do. In fact it's pretty unusual.

John Mackey: Because they don't understand the The Whole Foods Diet, if they did they'd be doing it. Maybe I think eventually because this does work, it will spread. I have great belief that despite lots of false information out there. Over time science wins. Over time word of mouth spreads things. Eventually people will begin to eat much healthier diets and they won't have these diseases.

Dave Asprey: The Whole Foods Diet, is one I support many of the tenets of it. There are some parts of it where I'm not convinced frankly, which is okay. I've had lots of people on the show where we don't always agree.

John Mackey: I'm not looking for converts. It's not a religious movement.

Dave Asprey: I'm looking to learn here. Tell me the main tenets? Eat mostly plants? I'm down with that. A plate of vegetable is a core thing to have.

John Mackey: It's really simple it's just two major rules. Eat real foods. Real foods are foods ... Eat real whole foods, foods that have not been highly processed. If you think about it for a second, what is sugar? Sugar is from plants, and it is the pure carbohydrate from the plant. It doesn't have any of the fiber. It doesn't have any of the nutrients. It's basically just pure carbohydrate, the sugar. We don't seem to have any problem in our society recognizing that sugar is a very harmful food and we should eat very little of it or none at all. That goes for pretty much refined carbohydrates in general. We're stripping away the fiber. We're stripping away the nutrients. Eating lots of breads and donuts and things like that. Those aren't real foods. They're not really healthy foods.

What's more controversial, which you may take issue with, is I think the same thing is true with oil. Oil is from plants, it's the pure fat from the plant. Sugar is the pure carbohydrate from the plant and oil is the pure fat from the plants. It also lacks nutrients. It lacks micronutrients. It lacks fiber. We would say if you're going to eat a real foods diet you want to minimize those pure carbohydrates or those refined carbohydrates and also those pure fats. We're not against fat, we don't make an argument against fat. We think fat is going to be found in real foods. That's perfectly fine. We think you should be focused more about food rather than the macronutrients.

Eat this many carbs, don't eat carbs. Eat carbs. Eat fat, don't eat fat. Eat more protein, eat less protein. No. It's about eating real foods. That's rule number one. Rule number two is mostly plants. We're not arguing for a plant based diet

unless that's your personal choice. We are arguing, we believe the science that once you begin to get your total animal food consumption up above 10% of calories as a lifestyle basis that your risk for down the road, it's not next week. Down the road your risk for heart disease and cancer begin go up. The more animal food you eat past a certain point the higher your risk is for those diseases.

Dave Asprey: One of the things that I run into a lot when I'm talking about the Bulletproof diet. Which people listening may be going, "What are you talking about? Is there a similarity here?" There's actually enormous amount of similarity. One of the things I believe is don't eat foods that won't spoil. Don't eat foods that are spoiled.

John Mackey: I think that's very sensible advice. Although, are fermented foods spoiled?

Dave Asprey: It depends on what fermented them, usually.

John Mackey: There you go. It's an interesting question though.

Dave Asprey: It is. It actually leads into where I'm going with that. Which is that there are different types of animal proteins. There are different types of plant oils. Different types of plant foods even. They have different effects on the body. I've started out my path when I weighed 300 pounds. I would say, "I need carbs for energy. There's a can of Coke." I remember in high school that was what you would do because it was just carbs and carbs give you energy. This was the 80s and I would like to say we don't know any better. I ate bran muffins too and all that stuff, but I was fat. When I fast forward to Cheetos and ... I guess Cheetos may have some milk in them or something. Some sort of corn chips fried in vegetable oil and a diet soda is technically plant based other than the chemicals in there.

John Mackey: It's not a real food.

Dave Asprey: It's not real food exactly.

John Mackey: It's not a whole food.

Dave Asprey: Neither you nor I would have anything to do with that. Then when you get into the point there about especially refined plant oils I am in full agreement with that. The vast majority of refined plant oils are in the kryptonite zone on the Bulletproof diet because they're extracted, because they're solvent extracted and because they're damaged. Having looked at the anti-aging stuff that I've done and all this. I realized that undamaged oils have a different affect on the body, then damaged oils. Usually when you extract oils from plants you tend to do some damage to them. You did Forks Over Knives, you talked with a lot of the people in Forks Over Knives.

John Mackey: They're the co-authors of the book.

Dave Asprey: Are those two doctors, the Forks Over Knives doctors.

John Mackey: They are Matthew Lederman and Alona Pulde are the two doctors that are in the documentary and wrote the book.

Dave Asprey: Got it.

John Mackey: They work with Whole Foods.

