



A REAL-LIFE APPROACH TO

diet AND LIFESTYLE DETOXES

CARLY JACOBS & KELLY EXETER

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*For our listeners, because really, what's the point
of doing this if not for you?*

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
SECTION 1: DIET	5
Episode 28: Making Sense of Diet and Food Part 1.....	7
Episode 29: Making Sense of Diet and Food Part 2.....	33
Episode 30: Making Sense of Diet and Food Part 3.....	57
Episode 81: How We Eat	79
SECTION 2: DETOXES	100
Episode 6: Giving Up Alcohol for a Month	103
Episode 17: Giving Up Coffee for a Month.....	117
Episode 19: Digital Detox - The Challenge.....	131
Episode 24: Digital Detox - The Report.....	139
THANK YOU	153
STAY IN TOUCH	155

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DIET AND
LIFESTYLE DETOXES

*From two self-improvement junkies who've
tried pretty much everything*



CARLY JACOBS &
KELLY EXETER

INTRODUCTION

Hello and welcome!

If you're reading this book, it's probably for one of two reasons:

1. You're a listener of the Straight and Curly podcast
2. You saw this book and thought it looked good

If you're a 1 – you could, in theory, totally skip this next bit. (But, you probably won't because you're reading a book and seriously, who skips the seventh line of a book?!)

If you're a 2 – allow us to introduce ourselves.

Kelly Exeter is a writer, reformed over-committer and self-improvement enthusiast who writes at kellyexeter.com.

Carly Jacobs is a writer, unapologetic over-committer and self-improvement enthusiast who writes at smaggle.com.

After being online mates for years and writing about the same kind of stuff, Carly said to Kelly, 'Hey, want to do a podcast?'

The rest is history.

Straight and Curly – A Podcast for Self-Improvement Junkies, launched in January 2016. The show was featured as one of iTunes' top ten podcasts for 2016. It ranks in the top charts most weeks. And it's been featured in several magazines and major newspapers around the world as a 'podcast worth listening to', alongside the shows of self-improvement luminaries like Oprah and Gretchen Rubin.

This book?

Well, it's not a book in the traditional sense. It's a (heavily edited!) collection of some of our most popular podcast conversations.

Mid-2016 we did a three-part series that attempted to make sense of diet and food.

There's so much confusion out there about what we 'should' and 'shouldn't' be eating.

Diet fads come and go.

One day, fat is evil. The next, it's sugar.

It's very hard to interpret all the mixed messages, so our three-part series looked to simplify everything and provide some guidance around getting back to the basics of eating well and in a sustainable (i.e. for life) fashion.

No hysteria or dogma – just research plus a healthy dose of our own experiences as committed self-experimenters.

When listening to our discussions around this topic, it's worth knowing that Kelly is a former elite athlete who eats for fuel (rather than gastronomic pleasure) and doesn't find it difficult to maintain her weight. Carly also eats 'for fuel', exercises regularly and finds weight maintenance really difficult.

To finish off the 'Diet' section of this book (where Diet = the food we eat every day), we revisit the topic a year later and check in on how our thinking has changed, and report on further self-experiments we've done.

The 'Lifestyle Detoxes' section?

That's where we break down three lifestyle detoxes we suggest everyone try at least once in life!

- A month without alcohol.
- A month without coffee.
- A weekend without your phone.

We did all three of these detoxes over the course of 2016 and the differing experiences we had made for some interesting discussion.

So, who is this book for?

- People who want to have sensible, non-sensationalist conversations about self-improvement topics (like diet and detoxes).
- Smart cookies who like to question things.
- Straight and Curly listeners who want to revisit our diet and detox episodes in written form.

Before you start reading, it's important to remember this is a collection of research, stories and giggles from two mates who are committed self-improvers and love a bit of self-experimentation. The episodes contained in this book are not comprehensive dissertations on the topics. We're life enthusiasts who are experts on ourselves, but don't pretend to be experts on anything else.

All clear?

Ok, great! Time to get on with the shows!

We hope you enjoy reading them as much as we enjoyed recording them!

SECTION 1: DIET

EPISODE 28: MAKING SENSE OF DIET AND FOOD PART 1

TIPS AND THOUGHTS SHARED IN THIS EPISODE:

- The difference between the word ‘diet’ and the phrase ‘being on a diet’.
- What is ‘treat creep’?
- It’s ok to feel hungry.
- How much water do you need to drink each day?
- The 5:2 diet and intermittent fasting.
- The role of calories and calorie counting.
- Why we hate the term ‘everything in moderation’.
- How much alcohol is too much?
- We are all experiments of one.
- The difference between nutritionists, dietitians and doctors.

THINGS WE MENTION IN THIS EPISODE:

- *New Study Just Further Debunked The 8 Glasses of Water a Day Rule:* sciencealert.com/no-not-everyone-should-drink-8-glasses-of-water-a-day-says-new-study
- *The I Quit Sugar program:* iquitsugar.com

- *Michelle Bridges 12 Week Body Transformation:* 12wbt.com
- *Whole 30:* whole30.com
- *The Beginner's Guide to Intermittent Fasting:* jamesclear.com/the-beginners-guide-to-intermittent-fasting
- *The Beginner's Guide to The 5:2 Diet:* healthline.com/nutrition/the-5-2-diet-guide
- *Just a few more bites: Defining moderate eating varies by individual, study finds:* news.uga.edu/releases/article/moderate-eating-varies-by-individual-0616
- *Nutritionist or dietitian - which is for me?* nutritionaustralia.org/national/nutritionist-or-dietitian-which-me

CARLY: Hello! Today, and for the next three shows we're going to be talking about something lots of people have told us they are confused about – food and dieting. There is real information overload on this topic because health professionals, fitness professionals, your mum and your Paleo-obsessed friends all seem to have a different opinion on what we 'should' and 'shouldn't' be eating.

So ... what can we add to the conversation given neither of us are dietitians or scientists? Well, we're regular people, just like you, who are trying to make sense of it all. Because we write on the internet, and we're research junkies, we're able to look beyond sensationalist headlines and understand what's being left out of food reporting. We also feel we have a very sensible approach to food and eating and a deep understanding of human behaviour.

So, that's where we're coming at this topic from. All that said, Kelly, you do have a science background. Right?

KELLY: Yes. I've got a Bachelor of Science in Human Movement and Exercise Science. So, I do have some university background in this but that's going back 20 years now. And – this will come out in the episode – a lot of what I learned at Uni has since been turned on its head. But, while I do have a background in this, I more have a lifelong background in that, as you said Carls, I'm a research junkie.

“ *As soon as something hits the mainstream media, it becomes sensationalist and contradictory.*

This is a topic that is of huge interest to me so I'm constantly reading all the information out there about it. And because I'm able to process that information with the benefit of my university background, I do understand why people are just so confused and overwhelmed.

As soon as something hits the mainstream media, it becomes sensationalist and contradictory.

CARLY: Yep. While I don't have formal qualifications like Kelly, I do have a lot of experience with successful weight loss and weight management so I know everything there is to know about diets, guys.

But, I just did want to put a warning out there that if you do have problems with disordered eating or if you suffer from any kind of food-related issues, it's probably best not to listen to these episodes. We won't be saying anything controversial or anything that we don't know to be true to the best of our ability but we know things we might say could be potentially triggering.

On that note, I'd like to start with the word 'diet'. Kelly, do you want to talk about the word diet?

KELLY: Yes. A lot of people believe – and I think this is kind of where you’re at Carls – that ‘diet’ is a verb, something that you do to lose weight. And that’s certainly where I used to be in the past. If I used the word ‘diet’, it was describing something I was doing to lose weight. I’ve since really changed my thinking of that. I really want – and it’s probably unrealistic, but I really want this word ‘diet’ to shift back to actually what it means, which is literally ‘the food that we eat’.

“ *I don’t call it ‘a diet’ but I will do a month of abstinence from that kind of stuff just to remind myself that they aren’t everyday items and shouldn’t be consumed every day.* ”

So, your diet, your everyday diet is the food that you eat. If we are looking to change our diets, let’s look to change our diets to something that’s sustainable long term forever rather than doing ‘a diet’ which to me is different. To me, a diet is saying: ‘I will eat this way to lose weight and then, when I finish losing my weight, I shall go back to eating the way that I did before,’ which is why hardly any diets work.

CARLY: Yeah. To me, I do have a very healthy everyday existence and I do allow for occasional treats in moderation on the weekends and that kind of thing. But sometimes, if I’ve let myself slip a bit and a few extra treats are creeping in or a few extra glasses of wine are starting to happen in the middle of the week, sometimes I don’t call it ‘a diet’ but I will do a month of abstinence from that kind of stuff just to remind myself that they aren’t everyday items and shouldn’t be consumed every day.

So, while I don't call them diets, they kind of are diets. I look at them as a resetting of my habits rather than undertaking an unsustainable way of eating.

KELLY: Yeah, I like that actually. The 're-set' idea. And, truth be told, it's similar to what I do.

