



Episode 10: Fix Your Sugar, Fix Your Fatigue!

Evan H. Hirsch, MD: Hello, and welcome to the Fix Your Fatigue Podcast. Whether you can't get out of bed in the morning, your energy crashes throughout the day, or you're a biohacker looking to optimize your energy, productivity, and focus. This podcast is for you. I am Dr. Evan Hirsch. And I will be your host on your journey to resolving fatigue and optimizing your energy. And we'll be interviewing some of the top leaders in the world on fatigue resolution. Welcome.

Evan H. Hirsch, MD: Hi, everybody, welcome to another amazing episode of the Fix Your Fatigue Podcast. I'm your host, Dr. Evan Hirsch, and today I've got with me, Michael Collins. Michael Collins has been completely sugar-free for over 30 years. I'm so impressed with that. He is a past chairman of the board of the Food Addiction Institute, which is a 501(c) nonprofit that helps raise awareness about processed food and sugar worldwide and is the founder of sugaraddiction.com, which has been helping thousands successfully quit sugar for over 10 years. Michael and his wife raised two children, sugar-free from the womb to six years of age. I'm going to be really interested to find out what happened at that point. [laughs] For over 30 years, Michael has worked closely with others to help them regain lives ravaged by various substance use disorders. Mike, thanks so much for joining me today.

Michael Collins: Thanks for having me. It's an honor. I really appreciate it.

Evan H. Hirsch, MD: You bet. So let's dive in here. Let's, why don't you tell us a little bit about your story. Why sugar?

[00:01:38] Michael Collins: Yes, I know it's a fair question. And I grew up as a regular kid, basically like my mom was a sugar junkie. She loves sugar, and she had a stash we all knew where it was. She thought we didn't, but we all knew where it was. [laughs] And we would eat bread and butter and sugar sandwiches, and we would make Kool-Aid with three times the sugar. And we had all kinds of whatever. There's a great YouTube video on 60 minutes. It's Ed Bradley talking to Eric Clapton, the great guitar player, right? And Eric asked him that they're sitting in a \$7 million Antigua treatment center that Eric built with his own money to help people. And Ed Bradley from 60 minutes says, "So Eric, this addiction stuff, this all started with heroin, right?" He said,

"No, Ed, it started with sugar." [laughs] I'm like he said, "I used to eat bread and butter and sugar sandwiches when I was five years old and six years old." And I said anything that would change my state I would do. And so that was me. I mean, I didn't realize that was what was happening. I was a kid. I mean, we didn't if I didn't scrape out a half an inch of sugar at the bottom of the Cheerios, and I didn't have enough sugar. We had unfettered access to the sugar bowl, right?

And so fast forward, regular kid, all kind of treats and ice cream and my father loved it. My mother loved it. So we always had all kinds of stuff. And I found beer at about 13 or 14, and I could talk to girls, and I knew I was changing my state there. That I and I realized there was an emotional lift. Like when we were kids, they call it liquid courage, right?

Evan H. Hirsch, MD: Right.

Michael Collins: So that party lasts until I was about 28. And I, we can talk about that if you want. I'm kind of an open book, but we stay on the sugar, but I got sober at 28 and literally went right back to the sugar, right? And as did a lot of my fellows in the recovery movement, the recovery groups, they gain like not the freshman 15 in college like the freshmen 50 like in the first year of recovery. They would gain 50 pounds because they all substituted the sugar, right? So I was kind of athletic and wanted I gained 20 pounds. And my face is all broken out. And it was just, I was feeling lethargic and anxiety and stuff. And I realized I was drinking a lot of caffeine too. And I realized that I had literally substitute one drug for another, right? I had gone back to the sugar and the caffeine and the flour and all these kinds of stuff. And I didn't eat any real food, to be honest. I mean, honestly, I did not. If there was a little tomato in the pizza, then that was the food. [laughs] But it's all just junk. And so I started to study it.

I read a book called Sugar Blues, which was written by a guy named William Duffy. William Duffy ended up marrying Gloria Swanson, the famous movie star. And they promoted that book in the early 80s. It was in the 70s. It was produced, but they did it in the 80s. And yes, and so I just kind of got in my head and then like, we, like you said earlier we, my wife and I, we raised the kids, and I don't know how I talked her into it, and we're not married anymore. But at that time she, during the entire pregnancy until they were six, they did not have any sugar, right? And I just really believe their brain developed better. I mean, it was. It wasn't that difficult in the first two or three years. But when we started, things started to socialize.

It started to get more difficult. And then I went on to have a regular life, a regular business career, and I didn't use sugar flour, like you said, for many years. And then I just kind of decided and made some good stuff happened in my life, and I decided that what am I going to do with the rest of my life? And this is helped me. I always help people because they would always ask, and I help people in recovery, get off drugs and alcohol and stuff. And so 10 years ago, I got the name sugaraddiction.com, and that's the podcast version. [laughs] Factory. [laughs] It usually brings some more question. [laughs] But that's the short version. Oh my God, here.

Evan H. Hirsch, MD: Yes. Well, thank you. Thank you for sharing that. And thank you for being vulnerable with us. Yes, it's that journey, right? Where you kind of you realize something, and then you're able to help others with it. I so appreciate that. So you mentioned about when Eric Clapton said on that interview about sugar being the gateway drug or being it all started with sugar. Why is that? Why does it typically start with sugar?