Dave Asprey: Okay. The Forks Over Knives documentary guys [crosstalk 00:12:04]. I didn't connect the names with this. They looked at the original paleo founders. They looked at original vegetarian, very different things. Which is something I really respect about the movie and about your book that you're going in on these things. What's your take-away on the optimal amount or the type of fat that would be appropriate?

John Mackey: I think it's an argument or a discussion I don't really like to have because we're really trying to get people focused on foods, not the constituents of foods. Carbohydrate, proteins and fats are the macronutrients. Then you have vitamins and minerals and phytonutrients are the micronutrients. They still are important. The important thing is if you eat real foods, mostly plants, you're going to get the right mix of protein, carbohydrate and fats. It's just going to be there naturally. It's not that complex. We make healthy eating far more complex than it needs to be. That's why we only have the two rules. I eat avocados, they're mostly fat, I love avocados. I eat nuts and seeds, those are mostly fat.

Dave Asprey: Absolutely.

John Mackey: You talk about not damaging the fat, well the least damaged fats are those that are still part of the whole food.

Dave Asprey: Amen.

John Mackey: Eat whole foods and don't worry about your macronutrients.

Dave Asprey: I love that perspective on it. One of the things that I think has damaged nutrition in the country a lot is this idea that macros are either calories or these big buckets because whey protein versus soy protein, neither one of them.

John Mackey: Those are not whole foods.

Dave Asprey: Exactly. They're not whole foods. You might use one or both of them as a supplement in a small amount to do something that you want to do with your biology. Like you said they're not whole foods, they're supplemental if you

decide to use them. Do you ever use protein powders or any of those other things like that?

John Mackey: No.

Dave Asprey: You eat whole foods.

John Mackey: I eat whole foods. I believe that the average American, my friend Garth Davis wrote a book called Proteinaholic. That on average the average American eats two to three times more protein than they need. It's actually stressful on our bodies to have to take that protein. Protein that you can't use for growing muscles and bones and just your whole body that you need for repair. The body has no use for it. It doesn't store it. It basically has to break it down into energy. That's can cause stress on your kidneys. Americans tend to be focused on protein because the question I get asked the most often, pretty much at any book signing is, "Where do you get your protein? Where do you get are protein?" Everywhere, because it's in every whole food I eat.

Protein is there. The only way you couldn't get enough protein Dave is if you eat those junk foods ... If you're trying to live on Cokes and Cheetos, you're going to be protein deficient, you're going to be micronutrient deficient. You're basically going to be sick, I pretty much guarantee it, because that's not going to nourish your body. It's about eating whole foods. One thing we describe in the book. We do a pie chart of what Americans eat. It's very disturbing because 54% of the calories we eat come from highly processed and refined foods, 54% of our calories, 32% come from animal foods. The majority is of those animal foods are foods that are from the industrial system. Beef that's been pumped up full of corn and has a lot of marbling fat in it. Eggs, chickens that are in these circumstances that we would not think are naturally not good for the animals. Arguably they're not the healthiest animal foods you can be eating.

Dave Asprey: I don't even think there's an arguable for that statement. If you're eating animals that were fed unnatural diets and you're sticking them full of antibiotics and probably getting some pesticide residues in there as well.

John Mackey: It's bio-accumulated.

Dave Asprey: I don't eat that kind of food, period. I do eat animal products, but most of the animals that I eat, eat the grass that grows in front of my organic farm. I'm very fortunate. I live in the middle of nowhere, which helps. It is entirely possible to go to Whole Foods and buy grass fed meat if you're going to do it, it is more expensive than industrial meat. Which is why you should eat less of it because protein is a terrible fuel source, right?

John Mackey: Exactly. We argue in the book that for your animal foods you should be concentrating ... I particularly believe that from the animal food perspective, that wild caught fish, you've got to be a little careful about the bioaccumulation

of mercury and PCBs and things like that. However that's going to be your best source for omega-3s, particularly the long chain omega-3s that are more difficult to get in a 100% plant based diet or definitely grass fed beef. Particularly they're going to get a higher degree of omega-3's. They're going to have more micronutrients in it. The thing that again if you focus just on those macronutrients, protein and we're ignoring those micronutrients.

They are extremely important to our immune system and our overall health. We want to eat micronutrient dense diets, which by the way fresh fruits and vegetables are the highest per calorie microdensity foods that we can eat. We're only eating 14% whole plant foods. That's what's wrong with the American diet largely. We're eating an industrialized product, full of refined foods. The animal foods are industrialized. We're not eating very many whole, real plant foods. Only 14% of our calories. That's pretty low.

Dave Asprey: It's pretty shocking. Although if you take away the water from the vegetables and you look at volume instead of calories. I know that if I take a plate, literally my daily intake is a plate covered in vegetables, whether they're cooked or not. Then a few ounces of grass fed high quality meat, at most. Then I'll cover it with guacamole, grass fed butter, which also doesn't get damaged in the processing as well. I know, we probably don't agree all the way on butter but that's okay.