So, I know what to eat. I know how to eat well. I know how to maintain a healthy weight. But I, too, will slip. I'll go away and it always starts with, 'I'll just have a little bit of this and a little bit of that.' In other words, I get on the 'moderation' train (and we're talking about 'moderation' a bit later). Then my 'moderation' pushes out and suddenly I'm eating crap all the time. At which point I go, 'Right, it's time for a reset,' and I'll do exactly what you do. I'll have a month where I pull things right back to what some people would call a 'restricted' diet but which is actually just an 'eating well' diet because I just need to reset things to where they need to be.

CARLY: Ben and I had a similar thing this week where we saw that they have these little portion packets of Nutella at the shops and I was like, 'Woo Nutella on toast!'. Since the Nutella came in these convenient single serve packets, I figured this was handy portion control and we'd be rude not to buy them. So, we bought them. And then for one week, we had a piece of toast with Nutella on it after dinner. And then randomly, we just did it again. We bought them a week later. Next thing I knew Ben was making our now nightly Nutella on toast and it was just like, 'Oh my god. We just totally normalised this treat food into an 'every night' food. This is not cool'.

We started calling it 'treat creep' where you have a treat once and then it creeps up on you and then suddenly you're just like, 'Nutella every day'. So that's just a thing we all need to be aware of — the whole treat creep thing.

KELLY: Definitely. Ok, let's start off. We've got several topics that we're going to work through and the first one we're going to talk about is the fact that it's okay to be hungry. Interestingly, just about everything that we're going to talk about today and in the next episode is something I've had to change my thinking on over the years. I was at Uni during the grazing generation ...

CARLY: Early 90s? Was that sort of when that was?

KELLY: Yep around that time – I started and finished Uni in the mid to late 90s and that was when grazing was the thing and it was all about not letting yourself get hungry because when you get hungry, you make bad food decisions and you eat too much food. It's a bit like going to the shops when you're hungry – you're more likely to buy 'bad' stuff and buy too much of it. So that was the grazing generation and everything we learned at that time and preached was around maintaining stable blood sugar over the course of the day. i.e. 'Don't let yourself get hungry because then your blood sugar plummets'. In a similar vein, back then, you never ever skipped breakfast if you wanted to lose weight. The dietary advice was you should have three meals a day and graze in between those meals so you never got hungry. And I stuck with that belief until around 4-5 years ago. Remember you went away to that Bali retreat where you guys ate three meals a day and three quite small meals?

CARLY: Absolutely tiny. They were the smallest you will ever see.

KELLY: Yeah, and it was around that time that I read a few things around that whole hunger mindset and that it's okay to be hungry and I really pushed back and I was like, 'No way. It's not okay to be hungry. This is what leads us to make bad decisions around food.' And then I read the post you wrote around doing that retreat where you said it changed a lot of thinking for you. Once I read that from you, I went, 'Okay you know what? I'm going to give this thing a

go where I do the same thing – where I have a solid three to four hours between my meals and only eat three meals a day. And just see how I go with that’

And, you know what? I was fine. The first day was like, ‘Oh I’m so hungry,’ one hour after eating. But then I realised it was less of a physiological thing and much more a habit-related thing. Why don’t you quickly talk about that retreat that you did?

“ *I quite liked that kind of light, clean feeling that came from properly digesting my food.*

CARLY: For me, it wasn’t a big deal to go for those big chunks of time without eating because I used to be a teacher. And teaching and nursing are two professions that come to mind as types of jobs where you can’t just eat anytime you like.

So, when you’re a teacher, you start work at maybe 8:30am when you’re doing your rounds at the playground and then you might not eat until 11am in the morning and that’s unusual for a lot of people. If you work in a desk job, you can duck out and grab a biscuit or you can grab a muffin with your coffee or something like that.

When I did this retreat I was working as a writer and had started doing that boredom-snacking thing. You know the one where you’re sitting at your desk, get a bit bored, go to the fridge... that kind of thing. So, it was a real eye opener for me and I quite liked that kind of light, clean feeling that came from properly digesting my food.

KELLY: And I think that’s what really caught my attention because I was thinking, ‘I’ve never felt that light, clean feeling.’ I guess because

my body was always processing food because I was eating every 60 to 90 minutes.

CARLY: Also, you're a very active person and you come from an athletic lifestyle, you do actually need to eat more food when you are burning that kind of energy. It's like when you see the kids that were really hardcore athletes in high school and then they stopped doing their hardcore training and they packed on weight really, really quickly because they're not burning off those ten meals they're eating every day.

“ *If you do get those first pangs of hunger and it's nowhere near meal time, having a glass of water often does take that away.* ”

KELLY: Yeah, let's just talk about that very quickly because as Carly mentioned, I was a triathlete for around 10 years and I was elite/semi-elite for about six of those years. And it was in those six years that I was training 15-20 hours a week and eating as much as my six foot six, 100kg boyfriend (now husband) who was an elite level basketballer at the time.

CARLY: So, for those of you that haven't seen Kelly in real life, she's tiny. She's a very, very slender small person, just to put that into perspective.

KELLY: Ha. Thanks. Yeah, it was just really inappropriate how much I was eating but I was getting away with it because of the sheer amount of training I was doing. But I tell you what, the triathlon off-season thankfully lasts only one month before you start training again because in that four weeks, I put on three to four kilos and then...

CARLY: So quickly.

KELLY: Yeah, in a heartbeat. And that's even though in my head, I was like, 'I can't keep eating like this. I can't. I'm not training as much right now. I need to cut back on my food.' But when you are used to eating so frequently and when you're used to eating anything that you feel like, it's a hard habit to break. The tiniest little grumble in my tummy? Bang! I was like, 'Hmmm, must eat.' And then when I started to push through and go, 'Okay shut up stomach,' I'd have a glass of water instead of grabbing something to eat. I quickly realised how much that actual grumbling in my stomach was more habitual than physiological.

CARLY: I'm so glad you mentioned the glass of water thing because I've heard so many nutritionists and dietitians say, 'Have a glass of water.' Have a glass of water? I'm like, 'Screw you, I'm hungry. Water is not going to do anything.' But I take it back now. Water is the best. It's so good.

KELLY: It is. It really is. Although here's another common way of thinking that's since been debunked – that thing where, 'We all have to drink eight glasses of water a day,' or something like that. But even though that's been debunked, it's still good to drink water and lots of it in a day. And if you do get those first pangs of hunger and it's nowhere near meal time, having a glass of water often does take that away. So, do always go for the glass of water before you go for the crackers.

CARLY: And I did find an interesting Shape magazine article by a dietitian called Cynthia Sass where she wrote: 'Many of my clients eat on a schedule, which is great, but they're never really hungry, which is an indication that they're eating too much. And that little bit of extra food, day after day, can be what's causing them to hang on to those unwanted pounds.' In other words, even when you're eating super healthy meals in the right balance at the right times, if you're

never hungry, you're probably eating more than your body needs to reach or maintain your ideal weight.

KELLY: That's so interesting and I agree with what she said there. So, this is probably a good time to talk about diets like the 5:2 Diet and Intermittent Fasting. I think you've tried the 5:2 Diet?

CARLY: I have. I did 5:2 for most of last year and found it to be really good for maintaining my weight. I usually fluctuate like a mofo but when I'm on 5:2, my weight is steady and then it just slowly and gradually declines and it's fabulous. The good thing about it is I just fast two days during the week and then I can have a couple of glasses of wine on a Saturday without completely ruining what I've done in the previous week.

The problem I had with the 5:2 is it absolutely screwed with my productivity. On fast days, I'd get to after lunch and I wasn't angry and I wasn't grumpy, I just felt really stoned. But in a really heightened sort of a way. So, I'd be really hyper aware of everything that was going on but then I also felt like I was moving through jelly. So, I got to the point where I was like, 'This is silly. It's affecting my productivity'. And the difference between me being on the 5:2 and not being on the 5:2 is like 2 kilos. I don't care that much.

So, I've stopped doing the 5:2. I still keep big chunks in between my meals and I try really hard to not eat at night but it's currently winter in Melbourne and eating at night is my favourite thing in the world when it's cold.

KELLY: And you go to bed late as well.

CARLY: I do. I do.

KELLY: That's what makes it really hard. I've tried the 5:2 not to lose weight but more out of curiosity because so many people were doing it and swearing by it and I wanted to be part of the informed conversation.

CARLY: Oh, you sound like me. So FOMO. Like, ‘I want to play the 5:2 diet too.’

“ *The problem I had with the 5:2 is it absolutely screwed with my productivity.* ”

KELLY: (Laughter) Yeah, I found the same as you. It wasn’t as difficult as I thought but, man, my brain did not work on the fasting days. Also, I couldn’t exercise. I couldn’t do anything other than a gentle walk and I’m used to being able to do intense exercise every day.

So, it didn’t work for me in that regard, but I have not met a single person who said they tried the 5:2 diet and it didn’t work from a weight loss point of view. I haven’t come across that yet. What I have found is more doable for me from a fasting point of view is a 12 or 14-hour fast where you simply eat your last bit of food at 7pm and then you don’t eat again until 7am the next day or 9am for a 14-hour fast.

And I have no dramas doing that because I go to bed at 8:30pm.

CARLY: (Laughing) I’d have no problems doing it too if I went to bed at 8:30pm.

KELLY: If you’re trying to do a 12- or 14-hour fast, hot tip, just go to bed early.

CARLY: I’d go to bed at like 4 o’clock in the afternoon and just totally miss happy hour.