[00:06:33] Michael Collins: That's a great question. And I think the one that is the center of my work today in doing podcasts and getting the message out and having running sugar addiction in the summit and stuff, and the summit science, people have really, in the last five years that we've been doing it, it just accelerated, it's just exploded. And the answer to the question is, is that sugar affects the brain reward systems, right? Dopamine, serotonin, norepinephrine, GABA, oxytocin, even the adrenal glands are affected by sugar. And the dose makes the poison, right? So we didn't take a little bit of heroin. You take a little bit of alcohol and then a pot, little whatever. But we are pounding as average. This is an average person 17 to 20 teaspoons a day. So think about an obese or overweight person doing 20, 30, 40 and teenagers are doing this because they're 30, 40, 50 teaspoons of sugar a day and drinks and whatever.

And so, it really, the science has now in the last five years exploded to understand that. And Dr. Lustig, the great eminent researcher says it, it's the fructose molecule. It's, yes, the glucose molecule and for your listeners, table sugars, half fructose, and half glucose, and it's the fructose molecule that is the offending molecule, and I've asked these guys, the researchers from Cornell, Cantley, and Lustig, and Tim, is fructose a psychoactive drug? And when they don't even let me finish the statement without saying yes, it absolutely is right. And see they don't come from no deference to them, but I mean, no slides or anything but they don't come from an addiction recovery background, right?

And they don't. There are a lot of 12 step food groups who figured this out anecdotally 10, 20, 30 years ago, and people have had a lot of success by eliminating sugar, flour, and some caffeine. And now the science is proving it out right now the science is proving all the things like in your work and addiction work and definitely health. I mean, the glucose stuff is going to destroy the body. It's going to give you insulin resistance. It's going to give you metabolic syndrome. But the reason people can't quit, the reason they can't stop is because of the brain reward chemicals that the fructose is blasting every day, all day every day. So, I don't know if that answered the question. But-

Evan H. Hirsch, MD: Yes, that's perfect. So it's-

Michael Collins: -yes.

Evan H. Hirsch, MD: -producing like the endorphins and the enkephalins, and so it's creating that narcotic effect.

Michael Collins: 100%. Absolutely. That's what's happening. One of the things that I wanted to talk about on this podcast that I've been now bringing more public is this concept of this construct of amotivational syndrome. Now, amotivational syndrome is a

very common knowledge syndrome and thought process in the recovery of marijuana abuse, okay? Literally, the stoner, you can't get up off the couch kind of thing. And it's like, it's talked about, it's understood, and I believe in the work that I've done in the people that I've gotten off of the sugar that not only do they get healthier which is a byproduct of it and lose weight, which is another byproduct but they their energy levels skyrocket. And I think that I don't think I know that sugar isn't amotivational drug as well.

Okay, it literally zaps you of your energy because think of it this way like in order to get a dopamine reaction in the body there's usually an effort required exercise, a hug, go new get new food, different thing, whatever it is, there's a need to do something. Look, you can sit on the couch and eat sugar and still get the dopamine hit, right? So you, there's no need to do any exercise. So if you're dopamine manipulation is handled by the food, right? The sugar. So I'm trying to get out here is that we have hijacked the system that evolved over millions of years to keep us alive and chase sex and chase food and get a dopamine hit by just ingesting sugar. Why would we want to do anything else? Because this [laughs] beautiful system allows us [laughs] to get the reaction or the result without the effort. Okay, if that makes sense.

Evan H. Hirsch, MD: It does. Yes. So let's kind of dive into my work a little bit with fatigue. So then-

Michael Collins: Yes.

Evan H. Hirsch, MD: -what is actually happening? What do you think is happening with why is that increase in sugar intake, relating itself to decrease in energy or an increase in fatigue? Is that insulin spike, or what do you think?

[00:11:35] Michael Collins: I think it's all combination, yes, I do. I think the insulin spike takes a lot to recover a lot of energy to recover. It's all proven that it wax your immune system. And I mean, it just throws you off. I mean, one of the things the world changes with something called a continuous glucose monitor, and Google and Amazon are working on it now, right? People can't see the spikes when they eat this stuff they can prick themselves 20 times a day and chart it out if they want with the basic blood glucose monitor, but when you can see it on your phone because you got a little patch on your arm these are prescription now but and they're invasive because there's a little needle but and they're you got to have insurance or whatever. But when Google and Facebook or work or Google and Amazon are working on when you got a little Fitbit thing, and it's not invasive, and you can just see it on your phone because there weren't they have these, but they're not that great yet.

And then people can see what's going on, right? They can see this up and down in the glucose in the insulin. Add that to what we discussed before about the brain reward chemicals being activated in just by ingesting this stuff. And you got a perfect storm, you have a perfect storm for that and really ended totally, and I don't want to it's not caused causation when I don't know that phrase, but I've seen so many people's energy. I've seen people with chronic fatigue, people with all kinds of different low energy stuff just

have their energy skyrocket just by getting off his shoulders. Yes, there's a lot of physical components to it, and a lot of mental.

Evan H. Hirsch, MD: Yes, I've definitely seen that as well. One of the first things that I do with people is I have them get off of grains and sugars. I just find them that's so potent-

Michael Collins: Yes.

Evan H. Hirsch, MD: -especially those simple grains that get converted into sugar so quickly.

Michael Collins: Well, you're advanced in that because it takes me a little bit to get folks to understand the grains part. They kind of get the sugar part because there's what, they don't quite get the grain stuff. So good.

Evan H. Hirsch, MD: Thank you for listening to today's podcast. If you're ready to stop missing important events and opportunities, have robust energy and be excited about life again, please go to fixyourfatigue.com and sign up for a free strategy session with me or register for a power-packed webinar showcasing my unique process that's helped thousands of people resolved their fatigue. You can take control and fixed your fatigue. I promise. The tools are waiting for you at fixyourfatigue.com.

Evan H. Hirsch, MD: When they come to see me, they're usually at a point where they've changed their diet. They've changed their lifestyle. They've tried to prioritize sleep, drink more water, all those things, and they're still not better.

Michael Collins: Yes.