John Mackey: Whole Foods sells butter, I'm not going to freak out [crosstalk 00:18:35] butter.

Dave Asprey: There you go. It's also from grass fed animals, which is important. Without all the pesticides, all that other mistreatment of animals and stuff. When I look at the percentage of calories that comes from the plant based foods it's probably low, just because there's so much bulk.

John Mackey: Because I think you've left out ... Let me make the argument that probably many of your audience either never heard or are going to reject, but I'm going to make it anyway. The foods you're leaving out are the healthy starch foods. I would argue, if you think about, we have a chapter on the blue zones for example in the book. Where we talk about all the longest lived peoples in the world. The five blue zones they've identified, Okinawa, Sardinia Italy, Ikaria Greece, Nicoya Costa Rica, and Loma Linda California.

They all eat a 90% plant based diet, 10% animal foods on average. On a meta-analysis shows that. They're not eating the processed junk foods. Their primary calorie source is starch foods. Whether it be beans and rice or whether it be sweet potatoes or whether it be corn. All of the civilizations that we know of in history have based their primary calorie source on starch foods. Even there's evidence that even our paleo ancestors were still getting starch foods in because they were getting a lot of roots. A lot of sweet potatoes, potatoes, casaba roots, starchy vegetables, squashes, things like that.

Dave Asprey: I'm not opposed to starchy vegetables at all.

John Mackey: If you put that on your plate too, you're going to get a lot more calories from plant foods, than from animal foods, I guarantee.

Dave Asprey: Those are higher calorie.

John Mackey: And very satisfying.

Dave Asprey: They are.

John Mackey: A nice clean energy burn too. You don't have that same spike in blood sugar you're going to get when you do a refined carbohydrates.

Dave Asprey: That's for sure. At lunch I usually don't eat those, but at dinner I'll have sweet potatoes, butternut squash. On the Bulletproof diet we've got essentially the safe starches. One of the things I came across in my own path, is that there are meaningful numbers of people who just respond poorly to the outer part of grains. There are other people I know who can just eat sprouted grains or whatever that it doesn't seem to do anything to them. What I did is I took certain grains that had less of the inflammatory stuff, I put them in that if they work for you, go for it. Which is why a lot of people who are listening are saying, "Would there be any common ground between these things?" When I read your book, I actually found that there's a huge amount of commonality there, despite the fact that I might eat more avocados that you would on the average meal and have the butter side of things.

The follow up there, if we agree that a plate of vegetable is the way we start. We have some sort of safe starch that's biologically compatible with you. I think we're in agreement. The next question though, is one that's maybe more Whole Foods based. I get this a lot. It's how the heck do I pay for all this? Because our food supply is set up to be so industrial, where if you're doing the animal protein. It's poor quality animal protein, especially at restaurants. You try to order a plate of vegetables at a restaurant. They charge you \$17 for three spears of asparagus. You tell them, "I want a plate of vegetables." They simply won't do it even if you offered to pay them \$100 usually. It's very hard to just get an actual meal made out of this stuff. How do we do that? How do we fix that?

John Mackey: You mean if you don't cook?

Dave Asprey: I cook at home.

John Mackey: Because the truth is in The Whole Foods Diet is a very inexpensive diet. If you are building your diet around whole grains and starchy vegetables, and let's just throw the gluten out. My wife is gluten sensitive. We don't eat gluten in my house. We still eat steel cut oats. We still are going to eat millet, quinoa. We're going to have some starchy type of foods with most of our meals. We eat a lot of sweet potatoes. There's so many different delicious kinds of sweet potatoes.

Dave Asprey: Sweet potatoes are amazing.

John Mackey: We do lots of the winter squashes, they're delicious. Then we both love beans. If you asked Dan Buettner of the Blue Zones. One of the most common things he found between all the different Blue Zone areas in terms of their diet, he said beans and greens. They all eat about a cup of beans a day. They all eat a cup or two of green vegetables. The good thing I love about what you're saying about your diet Dave is you're having a ton of vegetables. Those are the most nutrient dense foods you can eat per calorie. Of course it's not enough. On average a pound of vegetables has about 90 to 100 calories in it. It's not a starchy vegetable. If that's all you'll try to live on, you'd have to eat 20 pounds of vegetables a day to get 2,000 calories and you couldn't do it. You'd starve to death.

Dave Asprey: I was a raw vegan for quite a while. I bought salad bowls that were the size of half a watermelon. I was blending and chopping for two hours a day. I did lose weight on that diet.