KELLY: (Laughter) We could probably do a whole episode on fasting but we’ve got a few more topics to get through. So, let’s talk, Carls, about calories.

CARLY: Ok, calories... I really struggle talking about calories because it's a very contentious topic.

My personal belief and experience points to the fact that calories do matter. There is quite a big trend at the moment where people say, 'Eat intuitively. Eat the way your body feels.' And I completely agree with that. I think you do need to be in tune with your body. But I think it's important to understand how much energy you get from certain foods and the quality of the energy that you get from those foods.

“ *The theory was that if you just simply restricted your calorie intake by 500 calories a day, you'd lose half a kilo a week and that's a healthy and sustainable way to lose weight.* ”

For example, there are 52 calories in a small apple and there are about 60 calories in a mini Mars Bar, so they're about the same. And if you have a spare 60 calories to spend, most people would go for the mini Mars Bar because why the hell wouldn't you? But it's not as simple as that calorie swap. The Mars Bar is really high in processed sugar and will cause an insulin spike which results in a quick burst of the type of 'chemical' energy you get from energy drinks or from having a doughnut in the afternoon. That will be followed by a slump and then almost immediately, hunger again. Whereas if you eat that apple, its GI is lower so it will keep you satisfied for longer and give you a slow increase in your energy.

So, I don't actually count calories but I'm very calorie aware. And while I don't think that people need to write down every calorie they eat, they do need to know that foods like croissants and deep-fried spring rolls and snack bars and chips and biscuits and creamy sauces are loaded with excess calories and shouldn't be consumed

every day. And if we don't talk about calorie content and the difference between a high-quality calorie and a low-quality calorie, how are people supposed to make educated food choices? I just don't think that people who are trying to fight weight gain can do that very effectively in this weird wishy-washy, 'Don't call a bad food, a bad food,' world. It just baffles me. I don't get it.

KELLY: It's such a difficult conversation.

Actually, there are two difficult conversations here. The first one is the quality of calories, and the second is the difference between sugar calories vs fat calories vs protein calories. It's all very confusing for everyone.

But, let's take the example of eating an apple vs eating a Mars bar. Yes, they're calorically similar. But I defy anybody to tell me they can't tell the difference in the quality of calories between those two things.

CARLY: Yeah, exactly.

KELLY: And then again, let's go back to my Uni days. That was again the calorie counting era and the equation was really, really simple. If you wanted to lose weight in a healthy manner, you restricted your daily calorie intake by eating 500 fewer calories each day than the number of calories your body needs to function (which is different for each person depending on size, how much lean muscle mass you have, whether you're male or female, etc).

Anyway, the theory was that if you just simply restricted your calorie intake by 500 calories a day, you'd lose half a kilo a week and that's a healthy and sustainable way to lose weight.

The only problem with it is it doesn't work because if you only straight up count calories, if you have like 1200 calories in Mars bars a day as opposed to 1200 calories in good healthy food per

day, you might lose a similar amount of weight initially, but the way your body composition changes will be different. And body composition – specifically lean muscle mass – has a huge impact on your ability to maintain a weight loss.

You also have to start looking at where's that weight loss coming from? If you're losing weight, are you just losing weight in water? People who restrict carbohydrates lose weight really quickly because when carbohydrates are in your body, those carbohydrate molecules are stored with water... wow there's just so much to talk about.

Anyway, I agree with this concept of not obsessing about calories because I've certainly been there and it's not healthy (obsessing about calories and trying to restrict them). Also, hardcore caloric restriction around 1200 hundred calories a day, which from memory is what the Michelle Bridges 12 Week Body Transformation (12wbt) does...

CARLY: It is. There are different levels of it. You can choose 'I need to lose a hell of a lot of weight,' or 'I need to just lose a little bit,' and it kind of compensates a little bit but yeah, the 12wbt is 1200 calories a day.

KELLY: Yeah, I don't know how people do the amount of exercise the program calls for while only consuming 1200 calories a day. I do know all the meals on 12wbt are nutritionally robust, however. So maybe that helps.

Between the exercise component and the calorie restriction in the program, you're losing weight at a huge rate, which is fantastic. But it's not sustainable.

But then, I guess it's not intended to be sustainable. I guess the intent of the program is to go hard for 12 weeks, lose the weight you need to lose, and then come back up to a more normal level of daily calories, but now you know how to prepare and eat nutritionally sound meals. And I do know several people who've lost weight doing 12wbt, and maintained that weight loss because the program

taught them how to eat better.

My worry with most calorie-restricted diets, however, is people don't tend to then go back to the appropriate amount of calories for their needs. They tend to go back to consuming too many calories.

And the thing that pushes our daily calorie intake out beyond where it should be is something we'll talk about next actually.

Let's talk about moderation because when we let 'moderation' become 'habit', which is what Ben and Carly did with their Nutella on toast...

CARLY: Yep, that's what we did, guys.

“ *Every time someone says to do something in moderation, I'm like, 'What do you even mean?'* ”

KELLY: That's how you get calorie creep. When you have treat creep you get calorie creep as well.

CARLY: Exactly. It's about awareness as well. We specifically bought the Nutella in the individual portions because we were like, 'This is individual portion control, man. We are nailing this.' And then, yes, it was great we had this little portion, but then we started having it every day. Was that still moderation? In some people's books, it would be. And that's one of the things we wanted to talk about with moderation – it's not actually a quantifiable term. Every time someone says to do something in moderation, I'm like, 'What do you even mean?'

KELLY: It makes me want to stab myself. So, I'm just going to put my hand up here and say I have a long history of spending my whole days obsessing about food.

CARLY: Me too.

KELLY: It's an ongoing thing that I have learned to manage. I've never been anything that anyone would call overweight. My weight does not fluctuate very much. But it's taken a very long time for me to get to the point where I do not spend my entire day thinking about what my next meal is going to be and/or hanging out for it.

There are people out there who are genuinely able to moderate. They're the people who can have one row of chocolate and then that's it. They can put the rest of the block back in the fridge for tomorrow.



We tend to compare our current behaviour to our worst behaviour and we call our current behaviour 'moderation' because it is moderation when compared to that worst behaviour.

CARLY: Those people fascinate me. If I have friends over for dinner and a block of chocolate comes out, I'll eat like two squares of chocolate and then I'll observe how much chocolate other people are eating. Not because I'm judging them. It's more because I'm thinking, 'I could eat all of that and I want to eat all of that.'

So, I'm trying to figure out, 'Where is everyone else sitting emotionally with this chocolate experience that we're having?'

KELLY: (Laughs) I'm the same when I'm out with girlfriends and there's a bit of cake. I'll cut myself a small slice of cake and I'll eat that small slice of cake and then I'll cut myself another sliver and then another sliver and before I know it, I've eaten a quarter of that cake. And then I'll tell myself, 'But this is just one night this week that I've done this and that's fine.' Which it is to a degree but then I'll go home and what I find is 'moderation' puts me on a long slippery

slope to ‘not moderation’. I get in the habit of having things like that very, very quickly in exactly the way that you described your Nutella thing.

CARLY: I think the hashtag for this episode has to be #treatcreep.

#treatcreep, guys. When you go back for your second treat, that’s your treat creep.

KELLY: I don’t really want to open another can of worms here but, how about when you go on holiday? Should you just be able to eat whatever you want? Because you’re on holiday? Is that valid?

I know I tend to eat whatever I want because, ‘I’m on holiday so... why not?’ Well, the why not for me is that going on holiday shifts my idea of where the line is.

Then, when I get home, all I have to do is not eat as poorly as I did when I was on holiday and my brain thinks I’m eating ‘well’. And this is a big problem with the idea of moderation – we tend to compare our current behaviour to our worst behaviour and we call our current behaviour ‘moderation’ because it is moderation when compared to that worst behaviour.

What about drinking? For me, I think I am a moderate drinker in that I have a drink at most once a month.

CARLY: And I would say I’m a moderate drinker because I don’t drink during the week and I have a couple glasses of wine every Friday and Sunday. Who’s moderate Kelly? Is it you or me?

KELLY: And then what about the person that has one glass of wine each night? For them, that’s moderation because they could be having two! On that note, let’s talk about the study that came out literally yesterday.

CARLY: Oh yes, it was such amazing timing.

KELLY: It basically summed up everything you and I feel about moderation and why it drives me insane whenever anybody brings up the term. It starts with:

'Eating in moderation might be practical advice for health and nutrition, but a new University of Georgia study suggests the term's wide range of interpretations may make it an ineffective guide for losing or even maintaining weight.'

CARLY: I think my favourite part of the study was that it showed the more you like a food, the more of it you think you can eat in moderation. Totally! A 'moderate' amount of chocolate is always going to be heaps more (relatively speaking) than a 'moderate' amount of vegetables.

KELLY: Yeah, because it says in there: *'People do think of moderation as less than overeating so it suggests less consumption.'*

And that's the reason I want to kill the entire term. I understand its intent – it's usually rolled out when people are being obsessive. But to me, it doesn't add anything useful to the conversation. It doesn't provide any kind of practical guidance. And I think that's the thing I hate most about it. I'm all about very practical advice and I feel telling someone to 'just do something in moderation' is possibly the single most impractical thing you could say.