Evan H. Hirsch, MD: So it doesn't take much because they're highly motivated. They want to excel in their lives and whatnot. So-

Michael Collins: Yes. That's cool.

Evan H. Hirsch, MD: -yes, it's so important. Inflammation, all these things that sugar causes.

Michael Collins: That's another thing, the inflammation that it causes. I mean, the body needs to work to heal up, right? And if it's constantly inflamed, it's constantly trying to help itself come back to homeostasis and to heal up. And really, I mean I can tell you a story especially about the grains and the fruits and we were talking about. I might get into that is that I was 25 years into this thing and I ate grains, oats, rice, brown rice and I eat white rice occasionally too. A lot of fruit juice, mostly organic orange juice, thought it was good and a lot of fruit. And I had in my 50s adult acne, I had, my hair was falling out, I had a lot I was losing teeth, I hadn't had a cavity, and in 25 years I got started getting some cavities. And it was like, and I had this little cognitive

decline as well. Like at my both my parents died of Alzheimer's, and I'm like, I'm not going down that road, and it was like it wasn't just walk into a room and figure out where your keys are what you came in there for. It was like I had ten, five, two browsers open. They go from one browser. I can't remember. All that stuff when I got off greens and fruit just went away just like that just instantly-

Evan H. Hirsch, MD: Wow.

Michael Collins: -and I had had adult acne my entire life from a teenager to my 50s. And it went away just like that. And so that type of inflammation your body is always trying to heal from, right? You're always trying to get better. Your body's going to want to default to health and wellness. And if it's fighting against the inflammation, the metabolic syndrome stuff, that is sugar causes, you're just going to be tired and simple.

Evan H. Hirsch, MD: Yes. Well, and when I think too when I see that sort of picture where you've got the acne, and it goes away when you come off of sugar is also that oftentimes there's bugs that are being fed by sugar in the gut, and that inflammation that in the gut gets reflected onto the skin.

Michael Collins: Yes, 100%. One of the things I learned at the summit this year from a doctor and Berner, I think, is that 95% of our serotonin is created in the gut. It's like so I thought this is a brain chemical or whatever. And here we are if you don't have the right bio, whatever it is the-

Evan H. Hirsch, MD: Microbiome.

Michael Collins: -microbiome, there you go. If you don't have that, you're a great gut flora. You're just not going to have and what SSRIs are what people Paxil and these kind of Zoloft and all these kind of things. They're playing with their serotonin reboot uptake, and they're playing with their serotonin, and this is how you feel better, right? This is the reason you're taking this medicine, right? And so if sugar is destroying that and not helping you form the good serotonin so that you're feeling good all the time. Again, you're fighting against a body that wants to be healthy, and you're going to be tired because one of the best remedies is sleep for healing, right?

Evan H. Hirsch, MD: Right.

Michael Collins: Yes.

Evan H. Hirsch, MD: Yes, really good points. So yes, let's talk about fruits, and let's talk about like how much is okay? Is any fruit okay? And how much other sugars are okay?

[00:18:15] Michael Collins: Yes, this is a tough one. [laughs] Again, I can't-

Evan H. Hirsch, MD: Put me on the spot. [laughs]

Michael Collins: Well, it's like I can't take everybody. I can't take someone from sets and standard American diet to what my diet is today without some bridges, almost like Suboxone or Methadone. They have to be able to move through a process. And I've eased up on that over the years because I came through the recovery world as an abstinence-based guy, right? And so until the opioid crisis came through, I was still an abstinence-based guy. Look, if you're going to quit something, quit, right? But in the world of opioids, you got to be alive to recover, right? You can't just like Suboxone [laughs] works that for a year then fine. You're still alive, you don't go out and do end up with Fentanyl or something, you get dead. In this, in the same vein, I have to move people through a continuum or step down or step up whatever way you want to look at it, whereby they can eat some berries. Some blueberries and raspberries, some small guy steaming small fructose stuff to help them ease through the withdrawals because the withdrawals are real, right? They're very real. They're you're depressed, you're left. There's a lot of lethargy your body wants to sleep now because you're not ingesting this stuff.

And so, when I look at fruit, and when I listen to the experts and understand that the body doesn't know the difference between the fructose in a big giant apple or big giant banana, and a coke as far as the fructose, the sweet part and the only way you place that fructose can be processed is in the liver, right? They can't, there's no other way in the body for it has to go through the liver. And we have children at five years old with fatty liver disease, which is an alcoholics disease, right? Which is where alcohol is also processed. So I'm telling you all this to tell you that the simple fact of the matter is, is that large amounts of fructose no matter how you get it and think about it 100 years from now, or 200 years ago, an apple look like those little crab apples in nature and banana look like a little seed pod, right?

And it served its purpose you in about 20 days or 30 days a year. This stuff was ripe. You would eat it, and animals would eat it, or humans would eat it and spread the seeds around. Well, for 300 years, we've hybridized this stuff for what? For fructose, the sweet part. Let's look at navel oranges for goodness sakes. This thing does not have any seeds. It's impossible to propagate in nature without human engineering, right? And think about the rest of the fruits now with these beautiful packages, right?

And so that high fructose concept that high fructose content is a little bit of an issue when you're trying to get off of the processed sugar because the brain, again, is recognizing the signal of fructose as sweetness and then you're going to begin to crave the processed stuff, the stronger stuff, think of it having beers and wanting to whiskey. I mean, I don't people don't like my drug analogies, but they're relevant in a lot of ways because of the power of the fructose nowadays, it's like, like the weed when you and I were young, I must like, it was crap, but today, it's so powerful. This is the same thing as fruit, right? Fruit is now very sweet, and it's a big fructose bomb. I don't know if that made sense, and it's again difficult for folks to grasp because about 30 years 25, 30 years ago, there was a brilliant marketing campaign. It used to be the greengrocer, right? And you would have the green vegetables. And somehow they combined the two to make it fruits and vegetables, right?