John Mackey: That's why I think the starchy vegetables are so important. It's very difficult to eat a plant based diet. You're either going to have to get a lot of calories from fat or you're going to have to get it from starches. I think arguably that based on the history of humanity that starch foods are the ones that we basically evolved primarily eating. That's what civilizations have all been based on, that's what the Blue Zones do. If you think about Okinawa, 70% of the elders of Okinawa's calories came from just sweet potatoes, 70%. They had beans, they'd add beans. They'd add a little bit of fish to that. A little bit of pork when they were doing celebratory, about 4 to 5% animal foods in that diet. I'm an ethical vegan.

I don't make the argument that humans evolved. We evolved as what I call plant based omnivores. Just like chimpanzees and bonobos, they eat about 95% plant based and about 5% animal foods. Mostly termites and grubs and things like that. They occasionally get a monkey and they'll tear it apart and eat it. I think humans are very similar to that from our genetic closest ones. We flourish on mostly a plant based diet, with a little bit of animal foods. Then it's about where you're going to get most of your calories from. You're arguing for fat for your major calories. I'm going to argue starches would be a healthier choice and the one that's most proven in terms of longevity.

Dave Asprey: There's abundant evidence to support both of those, one or the other.

John Mackey: Where is your evidence of longevity from eating the high fat diet from? I don't see that in data?

Dave Asprey: Historically there haven't been societies that have been wealthy enough to do that, other than a few rulers. Where they could do that. Then there's the question of what happens with the processing of the fats and the type of fats, those seem to be really important. What I'm looking at here is the biochemical

argument. What happens when you have a background level of ketones present where you get rapid reductions in inflammation. You get changes in hormones that are correlated with longevity. It changes in telomeres, changes in mitochondrial efficiency.

One of the five big fears of aging is around losing mitochondrial efficiency. You can actually turn it back on with some ketones. I'm also one of the people who angers most with the keto crowd, who says you have to only be burning fat. I actually believe that a cyclical ketosis diet, where you actually do eat the starches you talk about. Then you stop eating them and you go into fat, and you go into starch, and you go into fat because having the body respond to the environment around it seems to keep us younger, almost like exercise does. You're doing it with food.

John Mackey: I'm not going to argue the biochemistry with you. I would say that's largely untested over the long term. You're coming to a big experiment here.

Dave Asprey: I don't actually disagree with that. There really aren't a lot of high fat historically.

John Mackey: Stating my case for ... Just using myself as an example. I'm 63 so I'm not a young guy. I weigh the same as I weighed when I was 18. I weigh 145 pounds. My cholesterol is 135, my LDL is about 65 to 70. My blood sugar is very low and my blood pressure [crosstalk 00:27:30].

Dave Asprey: In the 80s?

John Mackey: In the 80s. My blood pressure is 105 over 70. Although I might say, probably recently I'm under a little stress, so it might be a little higher right now. On average-

Dave Asprey: Book launches are tough.

John Mackey: It's an easy diet to follow. It works for people. You said you were a raw food vegan. To me, I wouldn't argue for a raw food vegan diet. [crosstalk 00:27:57] I think that's a very difficult diet.

Dave Asprey: It gave me Hashimoto's and food allergies. It was really rough on my body.

John Mackey: I've seen so many people when they adapt a starch based whole foods diet, cut the gluten out. You're eating whole grains like steel cut oats and you're eating sweet potatoes and brown rice and things like that. Your body responds very well to those starches. Then you're going to get some fat along with the diet. You're eating legumes and beans. You have to change your bio ... It's already the next frontier is the microbiome. What are we feeding our gut bacteria?

Dave Asprey: It matters so much.

John Mackey: Over time whatever you feed yourself, you're feeding some bacteria and others are dying off. A lot of people say they can't digest beans very well, and they probably can't because they don't have the bacteria geared up in their system to digest it.

Dave Asprey: Have you heard of Viome, the new service?

John Mackey: I haven't.

Dave Asprey: This is a new thing from Naveen Jain who's one of the guys involved with Joe Polish and all. They're doing four times a year gut testing to see what fungus, what bacteria, what virus, what-

John Mackey: I'd love that, could you send me that information?

Dave Asprey: Yeah, I'll hook you up with it.

John Mackey: Obviously clear I should be a member here.

Dave Asprey: I think so. I'll make sure to do that intro. I've already talked with Naveen, he was a guest on the show.

John Mackey: Okay.

Dave Asprey: He's someone who you should be connected with because then you can see if you start eating beans, do you change your gut bacteria? The answer is, yeah the fiber is going to do that. I believe that there's probably also some genetic differences because there are compounds called lectins in certain foods. In bell peppers, there are some people, like me who should never eat a bell pepper again.