CARLY: I completely agree. I don't think moderation ever means 'every day'. I watched this documentary and there was this guy and he was on a weight loss program and he said that he ate treats in moderation and that meant that he'd have this giant bowl of ice cream every night but he wouldn't have any other treats in a day. Just this giant bowl of ice cream and that was his 'moderation' of his treats. I'm like, 'It's never every day.' I don't think you can do something every day and call it moderation.

KELLY: Yeah, it's a habit. If you do something every day, it's a habit.



The more you like a food, the more of it you think you can eat in moderation.

CARLY: So that's where we sit on moderation. We also wanted to have another quick chat about alcohol. I'll go through this super, super quickly because we've done a whole episode on alcohol (episode 6 to be specific) and going for a month without drinking.

Alcohol is a really huge problem for weight loss and for health. Because we live in a country where it's so normalised and it's such a part of our everyday life, we do need to constantly be reminded that it's not normal to drink a bottle of wine every day. Actually, 'normal' is not a good word. It's not 'healthy' to drink a bottle of wine every day. It doesn't matter how you look or what you do around that. Just objectively, that's not a good idea.

So, there was actually an interesting study I found on young women relating to alcohol and obesity that showed the amount matters. It said that heavy drinkers, (so this is anywhere between two and four alcoholic drinks per day) are at a higher risk of obesity than moderate drinkers and the patterns of drinking also matter. Heavy but less frequent drinkers (binge drinkers) are at a higher risk of obesity than moderate but frequent drinkers.

There are so many mixed messages coming through here but basically, drinking regularly is 'better' as long as you really keep a lid on the amount. So, you can have a glass of wine every night but you can only have one.

KELLY: And don't *then* go out binge drinking on the weekend.

CARLY: Exactly. I've seen this study referenced in several different documentaries and research books that I've read and definitively that's the answer. Maybe that is the definition of moderation. It's like you can't ever binge? Maybe?

KELLY: (Laughs.) Maybe! Or maybe not. Probably not.

Ok, the next thing we want to talk about, and this is something I'm really passionate about, is that all our bodies are different. I feel like my personal approach to diet and nutrition is we're all experiments of one. I feel like we all need to find what works for our body.

So, rather than say gluten right now is 'evil' and sugar is 'evil' and everyone just jumps on whatever the current bandwagon is... I say, 'Yeah, go for it. Jump on the bandwagon, but do it in a really considered way.' I've done things like the I Quit Sugar program. I've given Whole30 a try. I've given most things a try to be honest.

“ *My personal approach to diet and nutrition is we're all experiments of one. I feel like we all need to find what works for our body.*

CARLY: Yeah, me too. I didn't hate the Whole30 actually.

KELLY: Yeah, and the way I approach all of those is that I've never done any of them to the letter. I've always kind of tweaked them a bit to what works for me and so now the way that I eat is a mixture of about six different ways. There's a little bit of Paleo in there. There's a little bit of Whole30. There's a little bit of I Quit Sugar. I've keep the bits that work for my body and ditch the rest.

So, (this may seem like a random segue but I promise, it's not), back in high school I had this permanently runny nose. I had to go

everywhere with a tissue in my hand. I also had constant gut issues – terrible bloating and constant flatulence, which was so attractive.

CARLY: Oh, it is. It's just the best, isn't it?

KELLY: I have no idea how I got a boyfriend back then but I did!

Anyway, in the first year of Uni my friend's boyfriend said to me 'Why don't you just try taking dairy out of your diet and see if it makes a difference?' No one had ever suggested this to me. No doctor that I had gone to for all these sinus issues I was having. So, I took dairy out. I said, 'I'll give it a week,' because at that time, it was cheese, chocolate, ice cream, yoghurt, milk – all things I loved eating. And I was like, 'Yeah I'll do it and see if it's going to make any difference.'

It made an absurd difference. In just one week, I could not believe it. So, I then spent the next four years having to work these things out of my diet because they were such a huge part of what I ate. Once I got rid of them, however, my whole life changed because, all of the sudden, I wasn't walking around with a tissue every day. As I gradually eliminated dairy from my diet, I got to experience life without the constant discomfort of bloating and flatulence all the time.

CARLY: Oh, I feel so sad for farty, runny nose Kelly.

KELLY: (Laughter) Seriously. I feel sorry for me right now because I can't eat all those foods but the alternative is I have to put up with bloating and flatulence, which isn't nice.

All that to say... should I really have quit dairy purely on my friend's boyfriend's recommendation? Given no doctor ever suggested it to me? Well, yes. Because it has made my life better. I experimented on my own body.

When I suggest experimenting on *your* own body, I think it's really important to 'do no harm'.

So, I'm not doing any experiment on my body that's going to potentially kill me or affect my health long-term. I don't think anyone could argue that taking dairy out of your diet is going to cause immediate short-term issues. Or long-term for that matter. I mean the whole, 'You need calcium for your bones and the only way to get calcium for your bones is from dairy,' is another thing that has long since been debunked. There are plenty of substitutes.

I've got a very good diet. My skin is amazing. My health is amazing. I can stand by my non-dairy thing.

Interestingly, over the years, there was one thing that I was never ever going to get rid of and that was bread because God, I love bread. Is there anything better than a freshly baked loaf of sourdough straight out of the oven with beautiful big knob of butter on it? There is nothing better than that.

CARLY: (Laughter) You're making me so hungry right now.

KELLY: (Laughs) But you know I gave Whole30 a go (which requires you to cut out wheat) and I was again, 'This is an experiment. I'm just interested to see what happens.' And again, what I found is that my gut just works better without dairy, and also without wheat. I did not want it to be that way but it just happens to be that way and every time I start having a little bit of bread here and a little bit of that there, bang, all of a sudden, I'm in a lot of discomfort all the time and my weight's fluctuating again. As in fluctuating in its little one to two kilo range which I know other people don't consider fluctuations but for me...

CARLY: Oh, that's a not a fluctuation for me at all.

KELLY: Yeah, see, normally I am very stable. So, when my weight starts fluctuating one to two kilos, something's not quite right.

Again, am I unhealthy because I don't have wheat in my life? No. I just have heaps of vegetables. And I still eat rice. I know rice gives a lot of people problems and a lot of people cut rice out of their diet. I don't need to. It doesn't cause me any issues. But these are all things that you just have to try.

“ *If you do go on a diet like the Whole30, when you re-introduce foods, do it really slowly and concentrate on what it is that's making you feel different when you re-introduce it.*

That's my only worry with things like Whole30. If you're coming at Whole30 from having a quite unhealthy diet and then eliminate everything – wheat, dairy, alcohol etc etc – and you eat the Whole30 way for a month and it's great and you feel fantastic... how do you know what thing(s) you've eliminated is/are making you feel so good?

CARLY: Yeah, if you do go on a diet like the Whole30, when you re-introduce foods, do it really slowly and concentrate on what it is that's making you feel different when you re-introduce it. And if you do think you are allergic to something, obviously go and see a doctor and try and sort that out properly.

I do love a bit of self-experimentation, however. I'm constantly cutting things out and trying new things and again, I really appreciate what you said before about 'do no harm.' I think nothing's going to break if you stop having dairy for a while or if you decide to not have sugar for a bit. Just use your common sense and give it a go and concentrate on how your body feels.

KELLY: Yeah and I do tend to do things in consultation with my GP or a dietitian. I have spoken to doctors and dietitians where I've said, 'I

have taken dairy out of my diet. What do you recommend I do to make sure the dairy I've taken out is being replaced?' And they say, 'Eat lots of green leafy vegetables to get the calcium. Since you do a lot of exercise, you're going to maintain healthy bone density so that's good. And it's probably also worth taking these supplements as insurance.'

“ *There's quite a difference between a doctor, a dietitian, and a nutritionist.*

It's little things like that but if you're going to do the lemon detox diet where you're drinking some lemon flavoured thing for three to five days or for a week or something. Come on. That does not fall under my 'do no harm' way of thinking. Again, common sense.

CARLY: I've been watching a lot of Degraasi for my other podcast. And there's a really good episode where there's this kid; he's in Year Eight and he wants to lose some weight and he goes on that lemon juice, pepper, Beyonce diet and he ends up in hospital with kidney failure. So, guys, please research your diets before experimenting with them.

KELLY: Yeah, I feel really strongly about this. A lot of people are looking for people to just tell them what to do but it's worth dialing in to your own common sense and intuition. I firmly believe we all really do know what we should be doing and what we shouldn't be doing. If something is extreme, and you don't feel like you should be doing it, don't do it.

CARLY: We'll just wrap this up with one little point that I think absolutely changed my life. There's quite a difference between a doctor, a dietitian, and a nutritionist. I'm not trying to demonise any professions here. I just want to give people the fact of what those

words mean because they are very confusing to some people. And it's fair enough, you kind of go, 'What? I don't know. Who's going to tell me about food? I'm so confused.' So, this is what you need to know about food and the people who can tell you what to do with it.

A **nutritionist** will usually have a completed tertiary qualification in any number of fields so this could include nutrition, food science, public health.

The main role of a nutritionist is to help people achieve optimal health by providing information and advice about health and food choices. Nutritionists are not actually qualified to provide medical nutritional therapy. This includes individual and group dietary interventions. Nutritionists are not actually medically trained. This is not to say that nutritionists are bad. Most of them are fantastic. But there's not a huge amount of policing of qualifications in that arena.