And so, they I believe they need to be in a separate category. And I think they need to be treats. And not to say they're not healthy. And not to say that some amount after you're through withdrawals is okay. But I think that people will find as they go through the first 30, 60, or 90 days that let the less fruit that they eat, the better off they'll do trying to get off the processed stuff, hopefully. Yes.

Evan H. Hirsch, MD: Yes, and I think the challenge like you mentioned is that we don't have a continuous glucose monitor right now. And so we don't know like if you're going to individualize it and say, "Well, you know, for you one piece of fruit a day is okay, and for you to pieces and for us zero." Is because we don't know necessarily what it's doing to these people, but I would, I would say, eliminating all fruit and all sugars for a period of a month and then adding them back in one every four days or whatever and watch what happens. Does it increase inflammation, joint pain, whatever?

[00:23:14] Michael Collins: That joint pain stuff's real? I mean, people, I mean, they, they're like, and as far as the glucose monitor when people can see that, like, exactly, you said, when you see a banana does the same thing as a candy bar. It's like the spike is the same to the same level, then they get it.

Evan H. Hirsch, MD: So what about combining fruit with protein? I've heard mixed things on that, that it potentially will release the fructose more slowly. Consequently, you don't have the insulin spikes, not as much inflammation, right?

[00:23:46] Michael Collins: Yes, a food combining kind of an older construct, and it does kind of work a little bit, but the idea that I don't know about that. I'll be honest. I mean, I'm not sure that I think the body is going to find its use for that fructose. And again, it's got to get processed through the liver. It's going to affect the dopamine, serotonin. I don't know. It could, but I also think it might create what the reason that easier on it doesn't hit it with the slam. So one of the big problems is people eat or drink orange juice, or they juice stuff, right? And or juices of all kinds and that slams a liver heart with no fiber and no, and so you don't get that what I think maybe protein would do and other foods would do green greens.

Also, a lot of times they say make a smoothie with a lot of greens and some fruit is that it slows the process down. So it's almost like a time-release. It doesn't slam the liver. You don't get a big spike, and then you're exhausted. Two hours later.

Evan H. Hirsch, MD: Right.

Michael Collins: So, yes.

Evan H. Hirsch, MD: Yes, no, I totally agree. And it's a question that I don't necessarily have the answer to because it is individualized and like, for example, I find that I do better in my mornings when I have a banana with pecans and then I put in some mac nut milk, and that's kind of like a breakfast cereal for me.

Michael Collins: Okay.

Evan H. Hirsch, MD: And but I don't know. I mean, I've got some family history of Type 2 diabetes, but I'm constantly thinking about, okay, is this really the best thing for me? I'm trying to make sure that I'm eating them the bananas a little bit more green than they are yellow. But I find that I'm also really if I just do protein in the morning, then I'm actually hungrier throughout the morning.

Michael Collins: I got you.

Evan H. Hirsch, MD: And so I'm trying to figure out that balance, but I think it really is individualized. So I'm glad you brought that up.

Michael Collins: I agree.

Evan H. Hirsch, MD: So when you talked about nature, I think that's such an important point too, is that we're made for craving these things like there's a reason why we're supposed to get the sugars from nature, but then they've kind of been taken advantage of by the processed food industry to say, "Hey, we're going to actually trigger those taste buds that you have." So that we're just messing with your innate systems want for this, this particular chemical?

[00:26:17] Michael Collins: Right. No, I believe that. That's exactly what happened. I mean, it's kind of like, and again, the drug analogies but the coca leaf and the cocoa, the cocaine, right? It's like, it probably shouldn't be chewing on coca leaves either, but [laughs] I'm just saying it's just much slower of a process and the processing really, and let's get to brass tacks, and I hope you don't mind me speaking freely, but it's a drug for goodness sakes. It's so processed. So clean, so run through chemicals turned into a crystal in a powder form. It's no longer a food product. It's not like a hamier. It's not like an apple. It's a process drug. And just because it's been indoctrinated and evolved into our system over 300 years from the English empire that grew it out of the backs of slaves in the Caribbean does not mean that it's right for human consumption. Then just because it tastes sweet, which is an anomaly in and of itself because other drugs kind of tastes bitter some of them whatever cocaine they taste they don't taste like that. Is it just a strange detour in human history and anomaly that we may need to re-change? Science is now proving that we may need to change.

Evan H. Hirsch, MD: Well, I'm I really appreciate that you brought that you actually are talking about like a drug, and you actually have this background with addiction. That's not just sugar addiction, because I think that people really need to hear that message. That how much sugar is a drug and how much effect it has on their body, and one of the best things they can do for themselves is get off of sugar and see how they do, right? How much time do you think it takes for somebody to be off of sugar to notice a difference?

[00:28:12] Michael Collins: Now, that's a question that I like to my goal my the

bane of my existences this is a product, what we do, and this information is a product people need and that they don't, but they don't really necessarily want. [laughs] To get them to the point and what I asked them to do like if you were to go to an allergist, right? The allergist would scratch your back for pollen and ragweed and whatever it is chocolate to them. Then they'd find out what you're allergic to, right? And so I just simply asked people to give themselves the gift of 90 days. Start with 30 but the gift of 60 or 90 days, and in that 90 days, just eliminate the things that we've been talking about. Just eliminate sugar. Eliminate flour. Eliminate grains. Eliminate some heavy amounts of fruit and see how you feel. See how you look. See how your weight. Where your weight is?