John Mackey: Some people have food allergies. Some foods we just don't agree with. The lectin argument is overstated.

Dave Asprey: It just depends on the biology of the person.

John Mackey: I know, but most of the lectins in beans, you have to soak the beans. Then you've got to throw the soaking water out. Then you cook the beans, make sure they're thoroughly cooked. I don't know. Then you're microbiome takes care of it.

Dave Asprey: Most people handle that pretty well. I do know that after extensive tests with myself I get chronic joint pain if I eat beans. It doesn't mean that everyone does. It has to do with probably mitochondrial DNA, not even nuclear DNA. It's one of those things where if you don't test it, you won't know. It's a suspect foods, you've got to know whether you can handle them or not and that you're worth a test. The evidence that you're talking about from the Blue Zones in the book.

Yeah, there are long lived societies that eat beans. There's the [inaudible 00:30:51], who are 70% starch and live a long time. We do have evidence that there is a group of people who are primarily starch.

John Mackey: We just don't know any societies that primarily eat fat, that live a long time. There's no evidence today of that.

Dave Asprey: Let's see. What about the Maori tribes people.

John Mackey: The Masai and [crosstalk 00:31:13]. The Eskimos have the lowest life expectancy in the Northern hemisphere and the Masai, the average age is 45 at death. I'm not sure those are great examples.

Dave Asprey: No. They're not. I felt crappy when I did a diet like that. When I was doing the research for the Bulletproof diet.

John Mackey: When you were mixing blood with your milk? The Masai did.

Dave Asprey: It's really hard to get fresh blood.

John Mackey: You know a few vampires out there?

Dave Asprey: Exactly. The interesting thing though, I did go for extreme high fat diet. I ate one serving of vegetable a day. I was eating 80% of my calories from fat and the rest from fish and grass fed meat. I gave myself some really nasty food allergies I didn't have before. It was not a good three months. I felt great for the first little while. Then I started waking up without knowing it 12 times a night. That my sleep monitoring stuff was telling me, "You're waking up." I'd sleep 10 hours a night. I just feel like a zombie. It took me a while to come back from that. I'm not sure I want to-

John Mackey: Something I like about you Dave is you're very experimental guy. You're an explorer, you're out there exploring these new frontiers. You're willing to use your own body as testing ground. I think that's fascinating.

Dave Asprey: Thanks John. I had arthritis in my knee since I was 14. I was obese and I had brain fog. It's like I was old in my mid 20s. I'm not going back to that. I'm willing to try almost anything to make sure I don't live in that state again. Having been there, I don't want to do that. I'm looking to see what works best for me, understanding that we have this incredible abundance of diversity in our gut bacteria. In our DNA from our parents. Then in our mitochondrial DNA, the mitochondria are there to take food and convert it with oxygen into energy for us. There has to be an algorithm that works for most people. It's a little flow chart. Don't do this if that hurts.

John Mackey: Clearly, we're not arguing that people have to, they have to discover what makes them sick. The problem is in some ways, the challenge is our bodies are

messed up. They often times ... If you get addicted to certain foods for example, you can just crave them. You're going through withdraw symptoms if you're not getting that. "I have to eat that because I feel good when I eat it. I don't feel good when I don't eat it." That's what an alcoholic would say or a smoker would say. I feel really good when I'm smoking, and after I smoke I get a little anxious, so I smoke again or I feel good after I'm drinking, and then I don't feel good when I'm not drinking. We have serious food addictions.

Dave Asprey: We do.

John Mackey: Most people don't want to change their diets. People never get tired of hearing good things about their bad habits, because people basically don't want to change the way they eat. They always want to hear things that they want to believe are true. There's always going to be a market for people that say, "Gosh if you give up sugar, you can eat all the animal foods you want." There's a real market for that, because that seems like a minor sacrifice. What are the long term consequences of that diet? I would say, they're not going to be good for most people.

Dave Asprey: I'll be a little bit more directional about chemicals, the long term results are cancer. Because when you eat that much protein, it raises [inaudible 00:35:04], instead of keeping it low most of the time. Which is what you want to do if you don't get cancer. I'm concerned about that. I don't overeat meat and a lot of the paleo crowd, big cuts of steak. I do enjoy big cuts of steak. I just know if I eat that on a regular basis I'm not going to like how I feel and I'm probably not going to live as long as I want to live. Speaking of that, how long do you think I'm going to live?

John Mackey: I think I'll live to be past 100. We're about telomeres, I had a telomere check a year ago. I was in the 98th percentile.

Dave Asprey: Nice.

John Mackey: I had the telomeres of a 12 year old. I thought, "That's cool."

Dave Asprey: That is really cool, of a 12 year old.