Some nutritionists hold tertiary qualifications from recognised health institutes and some of them have certificates from 8-week internet courses and can still legally call themselves nutritionists. So just make sure that you research the people that you're talking to about their background and their qualifications before you start to work with them.

Now a **dietitian**, they're tertiary qualified in food nutrition and dietetics. And they provide expert nutritional advice for people of all ages and they can provide dietary treatments for conditions such as diabetes, food allergies, cancers, gastrointestinal diseases, and for obesity.

The main difference between a nutritionist and a dietitian is only a person with an accreditation from the Dietitians Association of Australia can call themselves a dietitian. Theoretically, anyone

can call themselves a nutritionist. They shouldn't but they do. And only dietitians are qualified to provide medical nutritional therapy or clinical nutrition consultations in either individual or group settings. So that's where we sit on that.

And one little note about **doctors**. Doctors are fantastic but they are just that. They're doctors. So, Doctor Karl Kruszelnicki – who is my God – he says that he's a doctor and he's a GP and in his entire eight years of training, he did one day of nutrition at medical school and he said even though he's technically qualified to give nutritional advice, he says good doctors will always refer you to a dietitian.

EPISODE 29: MAKING SENSE OF DIET AND FOOD PART 2

TIPS AND THOUGHTS SHARED IN THIS EPISODE:

- Should we be using the term 'clean eating'?
- How to tune into your body better.
- The role of our guts in good health.
- Dealing with information fatigue.
- Setting a good example for our kids.
- Using food as a reward or consolation.
- The moderator versus abstainer mindset.
- Time-specific diets.

THINGS WE MENTION IN THIS EPISODE:

- *Dr. Karl Kruszelnicki's podcast:* abc.net.au/triplej/dr-karl/
- *Kim Beach:* kimbeach.com
- *Highway to Health:* highwaytohealth.com.au

CARLY: This is the second part in our series on making sense of diet and food. Today we're going to answer questions from our listeners but, before getting to those questions, I wanted to start with something that is actually one of my own things.

We touched briefly on it in the last episode but will just go over it again now. The labelling of foods is something that's driving me a bit batty at the moment. As Kelly and I are people who write in the wellness space, we have to be very careful about the type of language we use. And there's a huge trend at the moment about not labelling food.

“ *What I don't understand is not being able to say, 'clean eating' because I am then implying that any other way of eating is dirty eating.* ”

KELLY: As in, not labelling it 'good' and 'bad', right?

CARLY: Exactly, yeah. So, you can't say that the food is bad because it will give people a complex about it.

I understand the rationale behind this because there are plenty of people who have disordered eating. And we need to take that into consideration when we're having public conversations about food. But what I don't understand is not being able to say, 'clean eating' because I am then implying that any other way of eating is dirty eating. Or that saying a food is 'good' suggests all other foods are bad.

I'm definitely against the demonising of food and attaching or encouraging any kind of guilt associated with food. But when you can't say that what you're eating is healthy or a good food because it will make people feel bad if they're eating a crap food, I'm like, 'What? Are we not allowed to say anything anymore?' What are your thoughts on this Kelly?

KELLY: It's such a difficult conversation. I've got kids so I catch myself all the time going, 'Don't eat that because it's bad or it's good'. I'm trying to watch my language around them. So now, what I've reverted to – and I've done this on my blog as well – is I'm calling food 'nutritious' and 'non-nutritious' food.

CARLY: I like that. Yes.

KELLY: It's just as good as it gets I think. So, when I'm talking to my kids and my son goes, 'Why can't I have a Mars bar?' I have to stop myself from saying 'Because Mars Bars are crap'. Instead I say, 'Look, a Mars Bar is not very nutritious and we need to limit the amount of non-nutritious foods that you're eating in a day,' which is a bit of a mouthful... but he gets it. And I guess that's kind of the way I'm going to go with the whole thing.

I do also understand that if you'd call a certain way of eating clean eating, then you're intimating that other ways of eating are unclean and...

CARLY: That's the only bit that I have an issue with. I agree that you shouldn't label foods as bad because that definitely gives people a complex about it. But, if you're labelling a food as nutritious, you're not necessarily saying all other foods aren't nutritious. I think people are just unnecessarily putting meaning to a word you've used. Meaning's that not there.

KELLY: What I take from it is this – those people who push back against the term 'clean eating' – they can genuinely argue the term. But they can't push back against non-nutritious. Because a non-nutritious food is clearly non-nutritious. They can't argue against that but they can argue against good, bad, clean, not clean. I agree that labelling foods anything but nutritious and non-nutritious is maybe not in the best public interest. But is it starting to get to the point where it's perhaps gone too far? I don't know. The jury's out

on this for me and I guess it's because I have kids and I want to have useful conversations around food without demonising things. And I know how important the language we use around food is and I also am very conscious of the part that I play.

If I position myself as an authority in this space, and if people are going to look to me as an authority on this topic, then I have to be really careful about the language that I use. So, I'm conscious of my role in that conversation, if that makes any sense.

CARLY: Yeah, definitely. I actually think I really admire the way you write about food as well. And I think you just totally solved my problem. I didn't even realise you were going to do it. But I was like any time I'm writing about food, how do I say this is a good healthy food without using all those words that people yell at me for using? But you've just done it. It's nutritious and non-nutritious food.

KELLY: I think they are two terms that nobody can argue with. No one can tell me a Mars bar is nutritious and again, I always come back to the fact that we all know what we should and shouldn't be eating in this whole conversation around diet. And the only time we push back is against something that we can.

i.e. If we can get angry and defensive about something, we can push back against it. If I don't use terms like good and bad or clean and unclean, no one can push back against what I'm saying and no one gets defensive.

I think that's the thing. If what we're writing is making people feel defensive, that immediately means they're not going to take away the positive message we're trying to impart.

So that's what I try to avoid. I try to avoid push back just so the message can cut through rather than having people fixating on this one word, which is very frustrating as you know!

CARLY: Kelly, you're so smart. You just fixed everything then. I love it. So now we'll jump right to our listener questions. And the first one is from Ellie. She wanted to know more information about getting to know your body and listening to your gut – how to figure out what works well for you.

“ *If I don't use terms like good and bad or clean and unclean, no one can push back against what I'm saying and no one gets defensive.* ”

So, I definitely think people should pay attention to the way different foods make them feel. But I'm also very wary of people self-diagnosing. For example, I've recently stopped eating onions and garlic because they were making me burp really badly and they were repeating on me and I could taste that that's what it was. I've stopped eating those things and my burping has stopped. So, what I'm going to do now is go to a medical dietitian and be like, 'What the hell is up with that?' I'm not just going to not ever eat onions and garlic for the rest of my life because they're amazing and I'd really like to figure out a way that I can eat them.

I think the same thing applies with fitness as well. I have a friend who has an autoimmune disease and she's been warned against doing hard core exercise because it screws her hormones up and she gets really excellent results from yoga and walking. She can't actually raise her heart rate too much because it's not good for her hormonally. My body isn't like that. If I go for a walk and do some yoga, my body is like, 'Were you just asleep then?'

KELLY: (Laughing) My body's the same.

CARLY: It's like, cool thanks for that. I get my best results from doing hard-core exercise for 45-60 minutes and weight-based training several times a week. The only way I know that is because I've tried. I did six months of yoga and turned into a flabby mess. So just give everything a go. Switch it up. Mix it up. What works for someone won't necessarily work for you. The most important thing to do though, when you're doing experiments like this, is to do them well. Do them consistently and really concentrate on your results and actually track them.

“ *If you change 10 things in your diet at one time and you feel amazing, you don't actually know what thing made you feel amazing.* ”

KELLY: And also, just do one thing at a time. I get this question all the time – it's probably the most common thing people write to me about on my blog – they want to make change and they're like, 'I'm changing my diet and getting more sleep and getting more exercise and reading more and I just couldn't make it stick.' And I'm like, 'That's because you're trying to do it all at once.'

It's very hard to change more than one thing at a time so change one thing in your diet. Also, if you change 10 things in your diet at one time and you feel amazing, you don't actually know what thing made you feel amazing.

CARLY: Yeah, exactly.

KELLY: And the same with exercise. If you just make all these changes all at once and you feel fantastic, you just don't know what actually worked and what didn't.

Ok. Let's come back to diet. Like I've said in episode 28, I'm a really big fan of self-experimentation. But experiment on one thing at

a time. If you can eliminate something, if you feel like Carly did when she ate onions and garlic, just eliminate those two things to start with. See if that makes a difference.

And then I completely agree that if you've eliminated something from your diet, like when I eliminated dairy from my diet and got amazing results with my sinuses. I saw my GP and said, 'This is what's happened. Is this something to keep going with?' And yeah, they agreed that I should. So, I do think it's great to self-experiment. It's really important to listen to our bodies and I don't mean in that whole intuitive eating kind of way in that your body will tell you what it needs to eat right now and then you can just go eat that.

CARLY: My body is an idiot.

KELLY: My body goes, 'I like marshmallows. Eat those all the time.'

CARLY: My body is like, 'Have lasagna for lunch.' Don't even start me!