Now going in, and this is why the delivery of the message to the people on SAD, the standard American diet is difficult. Going in, people have this thought process, like the guy who has to quit thinks he has to quit drinking. Do I have to do this for the rest of my life? And that's a scary, crazy thought, right? Birthdays, bad and everything. Am I ever never going to have a celebration and my mom? And so this crazy anxiety which is partially their sugar addiction, but then [laughs] anybody that gets 90 days in never asked that question. Anyone who really truly did the experiment.

Did their own scratch test, give themselves the gift of 90 days. Those folks never asked the question in hindsight. They already know the answer because their skin looks better. They've lost weight. They're sleeping better. There ain't no anxiety. They don't pee all night. So many benefits and people have gotten off meds, SSRIs. I mean, nowadays, there are so many virta health and so many people who have been relieved. They have been cured, not really cured of Type 2 diabetes, from this process of eliminating ultra-processed carbs from their life, right? And it's only a matter of time before those stories are common knowledge. It's-

Evan H. Hirsch, MD: Right.

Michael Collins: -nowhere near common knowledge today. But when you can cure Type 2 diabetes, just no medicine, no Metformin, nothing, then the world is changing. So if people will just give themselves that little time that experiment, but they're so afraid of it, because a, there's nasty withdrawals, I'm going, to be honest, and anxiety withdrawal, and mental stuff. And really, in the second, in the first year, this is lower in the weight loss industry where people lose a substantial amount of weight and then gain it all back and then some. And the way they lost it is restricting carbohydrates, ultra-processed carbohydrates, and sugar, right? They restricted it. And so then they couldn't do it because they didn't understand what was happening to them emotionally. They use this as an emotional crutch through their life, to process difficult emotions. And this is a foreign concept for people. Again, back to the drug analogy, very, very well known that if you started drinking beer, and doing drugs at 15, or 16, that's when you stop growing emotionally.

This is a construct that's replete through all of the literature in drug and alcohol stuff. And anyone who has honestly done this and recovered and lost it 100 to 200 pounds in, do it by risk by going 100% abstinence of these products had to go through this type of

recovery emotionally, not only physically. And so that is a, again, a very, it's underground. It was always anonymous. It was always anecdotal. But now the science is there to prove all this slowly getting out. And it's, again, getting out from health professionals who don't have a background in addiction. So when now, we've married the two, I think people are going to start to get it. I hope so.

Evan H. Hirsch, MD: Yes, that's so important. I often talk about the inner journey. How important it is for us to continue growing and for us to work on our mindset, and 80% of our thoughts are all negative. And if you're, if you don't have good coping mechanisms, then you're going to turn to addiction. Is that true?

[00:32:56] Michael Collins: Oh, absolutely. I mean, it's the second most important thing that I talked about, which is this idea that as a child, probably in the womb, because it does cross the placental barrier. You, we started playing with our dopamine, serotonin, norepinephrine, then we started playing with our brain reward chemicals. So you're crying, you're hurt, and your mother's busy, and she's got two other kids, and she doesn't get down on your level give you a hug ask you what your, what's wrong? But she gives you a cookie and point you towards the [unintelligible 00:33:31], right?

Evan H. Hirsch, MD: [laughs]

Michael Collins: And now here we are. We're literally grooving neural pathways in our brain that says, "Stress, sugar. Worry, sugar. Pain, sugar." All of these difficult emotions, normal life stressors. When was the last time you saw a movie where a girl got dumped and did not have an ice cream party with their girlfriends? This is now a cultural norm that we can ingest these large amounts of sugar when we have a difficult emotional situation. And when people this is when people get after they get if they give themselves a 90 days and they make this connection that when they slide because people will get 90 days and disappear on me, right?

And when they come back, they end up saying, "Well, I was at this birthday party or well," more often than not, they'll say, "My mother died. I got divorce", and they were dealing with some emotional situation, and they just went to the old fallback, right? And that was a sugar. These are people that don't drink and don't do drugs. But they went to the societally acceptable emotional management tool, which is sugar and ultra-processed carbs. So it's a little deep, but it's not deadly. It's not that hard to understand, and sadly people like you, and I have to repeat it over and over for folks until it becomes more common knowledge.

Evan H. Hirsch, MD: Well, it's hard when there's a drug that's right there in the grocery that you can buy [laughs]-

Michael Collins: Exactly.

Evan H. Hirsch, MD: -for pennies, right?

Michael Collins: Pennies is right, right? Yes.

Evan H. Hirsch, MD: Yes, and so what I find also with addiction sometimes, whether it's smoking or alcohol or sugar, is that you have to replace it with something. Like in order to get that coping mechanism or something like that. Is there a favorite tool that you have? Like, okay, if you're going to, if you're going to go off of this in order to create a better coping mechanism, I recommend that this becomes your new thing that you reach for.

[00:35:42] Michael Collins: Yes, I know you're way advanced in like, I get interviewed on health podcasts or whatever. And you're way advanced and understanding that's exactly what has to happen. Exactly what has to happen. People have to figure out that they need to go for a walk and get a hug. Play a sport, get a massage. They have to figure out other self-soothing methods that require usually some effort and some time because you'd go for a nice run or nice walk, go to the gym, lift weights, you got that little buzz, right? Well, that's the same buzz that you're you thought you don't. The funny thing is like when you get to be an adult. You're not really ingesting sugar to get a buzz.

You're just getting back to normal. [laugh] You're just trying to keep up your level of serotonin, dopamine, you know what I mean,? But when you have an activity that you substitute exactly what you said, and you and it's normal, go to yoga class or do whatever, where you can manage your emotions in that way because we all need it. We all need some sort of stress management in our life. And if we don't have that stress management, we will revert to what neural pathways have been trained to do since we were babies right and that is reached for sugar.