John Mackey: I make people so upset, somebody's probably going to knock me off one of these days. Maybe after hearing this podcast. "Asshole, I hate that guy. John Mackey, somebody has got to take him out."

Dave Asprey: I think and I've got, I'm about 20 years younger than you, I'm 44.

John Mackey: I'm 63.

Dave Asprey: Okay, pretty good guess. We've got a bunch of changes coming. I know a lot of the people doing work now in the anti-aging fields. I think there's a good chance

in the next 10 years of adding 20 years to our lives, with some of the things we have around telomeres.

John Mackey: One of my jokes is they're going to finally figure out how to stop aging when I get to be 100. So I will spend all eternity at age 100.

Dave Asprey: There's maybe some truth to that. Although we may be able to reverse it.

John Mackey: I think maybe they can reverse it. I'm all for that.

Dave Asprey: I think 180 is achievable. Right now we know that you can get to about 120 [crosstalk 00:36:42].

John Mackey: I always read the oldest person documented, even those birth certificates can be tricky because people lie. They forget too. It's like 117 or something like that.

Dave Asprey: I think there's a 127 year old out there now.

John Mackey: Really?

Dave Asprey: Yeah. I think she just passed.

John Mackey: Send me the information.

Dave Asprey: I'll dig that up, somebody just sent that to me the other day. It's 120 ish we'll say.

John Mackey: Dan Buettner talked about when he was doing the Blue Zones, he said the hardest thing was people lie about their age, particularly if they want to be perceived as really old. The hardest thing is being able to document it.

Dave Asprey: Yeah.

John Mackey: Being able to get actual birth certificates and being able to verify that. That cut out a lot of these places like the Hunzas, Pakistan mountain people called the Hunzas. When they got in there and looked at the actual birth data, [crosstalk 00:37:37].

Dave Asprey: It wasn't there.

John Mackey: It didn't make the cut.

Dave Asprey: I definitely know that those are outliers. I don't mind making myself an outlier when it comes to longevity. It sounds like you don't either.

John Mackey: I've got to have some friends that stick around, so I'll have somebody to talk to when [crosstalk 00:37:52].

Dave Asprey: If you want to live a long time, you've got to have some friends. It's one of the big things. In fact that was another thing that was important with all the people that you worked with on the book, was stress reduction. What do you do?

John Mackey: Meditate, do yoga.

Dave Asprey: You meditate, do yoga. How often?

John Mackey: Now that is a fair question. I don't know if I do anything every day, except the basic biological functions. I'll probably meditate four or five times a week.

Dave Asprey: For a few minutes or an hour or?

John Mackey: No. My wife is a yoga teacher, she meditates two hours and does two hours of Vipassana. I'm hoping her karma is going over for me. When I meditate 10 to 20 minutes, I actually feel ... It's the quality of the meditation, not the length.

Dave Asprey: It is.

John Mackey: Really the kind of schedule I have to keep for my life, 10 to 20 minutes is great. It makes a big difference. Also you need to control your breath, but those are actual conscious meditation. The real trick is to be meditating all the time.

Dave Asprey: Yes.

John Mackey: To be fully present in the moment. A mantra I tell myself many times a day. Fully present, fully in my heart, fully in my higher self. When I can do that out, I feel like I'm in this relaxed meditative state all the time.

Dave Asprey: That is an achievement because you're a CEO of a ginormous company, which can be really stressful.

John Mackey: It's a goal, I have to do the mantra many times a day because if I was doing it all the time I wouldn't have to do the mantra, right. You find yourself with a busy mind, you find yourself in an emotional space that you don't think it's necessarily one you want to be in. I've got to refocus and that's a meditation. If you're trying to meditate and you find your mind drifting you go back to whatever your concentrating on or if you're doing Vipassana, you're just observing the thoughts. I think it's the same way with this living meditation. When you find yourself caught up in difficult negative spaces and you've gone out of the moment. You've gone into fear. You've gone into anger. The good news is as soon as you catch yourself you can go right back into the relaxed in the moment space, which is what I try to do.

Dave Asprey: You drive that awareness, you notice when it happens because it sneaks up on you.

John Mackey: Exactly. When you're really conscious, when you're higher self. When you're really present, there isn't any fear. There isn't any anger. There's love, that's what's there in that moment.

Dave Asprey: How did you learn to do that?

John Mackey: I'm still learning how to do that.

Dave Asprey: Good answer.

John Mackey: Like anything else, you practice it. You recognize a state of being. You say, "This is the state of being that I am most fulfilled in. This is the best state for me. I want to be there all the time. Then you practice it. It's like any skill you practice it. If you meditate, you get better at it. If you catch yourself in the day in a place of consciousness you don't want to be in. Catching yourself allows you to choose differently, choose again and start over again. Then you get better at it. I'm just older, [crosstalk 00:41:23] I've been practicing a long time.