KELLY: Yeah. It's funny you mentioned gut before i.e. Listen to your gut. I'm fascinated by how the food we eat affects our gut. And then how then the functioning of our guts affects every single thing in our body. There's heaps of research being done around this at the moment.

CARLY: I'm so excited about it because I saw a documentary on it recently. A whole bunch of scientists in Lithuania are doing gut research and they've pretty much proven that people who are moderately overweight and eat the same amount of food as people who do not have weight problems, their issue is literally that they have different gut flora. That's me and my partner. He is a 6'2" absolute beanpole. We eat mouthful for mouthful the same amount of food when we go on holidays and he will lose weight without fail and I would gain weight without fail. And it's my flora. I swear it's my gut flora.

KELLY: Yeah, the research being done around gut health at the moment suggests our guts are our body's second brain. So much of what is going on in there affects how our body functions. I'm loving it. The research 100% indicates our guts are really important. Yet we treat them so badly. We put a lot of crap through there. And so again, I don't want to use the word 'clean' but when we clean up our diets, our guts function so much better and that's why we feel so amazing. That's one of the big reasons.

CARLY: Yeah, I've actually applied to be a part of a trial study that they're doing. There's nothing weird or scary that I have to do.

KELLY: You don't have to have transplant poo?

CARLY: No, I have to send my poo to Lithuania if I get selected for it, which is very weird.

KELLY: But are they sending poo back to you to put up your bum? Because that's one of the things they're talking about!

CARLY: No. You know what? If they can get that up to Dr. Karl's approved standard, I would absolutely do that. But no, because I know that if you're going to do a fecal transplant, it's actually supposed to be with someone who you'd live with. So, mine would have to be a fecal transplant with Ben. And since he's got an amazing metabolism – bring it on, man. Fecal transplant me, dude. I want his metabolism. It's insane.

KELLY: (Laughing) Okay... So, total non-segue – but let's talk about information fatigue.

CARLY: I always say, 'Go with science.' I listen to Dr. Karl's podcast. I know I keep mentioning him but the man's a genius. He's got PhDs in all the sciences and...

KELLY: Yeah, and a PhD in awesomeness.

CARLY: Yeah, and everything he says is just so sensible. Also, he used to smoke and he talks so honestly about the mistakes he's made with his health. He's really respectful of the struggles people have and I love him. He's brilliant. One thing he always says to avoid is anything vitamin-related. Most dietitians and medical professionals agree that supplements are just expensive wee. Any vitamin you ingest that is superfluous to requirements is expensive wee.

“ *The research 100% indicates our guts are really important. Yet we treat them so badly. We put a lot of crap through there.*

For Bridie – who asked the question about information overload, if you're trying to figure out which are the best diets to try, if a diet is based on heaps of vegetables and regular exercise, you can't really go wrong. I think when you see a diet that has a supplement that goes with it or you have to purchase special snacks or you need this particular branded food preparation machine or anything like that, just don't. Just don't do it.

KELLY: Yeah, I'd put a big question mark up against those ones.

CARLY: I'm not completely against diets. There's a blogger who's a good mate of mine, Kim Beach. She's got a fabulous online weight-loss program and it's excellent. It's not calorie-restricted. You get plenty of food and there's lots of exercise. She occasionally suggests you have a protein shake on a day if you're particularly hungry or if you haven't done enough food prep or whatever but she doesn't sell any extra stuff with it. I think common sense can tell you that that's an appropriate thing to do to your body and not any of the other gimmicky things.

KELLY: Yeah, definitely. I totally get the information fatigue thing. Don't believe news.com.au. Don't believe anything that you read in headlines. If you're unsure, seek out a dietitian. If some new research comes out and it's all over on the news, like bacon being evil...

CARLY: I remember the bacon thing.

“ *Remember, when news sites are reporting on research, they're pulling out the most click-baity bit of that research and giving that up to you.*

KELLY: Remember the bacon day? Everybody freaked out because 'they' were trying to take bacon away from us.

CARLY: And now we don't care. We're all back to eating bacon.

KELLY: Yeah, look. Most bacon is cured in nitrates. Nitrates are not great for us. Don't eat bacon everyday but it's not going to kill you if you have it every so often.

Remember, when news sites are reporting on research, they're pulling out the most click-baity bit of that research and giving that up to you. But what I always come back to if ever in doubt is I just go to Michael Pollan's assertion of, 'Just eat real food, mostly plants.' You can't go wrong with that.

Don't eat stuff out of packets. Don't eat things that have ingredients you can't pronounce or have numbers in them. Eat vegetables that still look like vegetables. It's very hard to go wrong if you do that.

If you avoid packets where there are more than ten ingredients and you can't pronounce half of them, that's a really big step just straight up. And then make small steps from there. That's my favourite way to cut through all the information overload.

CARLY: Also, I think occasionally trying something new is a bit fun.

I went to a conference and Deborah Hutton was there and she had this big litre bottle of, kind of looked like really strong tea. And she was drinking from it all day and I was like, 'I have to ask her what is that?' And she said, 'It's chlorophyll.' And I was like, 'Oh okay.' And then she said, 'I just buy it from the chemist.' She said she drinks it because it regulates the acids in her body because she drinks wine and I was like, 'Fist bump, you're awesome, you advocate drinking wine.'

I bought it and started drinking it and it was kind of gross and I hated drinking it.

KELLY: Yeah, it's gross.

CARLY: And then I did some research and it was one of those vitamin things where it's just expensive wee. It was superfluous to my needs because I have enough greens in my diet. And it was a really expensive bottle. Ok, it wasn't that expensive. It was like \$15 but that's wasted because I don't enjoy drinking it and it didn't make any difference.

KELLY: My friend Alexx Stuart, she always comes back to this. She's like, if it's something you don't enjoy doing, then don't do it.

CARLY: Exactly.

KELLY: If you don't like green smoothies, then don't force yourself to drink green smoothies every morning because you feel like you should. Just find a way to eat healthily and I do come back to this often.

I really believe that every single adult knows how to eat healthily. We all possess the common sense to know that fresh food prepared as close to the source as we can get it is the way to eat our food and that eating stuff out of the cans and packets is not the best way.

CARLY: I disagree a teeny bit with that. I think you and I are quite educated people and we assume that all the people around us are as educated about that kind of stuff.

I used to teach in high school and sometimes I would teach in rural areas. Many of them have no idea whatsoever. I mean, you only have to watch Jamie Oliver in that show he had where he'd go around to schools and show kids broccoli and they'd never seen it before. Like they'd never seen it in its natural form.

I do think educated adults should know what it is they're eating but some people just have absolutely no clue. I was mentioning before about those health nut bars. Now, they're full of wholesome food but they're also really high in fats and sugars. And they're just not nutritionally as dense as say a salad would be. I can see how some people would be confused by that. They'd go, 'Oh this is healthy.' And they actually just need to be reminded that in fact, it's not. Do you know what I mean?

KELLY: Yeah, definitely. And on that topic, I will say that anything that comes in a packet and is marketed to you as 'healthy' or 'natural', it probably isn't.

CARLY: Internet fist bump for you, Kelly. Well said.

KELLY: (Laughs) Thank you. It does frustrate me. Maybe 5% of things in packets are actually healthy, but 95% of things of that ilk are definitely not good for you. So just don't go there if you have the option.

CARLY: And I think that's one of the issues that we have with this info fatigue thing is that we're constantly looking for an answer that isn't eating a ton of vegetables at every meal and avoiding all the things that taste good. Unfortunately...

KELLY: There is no answer.

CARLY: There's no answer. The answer is eating a ton of vegetables and avoiding all the things that taste good.

“ *One of the issues that we have with information fatigue is we're constantly looking for an answer that isn't eating a ton of vegetables at every meal and avoiding all the things that taste good.* ”

KELLY: Which is probably a good time to talk about setting a good example. Veronica mentioned being aware about setting a good example for our kids both in what we eat and how we talk about what we eat.

I know you had a similar experience to me, Carls. When I was growing up, we were rewarded for cleaning our plate. We were rewarded for eating all our food. It was important and necessary to eat everything on your plate. I look back at that and now I'm very careful not to do that with my kids.

I'm in a funny place with my kids because they're both carbohydrate-arians. They eat only white carbohydrates. It absolutely kills me. I model good behaviour for them like eating good food and they just don't take it up!

CARLY: Ant's not overly into veggies either, is he?

KELLY: No, he's not. And that makes it really difficult. I love that I got him drinking green smoothies now, however. That's a big jump for him! I put a ton of spinach in those green smoothies.

Back to the kids – I vowed I would never make food a battle ground with my kids. I would never do what my parents did which was stand over us and make us eat every last bit on our plate. But here's the thing: my daughter eats nothing at home. At day care they have assured me she turns nothing away. And I know that at day care they're obliged to feed them nutritionally sound foods so I'm kind of hanging my hat on the fact that she's getting good stuff there.

So, I struggle a little with what my kids eat and don't eat. I also try to be careful and keep the conversation away from saying things like, 'This is good,' and, 'This is bad,' and, 'You shouldn't eat this because it's bad.' I also never, ever say, 'That's going to make you fat if you eat that.'

CARLY: Oh god, yeah.