So yes, 100% got to figure out a new self-soothing, and a new emotional management tool so that they can recover and that work usually happens after the physical stuff in the first year where you have you facing situations that may be more elevated and stress or worry or fear whenever financial like right now, I mean.

Evan H. Hirsch, MD: Right. So then is there a particular emotional management tool that you recommend? Is there a particular therapy that you find to be especially helpful?

[00:37:37] Michael Collins: Walking.

Evan H. Hirsch, MD: Oh, nice.

Michael Collins: Walking is the easiest, cheapest you can do it anywhere, anytime. You don't have any special equipment, you just walk out the door, take a left or right, and you just do it, right? And if you can integrate that into your life, then you literally like you need a drink, or you need a coke, or you need a cookie. You need a walk, you will feel it, you will come to a place where if I don't have to walk, you want to kill someone. You're going to really get to the point where and whatever turns on, you know what I mean?

Athletes, male athletes seem to do a little bit better because they have a muscle memory process that they fall back on to, right? Females too, but they lose weight slower, so they get frustrated. But males, if you notice, the CDC did a thing on the biggest loser, and all but one of their folks had gained all the weight back. But if you watch the show, you'll see that most of all of the men were athletes, and it was easy for them to fall back into that exercise. In other words, they were using the exercise in the show for their emotional management tool, and then when they got away from it, they didn't have Bob or whoever yelling at them. [laughs] They went right back to their regular weight. Because they didn't put two and two together, they didn't marry the two concepts.

Evan H. Hirsch, MD: Right.

Michael Collins: So

Evan H. Hirsch, MD: So are you saying that if they replace the addictive behavior with walking, that they don't necessarily need some additional emotional support, like therapy, or coaching, or something like that is? Are you finding that that's the case?

[00:39:26] Michael Collins: No, sorry. I must have missed something. [laughs] We never got to it, really. And but basically, the founder of the Food Addiction Institute, he's still alive. He's almost 80 now. He said, "This needs an inordinate amount of support." Okay, and that is now it's online, obviously, since the virus and stuff, but we were doing it online for years ago. And we have thousands of people in Facebook groups and Zoom meetings every week, all week. And the people who make those meetings, the people who build a new tribe, a new community, because we're still outliers. Bottom line, society and you're even your own nuclear family and your workmates, and your schoolmates and whenever those folks have not yet, they don't want you to leave the tribe. So they're not trying to pull you back. So you'll be overweight and unhealthy. They're trying to pull you back because 1000 years ago if you let the tribe you could die, right? You didn't. So they're trying to keep you in the society that they know, right? But anybody that's been successful knows that they need to, I love the phrase, "You become the five people, the average of the five people you hang around with, right?"

Well, now, there's actual obesity science bunch and bunches of peer-reviewed articles that have proven the fact that you are going to become the average weight of the five people you hang around. This is like, this is a proven fact. And so if you're in a lot of people will think that what I've been proffering over the last few minutes is that it might be a bit extreme. But if you don't join the group of people who believes what I've been talking about, their chances of success are lowered simply because you're not. You're hanging out with people who have not taken the time to research. They're not like the people that visit your clinic are the people that visit my site. Like I say, if you made it to sugaraddiction.com, you don't need to take the damn quiz you already know. [laughs] If you, if you've already come this far in your research and you're feeling in your own body and your attempts to quit over years or decades, a lot of times.

Then if you don't start to run with, get a new crew, get a new support team, get a new

tribe, you're just going to stay in the same swirl of society. What's that great meditation teacher? It's not good to be well adjusted to a sick society. And I mean, it's just not. If society is still in swirl, this process of giving sugar to a baby, then you're not going to get out of it easily without running with a cubit site with and becoming friends with and having a support system of people who believe what you believe.

Evan H. Hirsch, MD: What if your fatigue was not beyond your control? What if you could literally fix your fatigue? Thank you for listening to my podcast, where I bring you top health experts and leaders from around the world to discuss the hurdles and solutions to fatigue and the 33 different things that can cause it. If you're ready to have robust energy and be excited about life again, please go to fixyourfatigue.com and sign up for a free strategy session with me or register for a power pack training webinar. You can take control and fix your fatigue. I promise. Solutions and support are waiting for you at fixyourfatigue.com.

Michael Collins: I know that's kind of heartless and the worst thing that I've talked with, and so what I'm going to say is I'm so far from tough love. It's not funny. But this is a situation where there are a few constructs that need to be understood and need to be emphasized. And then I have to let the people make their own decisions.

Evan H. Hirsch, MD: Right. Know, yes, I'm big on that too. I think it's important to educate folks and say this is ideal, but there's some flexibility in here because we don't want you to go crazy.

Michael Collins: [laughs] Crazy, it's not a good word these days, apparently a politically correct word, but the withdrawals and beaky think you're going crazy. And your mind will say, "I have to have this." Like if I told you to stop eating broccoli or steak for a couple of weeks or a month or whatever they say, I like steak. I like broccoli. You'd be like, "Okay, I'll do it." But when I [laughs] tell I would suggest not tell, suggest you to quit eating sugar like people get all weird on me. It's like.

Evan H. Hirsch, MD: Yes, it's that relationship. I mean, I think the thing too, is that there's such a huge emotional component to food and its relationship to family. So are you trying to tell me that when people ask me, are you trying to tell me that what my grandma was feeding me was toxic because she was making me this cake? And it's like that's we equate that love with sugar. Love with sweetness. Have a, in Judaism we have the Jewish new year. It's, have a sweet new year, and we cook things that are sweet. You put like raisins in your holla and stuff like that. So it's like there's like this association between love and sugar. And that makes it even harder to give it up, right?