Dave Asprey: How much energy and time do you spend every day dealing with the voice in your head?

John Mackey: Of course the answer is when I catch myself with the voice, then I go back into the moment. I don't know, because that would be a very useful wearable.

Dave Asprey: Wouldn't it.

John Mackey: If I have a FitBit on or a Garmin or something I could try it in my sleep. I think that's all valuable feedback information. Wouldn't it be great to have something that actually sees your brain pattern and it's reporting. You spent seven hours in the mind loops that are toxic. That would be very interesting feedback. Hey, is there any doubt that they will come up with something that measures that and we'll be able to wear it.

Dave Asprey: You can get that from neuro feedback. I run a neuro feedback institute. Yeah, you end up seeing more beta and less alpha. It's hackable, but you look like a real dork wearing that around.

John Mackey: I just want to wear it around my wrist.

Dave Asprey: A patch. I'm looking for other things that are in The Whole Foods Diet. Talk to me. What's your take on fasting? Because we're talking about food addictions and all that. I fasted in a cave for four days by myself in the desert because I wanted to explore loneliness and hunger as a formerly obese person with social anxiety. It seemed like a good way to push my buttons and really break an addiction.

John Mackey: I do periodic fasting. Not so much for cleansing. If I don't think my digestion is getting off, for whatever reason. Just simply withholding food and fasting for 24 hours or 48 hours makes a huge difference. Now you know if you fast for three days or longer you change the system, you stop being hungry. I've done a fast that lasts longer than three days. Most of the time I fast a more intermittent fast. I didn't feel quite right. I make sure that before I eat anything else I'm going to get hungry again. I'm going to make sure that ... Fasting is a very good way to ... It's like a reboot. When you fast, you're almost rebooting your digestive system. You're letting it rest. You're letting it recalibrate.

Dave Asprey: When I first stated doing fasting, the thought of it was abhorrent to me, because I come from a background of being obese. Learning that if I didn't eat six meals a day at least, that I would starve to death and I would have no energy. The truth was I wouldn't have no energy.

John Mackey: It teaches you self control.

Dave Asprey: Yeah and I considered that.

John Mackey: It helps break food addictions. It's one thing that I think is important in the book, what exactly is a processed food?

Dave Asprey: Oh yeah. Let's go there.

John Mackey: Yeah, of course all food is processed a little bit when you cook it's processed. The definition that Dr. Michael Gregor gave that I really like, we took it for our book. A unprocessed food or whole food or real food, is a food where nothing bad has been added to it and nothing good has been taken away. For example if you do steel cut oats, they've been processed because they've been cut, but there's nothing bad added to it. None of the fiber, none of the nutrients, nothing has been taken away from it so that qualifies as a real, whole food.

If you go down to oatmeal cookies, you've still got the oats, but now you've added bad things to it. You've added sugar to it, you might have added oil to it. You probably added salt to it. Those are the three things that people are addicted to. They're addicted to fat, sugar and salt. Those are the three challenges that we often times ... I'd say high protein as well. That's not a whole food, that's not a real food. You might like cookies, but don't kid yourself. You might rationalize, "Hey, I'm getting some oats here." You're getting bad stuff with it as well. Nothing bad added, nothing good taken away.

Dave Asprey: Got it. I like that definition.

John Mackey: It makes it nice and clean and simple.

Dave Asprey: It does. I would say there's probably some arguments about which things are good and bad in different dietary tribes out there.

John Mackey: It is tribal isn't it?

Dave Asprey: It sure is.

John Mackey: It's fascinating to me. It's almost like religious tribes. People they're so passionate, they get so angry. They want to be right. They have the right path and everybody else is wrong. I'm arguing for the The Whole Foods Diet. I think it's well grounded in science, but it's going to evolve because we're going to learn more.

Dave Asprey: I have evolved to less protein than I used to think was necessary. I could lose half my 100 pound on Adkins. Of course then I'd get all the excessive protein.

John Mackey: It also comes back, it tends to come back. What do they call that a boomerang or a-

Dave Asprey: Yo-yo.

John Mackey: Yo-yo, yes.

Dave Asprey: I've lost a lot more than 100 pounds because you lose 20, you gain 30. You lose 30, you gain 40, it's over and over. I'm to the point where I don't have fat pants anymore. My pants just fit and they always do. For a guy with my health background 15 years of antibiotics and all that. I never thought that was possible.

John Mackey: Your microbiome might be messed up from that.

Dave Asprey: Oh yeah. I hope I've restored it mostly.