“ *It's quite easy to look back on the way our parents used language around food in the 80s and 90s and shake our heads and be like, how could you have possibly said that kind of stuff to us?* ”

KELLY: It's hard with kids because they kind of chunk out, and then they stretch, and then they chunk out. I always know a growth spurt is coming when one of mine gets a tiny bit chunky around the face. I have to really watch myself and make sure I never say anything like, 'Oh, you've put on a bit of weight there. Time to go on a diet!'

CARLY: It is really tricky. And I think it's quite easy to look back on the way our parents used language around food in the 80s and 90s and shake our heads and be like, 'How could you have possibly said that kind of stuff to us and labelled food as bad?'

But then who's to say that the way that we're raising kids now to not label foods isn't going to end up with some sort of a bigger issue in the future?

Before I joke about any food issues I had growing up, it's important for me to note that I don't want to cast blame on anyone for it. But, I have a very complicated relationship with food and so does my mother. But she was honestly just doing her best with the information that was available to her at that time.

KELLY: Yeah, that's right.

CARLY: I'm not blaming her because all mothers did the same back then. You were told foods were bad and if you were putting on weight, it was totally okay for your mum to say, 'You're putting on weight, you need to deal with this.'

KELLY: Yeah, my mum was big on that. In our family, it was a really big thing, 'Don't do x because you'll get fat.'

CARLY: Our whole family would go on diets together. Nutritionists and dietitians would just die if mothers were putting their whole families on diets these days.

But we had a real thing in our house where, if we had a treat on a Saturday night, we'd buy a block of chocolate or something. And we had to finish it all on a Saturday night because the next day we were going on a diet. We always had this thing of, if we had naughty food or bad food in the house, it had to be consumed on that day because the next day we'd be starting over. But then of course two days later, we'd buy chocolate again.

So, that kind of stuff was confusing. I did not come from a family of moderators. We're abstainers and we're bingers. That's actually one thing that I think is a huge thing for me now: full-sized blocks of chocolate do not come into my house. There's no point in me kidding myself because I spent 20 years living in a house where you finished the block of chocolate. And I can't break that habit. It's just in me now. I just make sure I portion everything. Nutella portions, guys.

That actually worked really well (until it became a nightly habit), because otherwise I would have eaten an entire jar of Nutella.

KELLY: It's like that having a tin of Milo in the house.

CARLY: Exactly. You keep sneaking back for your little mouthfuls and stuff.

KELLY: Yeah...

CARLY: I don't have kids. I have a niece that I'm just in love with and I try very hard to always use positive language around her and make sure that I say positive things about her that don't have anything to do with her appearance.

KELLY: Yeah, because that's the big thing. So now, I've got a daughter and I'm very careful that I don't say anything like, 'Oh I'm feeling a bit fat today,' or, 'I need to go on a diet.' I do not make any comments about my or her body at all. Like I'll say, 'You look...' ah it's probably not wise to say this either, but I say, 'You look very pretty,' or, 'I love your outfit.' But never any language around size.

And I'm hyper-vigilant about what I say about myself. I'm very, very careful with that because I do know that that's something that was back in the day when we were growing up. All the language was around, 'No I'm feeling a bit fat. I need to go on a diet.' And I think that's a very damaging thing to grow up hearing all the time.

CARLY: It's interesting that you brought that up actually because I was having a conversation with my niece and she was telling me about these girls that she goes to school with. She's five and I was shocked when she was like, 'My friend, big Lily.' And I was like, 'Big Lily, why do you call her Big Lily?' And she said, "Because there's big Lily and little Lily." And I was like, I cannot believe they're differentiating between the two Lilys in the class by calling them Big Lily and Little Lily.

When I was growing up there was another girl in my class that was called Carly. She was little Carly and I was big Carly. That broke my heart because I hated it when people called me big and I feel really sad for big Lily. Can we think of another differentiator for Lily?

KELLY: At Jaden's school, it's always by the surname. There's always like a couple of Jacks in the class. It's Jack D. And Jack M.

CARLY: Yeah, that's better. I was just like, 'Guys can we not have big Lilys and little Lilys?'

KELLY: Yeah, even if just we're referring to height or something, it's still...

CARLY: It's still bad. Little Lily might feel really self-conscious about being so small.

KELLY: Let's not use size to differentiate.

“ *Gretchen Rubin says it's important to distinguish between acknowledging something is a treat, and using something as a reward.* ”

CARLY: We went off topic there, guys.

KELLY: (Laughing) But yeah, it was an important off-topic. Don't do that. Don't differentiate people by size!

Ok, onwards. Gabby asked about how to stop rewarding yourself with food and the whole consoling yourself with food. Gretchen Rubin says it's important to distinguish between acknowledging something is a treat, and using something as a reward. It's ok to have a treat, but don't reward yourself with treats. That's a simple mindset shift.

You just tell yourself you can certainly reward yourself for stuff, but the reward can't be food. Insofar as consoling yourself with food, I just don't have crap food in the house – the kind of food that you want to console with. If I go to the fridge, there's like frozen veggies and that's it. If I'm going to console myself with something...

CARLY: You can heat up some steamed vegetables in the microwave, Kelly. Yeah, you!

KELLY: That's exactly what I do! (Laughs) And you know what? I keep going back to the fridge. I know there's nothing in there. I know

there's nothing in the pantry but I will keep going back there and looking at it...

CARLY: I do the exact same thing. Just in case something appeared.

KELLY: Yup, but it's not there and I can't do it. And that's the only way. If the food is in the house, I will eat it. End of story. So, I just can't have that food in the house.

“ *The moderator versus abstainer distinction is something I found fascinating because it explains why some people appear to have amazing willpower with food, and others don't.*

CARLY: Yeah, I'm exactly the same. I said before – full sized chocolate bars are not welcome in my house. They just never enter it. If friends come over for dinner and there's leftover dessert, I send it home with them. I save one portion for Ben and I send the rest home with them.

Also, I don't have a huge amount of issues with rewarding myself with food. That's never been a huge thing for me. I do console myself with food sometimes though. So, I do have to be very careful if I'm having a bad day.

Ben, is really good at knowing when I've had a bad day.

I'll be like, 'Oh I'm getting Vietnamese takeaway on the way home,' and he'll be like, 'No. You had a grumpy day today. That doesn't mean you get to eat shitty food for dinner.'

If you do feel the need to have a little something, as a reward or to make yourself feel better, I feel it's all about portion control. I have those low calorie hot chocolates and they're like 50 calories and there's no nutrition value in them whatsoever. They're basically

powdered milk and a little bit of sugar. But on a cold winter's night when I'm feeling really sorry for myself because I've eaten nothing but vegetables all day and did a 45-minute F45 and I'm just like, 'Why am I not the thinnest person in the world?', I can sit there with my lovely little comforting cup of hot chocolate and not feel I'm being deprived of everything.

Things like that do minimal damage to any type of healthy eating plan and it's also just good to have that kind of balance so you don't feel like you're missing out all the time. So yeah – portion control.

KELLY: Yeah, I definitely agree with that. Next, I wanted to talk about moderation and abstainer mindsets. We talked about moderation in the previous episode of this podcast. The moderator versus abstainer distinction is something I found fascinating because it explains why some people appear to have amazing willpower with food, and others don't.

I'm that person who'll make the chocolate rice crispy slice, and I'll cut myself one slice. Then I'll cut myself another. And then another. And then I've eaten half the thing. I look at that and go, 'Kelly, you are pathetic. You've got no willpower.'

But the fact is, is I'm actually an abstainer. It's far, far easier for me to not have any of something than it is to expect myself to have one small slice of it.

CARLY: I find that so fascinating coming from you Kelly. Especially after that coffee episode we did. You were like, 'Screw you brain, I'm not addicted to coffee,' and you were just able to go without coffee.

Also, you really don't like not being in control and you think that you should be able to do anything. So, I'm surprised that gold star Kelly isn't a moderator. I feel like you should be the type of person who wants to eat one Tim Tam and go, 'Look at how disciplined I am.'

KELLY: Well, that's exactly it! I'm so disciplined in all other ways, I hate that I'm like this with food. I get so angry at myself that I can't just have one Tim Tam. And the self-talk that follows – my God! I get so down on myself. That's why, when, it was first brought it to my attention that some of us have moderator mindsets and some of us have abstainer mindsets, I was like, 'Oh my God. That's amazing.'

It's got nothing to do with how much of a loser I am for not having self-control. It's just easier for me to have nothing than it is for me to have a little bit of something.

Interestingly, however, it doesn't apply to everything and I think that's a really important thing to understand. For instance, I'm a moderator with alcohol. I can very easily have one glass of champagne and that's it. I don't feel the need to have more whereas I know other people, if they have one glass, they'll have the whole bottle. And it takes a huge amount of willpower to not have the whole bottle.

I also think it's important, when applying this moderator/abstainer mindset, to understand that it doesn't apply to every single area of your life.

CARLY: It works differently for different things for different people.

KELLY: Yeah, so in most areas of my life, I am a moderator. I can moderate how much I go on social media. I can moderate how much coffee or tea I drink. But with food? I guess because I just love food so much, I have to be an abstainer.

I think it's important for people to understand their mindsets in that regard and then work with it. If I say to myself, 'This is pathetic Kelly. You should be able to have more willpower than this.' I will keep being frustrated because I keep trying to have the one Tim Tam and then I'll keep being angry at myself and not being able to just have the one Tim Tam.