[00:44:59] Michael Collins: I mean, a nail on the head 100%. That's exactly correct. My mama, I'll tell you a story. My mother's mother, my grandmother, died when she was eight years old, right? And so she had her father, and my grandfather and her had to move in. He, she was the youngest. He had to made it, but everybody else was gone. They had to move in with my great aunt, or her aunt, his sister. And she owned this big hospital. It's a long story is a rural hospital, but across the street, their cousin Jim owned a general store, right? And so, they set my grandfather, set up this deal with his cousin

that anytime my mother walked in the store, she could have anything she wanted for free candy, right. And so my mother genuinely believed that sugar was low.

She really believed it, and I think a lot of people exactly we're talking about your religious stuff is exactly correct. People cook, and they bake, but it came through an evolutionary process that took two and 300 years back in the early days when sugar just started to come from the slave in the Caribbean. We, the average English person, ate like five pounds a year and that skyrocket over 100 years to 100 pounds and now 250 pounds, and it just, it's like it became vendors understood how to sell it. Whatever they started and they started making up holidays that had. All the holidays, they didn't start out as the Easter Bunny and can't Valentine's candy and holiday. Didn't start out this way. They genuinely if you do the research, they did not start out as candy holidays, even Christmas.

They did not start out this way, but then they evolved to it, right? And so we've got, sadly Dr. Lustig and I keep quoting him because he's like the, he's doing he's done the research. He's still doing the research. Says this is a 30-year game, okay? We're eight, six, or eight years into a tectonic shift like bathroom or condoms and bathroom seat belts in cars, smoking, drinking, and driving. We are just now the science on those four things said this is what we need to do. And but society have not caught up with that norm or that idea. The societal norm was different. And that's where we are with sugar. We're in the middle of that grading time period where some people think about it.

Yes, some people think about that's crazy. I'm still going to give my kids sugar. I don't want to deprive them. [laughs] I just, I, it's hard. I mean, it's genuinely difficult, and I feel for people as they move through the educational and informational process and the process of trying to stop if they do that.

Evan H. Hirsch, MD: Yes. So do you have any tips on how to break that association of love equals sugar or sugar equals love?

[00:48:00] Michael Collins: Yes, that's a hard one. Yes.

Evan H. Hirsch, MD: Is it just awareness?

Michael Collins: It's awareness, it's the science of it all and to realize that it's not love. It really truly is not love. Love is love. Kinds of acts are love. Support is love. These are in that sugar is shortcut. Sugar is a shortcut to everyone feeling better, okay? And like, it's like everyone feels elevated a little bit there's a little bit of dopamine flowing and serotonin flowing, and all these things are flowing when you have a concentrated big cake that everybody eats. You can see it with the children who are not like their, everybody who sees what happens when the cake and ice cream comes out.

We got these wild kids running around because they're so hopped up, but the same thing happens at a lighter lower level with adults. And so if we can remove that if we can remove the idea that this is that they're intertwined, and it is what I mentioned a couple of times that uncoupling that separation of the societal norms that have been involved

over 300 years and the actual reality in the science, then people change and they get better.

Evan H. Hirsch, MD: Yes, I find that sometimes I, I'll tell people to see it as poison. I'll use this with like getting people off of cigarettes as well. If you look at it if you understand what it actually is and what it's actually doing to the body, and then you take it to the nth degree, and you're calling it poison, then you no longer want to give it to your children.

Michael Collins: Right.

Evan H. Hirsch, MD: I think the other challenging thing, too, in terms of like making the behavioral change seems to be getting the buy-in like it's always more successful if everybody in the family does it, but they you got to get the buy-in of everybody. Any advice you have on that?

[00:50:09] Michael Collins: Yes, I mean, one of the modules that we talk about is the societal portion of the societal piece of it, right? And very rarely is an entire family ready to do it at the same time. It's usually the mom who says they have to feed the kids and feed the husband, and they still want to have these things. And so that's where the new tribe comes in. And they're a lot of people very successful at separating their food from their family's food. So it is hard, but it is doable, and the same thing goes with workmates, schoolmates, society in general. The societal picture, the societal interaction around this stuff is powerful, damn powerful, okay?

When you're looking at neural pathways groups to move towards it and muscle memory, brain memory to think about having it and being part of it it's just hard to uncouple, and the only tips that I can have like I said is like you need to literally have a group member on speed dial go in the bathroom so these people are crazy where you can like sit have another support system that is not the people that are around you. Because it's hard in the early days to recruit people. Once people get off, it's a very, very strange phenomena they want to help everybody. They want to because they've been enlightened or they've been there, they feels so good. They just want to get the message, especially to their loved ones, into their family.

Evan H. Hirsch, MD: Right.

Michael Collins: And but in the early days, it's wise this is a big tip to not get in the recruiting business to not try and change everybody's to do the airlines thing. Put your own oxygen mask on first. Get solid, get with your tribe, new tribe get a group of new people around you. And then if you're successful when you're successful, then attempt to move towards helping them. And another thing too is if you can get them to be convinced that they can lead by example, that they if they change, they don't have to say a word.

Weight loss is very difficult to hide. People will start to come to them, and then you, they can disseminate the information on what's happening with them, to the people that are

ready not to try them. It is really hard because, like I said, the husband or the wife or the kids are not ready, and you are so, but you still got to get through it. You still got it.

Evan H. Hirsch, MD: Well, Mike, I could totally talk to you all day. We're just that energized. It's yes, this is yes. This is a lot of fun. I appreciate you sharing your knowledge with me with everybody who's going to be listening and watching this. So, last question is about practical tips and takeaways. What do you feel like is kind of a big takeaway? Or if there's one thing that you would want people listening to this to start doing in their lives right now? Or what would be like I guess a baby step in moving towards an ultimate goal? What do you feel like that would be?