John Mackey: One thing I like about The Whole Foods Diet, since we're saying eat real, whole foods, mostly plants. You get to eat as much as you want.

Dave Asprey: Is coffee a plant?

John Mackey: Coffee is a plant.

Dave Asprey: Yes. Just checking.

John Mackey: Coffee is one of those ones that people the tribes line up differently on.

Dave Asprey: They do.

John Mackey: I drink decaf, I'm a recovering caffeine addict. I was hooked for many years. Once I got off of it, which was now about 15 years ago. I go my own energy back. Otherwise the caffeine was creating the energy. Then I would have to pay back the debt on it.

Dave Asprey: The studies on coffee are interesting because even decaf tends to correlate with longevity. Where what we're dealing with is the same stuff in plants, which is polyphenols.

John Mackey: Yes.

Dave Asprey: Green tea, coffee.

John Mackey: Green tea is the champ though or white tea compared to coffee anyway.

Dave Asprey: In terms of volume per cup you see less, but you see different type of polyphenols versus the volume of polyphenols. I do both because why not? Doing decaf is a good choice. I still enjoy my caffeine.

John Mackey: It may be one of those things where I'm already such a wired guy. It's like giving a hyperactive kid Ritalin. It just blows out my adrenals. It gets me so amped up.

Dave Asprey: That's how Tony Robbins is too. He's like, "I don't do caffeine." His whole team is like, "Could you imagine Tony Robbins on caffeine?" Because if you have that much energy, you have that much energy, right?

John Mackey: I have other friends who can basically drink coffee all day. They're just mellow relaxed people, they can go to sleep on it. If I was to drink ... Let's say I go to Starbucks and I say decaf and they give forget. They give me the real thing.

Dave Asprey: It's not a good day for you.

John Mackey: No. It'll be a bad night for me actually. I won't be able to get to sleep at a normal time. I'll be wired. I always joke, if you make that real caffeine, I want your telephone number and I'm going to call you up at three in the morning.

Dave Asprey: I love that. We're coming up on the end of our interview. I've got to be respectful of your time. One more question for you. If someone came to you tomorrow and they said, "John, I want to perform better at everything I do in my life. Not just my job, but just being a human being." What are the three most important pieces of advice you'd have for them?

John Mackey: The first thing I would say, people perform best when they're in sync with their own purpose in life, whatever that is. There's a saying that the two most important days in our lives, the first one if the day you're born. The second one is not the day you die because that's the end of the story. Your marriage and both of your children, those might be very big important milestones. I would argue the second most important day of your life is the day you discover why you were born. When you sync up with your own purpose, then every day is an adventure. Every day you're flowing along. You're in the flow space when you're on purpose. That's the first thing I would say. Secondly life is very short.

I know this because I'm further along towards the end of it than you are. Young people don't fully understand this in their gut. They will as they age. It's so much shorter than we realize. It's too short to do anything except follow your heart. Follow the things that you have passion about because those enliven us. They give us tremendous energy. It's not an act of will when you're doing things you're passionate about because you're just flowing along. The energy flows along with you, so purpose and passion. The third thing I would say is you just set a high standard for yourself because you want to be excellent. You expect a lot from yourself. You don't make excuses. You don't rationalize things. You hold yourself to a higher standard.

It doesn't mean you have to beat yourself up. It just means you're not over indulging yourself. You're basically saying, "I'm going to make this day count. This is an important day. This could be the last day of my life. I'm going to make it a good one. I'm going to see the beauty in it. I'm going to express a lot of love and share love. I'm going to try to be alive and healthy and conscious." If you do those every day and you get into the habit of doing it and you get skilled at it. Then you're going to live ... You're whole life is going to be a big adventure and adventures are fun.

Dave Asprey: That is a profoundly awesome answer. Thank you for that. Your new book is The Whole Foods Diet. It's available everywhere books are sold, online and it's also available at this little grocery store called Whole Foods, right?

John Mackey: You'll probably get your best price at Whole Foods, we've got it at 17 bucks.

Dave Asprey: Nice. I just took a photo next to this giant display here in Austin at your flagship store.

John Mackey: Thanks.

Dave Asprey: I would encourage you if you'd like to see what John thinks, but also the physicians that he worked on with this, who looked at a variety of different long lived people who have said different amount of philosophy. That it is different that some of the things that I recommend, but it has merit and it's worth your consideration. It's worth reading if you're a bio-hacker, so check it out.

John Mackey: Dave, I'm very appreciative of our partnership and Bulletproof coffee in a lot of our stores. They're very popular. I think you for ... you're a wonderfully gracious host. You have a big heart. I salute your adventuresome spirit. It's an inspiration to me.

Dave Asprey: Thanks John.