[00:53:22] Michael Collins: A good question. You mentioned a little earlier a little bit ago about awareness, right? And what I've found in same to dovetail on the last question, and really the whole thing is that what I found in the success stories is people are a little bit of a pioneer, right? They're kind of the kind of person that they don't care what other people are saying or doing. They've had a success in sports or athletics or work or school or something. They've moved away from the family of origin or their tribe or their homies from school or whatever. And they've done different things, and they've done their own research, and they've done their own experiments on their own body.

They're not afraid to take and do another one, right? So if you if, this talk has resonated with someone with you, some listener whenever then do your own research. Do the experiments that we've outlined, just test. Use yourself as that human guinea pig, adopt that ethos of, let's see what happens. Let's take the test. Let's eliminate this stuff for X amount of days and see how I feel, right? And whatever that takes socially, physically, diet-wise, shopping wise, there's a lot of ingredients, but if you've done the research and you feel like you've had a success in your life, any kind of success doesn't matter. And you can translate it here.

So don't be afraid. Be one of those pioneers. I think we're all, you and I, and people that are willing to discuss these kinds of things are societal canaries in the coal mine, right? There, we've just we're not afraid that we don't want to die ourselves in so, and we've discovered something. Yes, we want to get the information out. But I think the people that are willing to have an internal locus of focus for their own self do much better. So, and that reaches quite a few people because everybody's had a success. It's something that can translate into this.

Evan H. Hirsch, MD: That's great. And so if there's a baby step towards removing sugar addiction, is there like one thing that if somebody was like, "Oh, it's too overwhelming to remove all the sugar in my life." Is there one thing that you feel like is the most important to remove first?

[00:55:45] Michael Collins: Sugar-sweetened beverages.

Evan H. Hirsch, MD: Awesome.

Michael Collins: There's a study out right now. And it's actually not a study. It's for the first time in history, the American Pediatric Society, the American Pediatric Dental Society, the American Heart Association, I always forget the fourth one in the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, was one of the largest nonprofits in the world, got together and said that children between zero and five should have zero sugar-sweetened beverages. Now, never had four medical associations got together and made such a proclamation. And if you were to just eliminate sugar-sweetened beverages as the first step, you would immediately get some of the benefits we've described. And then you can start working down the normal chain. They're more sugar stuff.

Evan H. Hirsch, MD: That's awesome. And another good motivator that I tell people is that usually, if you when you eliminate sugar-sweetened beverages. You're going to lose about 10% of your body weight. [laughs] When you get rid of gluten, you lose about 10% of your body weight. So if you want to lose weight, this is another great way of doing that as well.

Michael Collins: Absolutely, that's it. I like that. I'm going to steal that right there that 10% and 10%. [laughs] I liked it.

Evan H. Hirsch, MD: Please do and well, what I found is like after the 10% is that then people will lose about three pounds a month until they get down to their high school weight as long as they were healthy in high school, and they don't have some sort of thyroid or other metabolic issue.

Michael Collins: Nice. I believe that that's exactly what I see. You'll fall to a right-sized body. You don't need to exercise, you don't need to do anything if you'll just eliminate I call it powder addiction if you just eliminate “owders” of any kind, and I'm talking like these protein powders and all those other crap. Just powder, like just eliminate powder and crystal or granular just eliminate that stuff, you will fall through right-sized body you don't need to exercise I mean you can exercise. The exercises for your to help rehab your brain reward system not to calories to reduce body weight. It's to help to keep you off the stuff, so yes.

Evan H. Hirsch, MD: Awesome. So, Mike, you've got this great website at sugaraddiction.com, you've got a copy of your bestselling book that it's available to download. You've got the sugar quiz, and then you've got the 30 Day Challenge, anything you want to say about those things?

[00:58:13] Michael Collins: Yes, like I said early, I mean, if you get to the website, you don't really need to take the quiz because you're probably already. [laughs] It's like those alcohol quiz, you get 19 out of 20 wrong like, whatever. So, but the book is free, or you can get it on Amazon too. It's free to download on Amazon, and it's free on the website, sugaraddiction.com/book, or right there in the homepage. And the 30 Day Challenge is just a simple. It's a good first step. It's a good there's a lot of information, it's self-paced, you get into one of the online Zoom groups in a forum, a private forum, no one else knows you're in it.

And it's really good support for you, and it's the tiptoe, just a little foot in the water to see if this is for you. To see if this lifestyle is for you. See if you can get along with the people who have quit and had success. We've got success stories of years, multiple years now. So it's they and all, everybody likes to help. It's a real loving group. And so it's like a strange phenomenon. This happened in the early days of drug and alcohol recovery too. People feel so good they want to help other people do it. And I'm a big believer in peer recovery stuff, big believer.

Evan H. Hirsch, MD: I love that. And that is the best place for people to find you and learn more about what you're doing, correct? That website?

[00:59:34] Michael Collins: sugaraddiction.com. Yes.

Evan H. Hirsch, MD: Awesome.

Michael Collins: And if it's, well, yes, we just had it, but the Quit Sugar Summit is very interesting. You can check that out too, with a lot of speakers and stuff. Very interesting stuff. What's the, that's all science if you're a science geek guy, you love that.

Evan H. Hirsch, MD: [laughs] Nice, and is that also on the site? Can you find it there? Do you have to go to a different site?

[00:59:54] Michael Collins: It's called quitsugarsummit.com.

Evan H. Hirsch, MD: Quit. Yes. Okay, awesome. Well, Mike, thanks so much for being with me today. It's been amazing having you on. I think people learned a lot today and hopefully, they'll take that step of getting sugar out of their lives.

Michael Collins: Well, thank you. I really appreciate the work you're doing, and I really appreciate you having me on. So keep up the great work, and it looks like we do a lot of the same stuff. So.

Evan H. Hirsch, MD: Thanks.

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