Remember I mentioned marshmallows earlier? I just have a real weakness for marshmallows.

CARLY: That's so weird.

KELLY: I know, it's so random. I bought a packet the other day with the intent that I was going to have one marshmallow a day.

“ *I get so angry at myself that I can't just have one Tim Tam. And the self-talk that follows – my God! I get so down on myself.*

CARLY: Oh, sure you were.

KELLY: Oh my God. I had to throw out half the bag yesterday because I ate half the bag that day. I had one marshmallow and then I went back for another and then I went back for another. And in the end, I was like, 'Either I'm going to eat this whole bag or I literally have to go and put this thing in the bin.'

I was kind of experimenting with myself. 'Can I exert self-control?' Yeah, I could have. But it just took so much energy. It took far less energy to just put the freaking thing in the bin so I didn't have to think about it anymore.

CARLY: Do you actually have to destroy the food? Like me putting a bag of marshmallows in the bin is not going to stop me from eating them. I'm sorry.

KELLY: (Laughing) I know people who will go back and fish the thing out of the bin. I'm not quite that bad.

CARLY: I'd have to pour water on them. I'd have to actually destroy it. You know that episode of *Sex and the City* where Miranda is eating the cake and she has to put dishwashing liquid on it to stop herself from eating it? That's me. The bin is no barrier to me. As long as it hasn't touched the bin, it's good. I'm still going for it.

KELLY: (Laughing) Once they're in the bin, for me I'm good. I'm not going back there because that's even too far for me. But I do understand why people sometimes, literally, have to set it on fire to make sure that they don't go there again.

CARLY: Also, it comes back to the whole thing of just not having that type of food available. It doesn't come into my house. If it's in my house, I try to get rid of it as soon as humanly possible.

“ *Having food that you know you can't be moderate with and can't eat just one bit of? Having that in your house is making life hard. Why would you make life hard for yourself?*

KELLY: I just think, make life easy for yourself, guys. Having food that you know you can't be moderate with and can't eat just one bit of? Having that in your house is making life hard. Why would you make life hard for yourself?

The fact is, if you go to the cupboard and there's nothing there to eat, you'll be like, 'Oh bummer, there's nothing to eat.' And then you get over it. It's not like you're dying of anything if there are no Tim Tams in the cupboard. It's just your brain going, 'Oh darn,' but that's it.

So, just make life easier for yourself. Just don't have it in the house. People have said to me in the past, 'But I have kids.' My response to them is if something's not good for you...

CARLY: Your kids shouldn't be eating it.

KELLY: Yeah, your kids shouldn't be eating it either. So, I don't get that. Partners, however, I can see how they can make things tricky. I'm lucky with Ant. If it's there, he'll eat it. If it's not, he doesn't miss it.

CARLY: Yeah, I'm lucky with Ben as well. He enjoys eating very healthy food and he also suffers from very severe migraines and chocolate is a trigger. If I want chocolate, which is rare, I'll buy just one little tiny thing. I'm a real instant gratification kind of a gal and he's really into the delayed gratification. But he's very sweet. I'll eat my treat early and then four hours later, he'll get his treat and he always gives me a bite because he's really nice. If that was me, I'd be like, 'Screw you. You ate your treat.'

KELLY: Yeah, I don't share a treat. When it's mango season and I've got a beautiful plump ripe mango, I don't share. Ant's forever like, 'I can't believe you don't share your mango.' And I'm like ...

CARLY: 'I can't believe you think you should have some of my mango.'

KELLY: Exactly, right? What is wrong with him?

CARLY: It's like sharing your last Rollo. Just don't go there.

Ok, one more listener question. Jessica wanted to ask about time-specific diets. She was saying she really struggles with things that are like 28 days or 3 months or whatever way you do a particular type of diet.

We've covered a little bit of this before. I don't hate time-specific challenges and things. Doing the Whole30 or the 5:2 where you have designated days of the week where you eat certain foods or restrict your calorie content intake for those particular days. I just use them as a reset and I'm very conscious of what I'm using them for. I don't look at it as a brand-new thing that I'm going to be doing forever and eternity. Like, say, never eating chocolate again.

But I can certainly do the thing where I'll go without eating chocolate or sugar or alcohol for 30 days just to remind myself that I shouldn't be having Nutella on toast every night.

KELLY: I like doing resets like you, Carly. And my favourite one that I do is with my CrossFit gym. They've got a program called Highway to Health. It's really good. It's a 21-day program that kind of borrows from Paleo, Whole30 and it's a little bit from everywhere. It's quite sensible and quite easy to do. Whenever I feel like I've fallen off the wagon and am eating stuff that I shouldn't be eating and I'm eating it every day, I'll go and do that 21-day program and it just resets my system a little bit.

I'm not doing it necessarily to lose weight or to change how I eat because Highway to Health is kind of how I eat most days. I just use it to reset my diet and then get back to eating the way I know I should be eating.

I do feel I'm very much against people doing diets only to lose weight and then returning to the way that they ate before. That does not work. If you're going to do a diet, choose one that teaches you how to eat real food and make your own food and teaches you a way of eating that you could in theory do for the rest of your life.

EPISODE 30: MAKING SENSE OF DIET AND FOOD PART 3

TIPS AND THOUGHTS SHARED IN THIS EPISODE:

- A trap for athletes – being able to eat whatever they want whenever they want
- If it's not in the house, you can't eat it
- If you shouldn't be eating something, should you have it in the house for your kids?
- How to have good conversations with your kids about food.
- The trap of using food as a reward.
- Moderator versus Abstainer mindsets.
- The strategy of convenience versus inconvenience.
- Gretchen Rubin's Four Tendencies.
- Shifting your thinking about the price of healthy food.
- Eating five cups of veggies a day.
- Do we need to get more comfortable being hungry?
- Use a smaller plate.
- Choose your treat food wisely.
- Make good food choices when you're in control of what you're eating.
- Drink lots of water.

THINGS WE MENTION IN THIS EPISODE:

- *Alexx Stuart's site:* lowtoxlife.com
- *Alexx Stuart's program – Thrive: Raising Kids Who Love Real Food:* thrivinghappykids.com
- *Gretchen Rubin's Four Tendencies Framework:* Find out which you are at bit.ly/habitsquiz
- *French Women Don't Get Fat:* frenchwomendontgetfat.com

CARLY: This is the third episode in our *Making Sense of Diet and Food* series and today we thought we'd offer some practical solutions for developing good habits around food. So, Kelly, do you want to get started on your favourite good food habit?

KELLY: Yes. I've had to develop many over the years because remember, my main problem with food is I love it and am a bit of a compulsive overeater. Also, I did triathlon for 10 years so that created the dastardly habit of, 'I can eat whatever I want, whenever I want without fear of putting on weight because I am doing soooo much exercise.'

So, when I quit triathlon it was like, 'Oh dear. I need to learn some good food habits because I'm not training for 12-15 hours a week anymore and can't have bad food habits anymore.'

CARLY: You know what? I think that happens consistently. A lot of the sporty kids I went to school with who were exercising four, five hours a day and eating heaps of food, put on weight significantly when they stopped training. I don't think anybody gets away with doing that.

KELLY: No, they don't. It's a rare ex-athlete who quits their sport and doesn't find themselves in a spot of bother in that regard.

I reckon it took me 3-5 years to re-learn how to eat once I finished. While I was training and competing, I'll be honest; I didn't pay a great deal of attention to whether food was nourishing or non-nourishing (the terms we've agreed to use so we don't fall in the trap of defining foods as clean or good/bad). I just ate whatever I wanted.

“ *What's the easiest way to stop yourself eating food that is very low in nutritional value? You just don't have it in the house.*

So, the first major shift I had to make when I stopped competing was I had to pay attention to that!

Which leads me to my first biggest tip. What's the easiest way to stop yourself eating food that is very low in nutritional value? You just don't have it in the house. I know this sounds really simple but most people, if you've got a packet of TimTams in the house, you'll eat it. If you've got a giant block of chocolate in the house, you'll eat it. If you don't have it in the house, you'll do what I do and go to the fridge every half an hour hoping that something has magically materialised in the last half hour. And you'll be disappointed every time but ultimately, it's not there.

Now, a quick note on something I hear from people quite often: 'But I have kids – so I have that kind of stuff in the cupboard for them.' And I'd say to them...

CARLY: If you shouldn't have it your kids probably shouldn't either? I think we've touched on this previously, and I know that technically I'm not allowed to say that because I don't have children. But I've heard

people say that before: ‘I’ve got treats in the house for the kids.’ And having that kind of food in the house isn’t necessarily the best thing for kids anyway.

When I was a kid growing up and we had treat food in the house, I knew exactly what the treat food was, and I knew it was food that was a ‘sometimes’ food. I also knew if my mum ate it, she had guilt about it. Which meant there was this whole stigma around having treat food in the house.



Having better conversations with our kids about nourishing and non-nourishing foods also gives them better ownership about what they choose to eat and not eat.

KELLY: Yeah, I was just about to bring this up.

If you’re a parent looking to have a good conversation with your kids about what a ‘sometimes’ food looks like and how to make ‘treat’ foods that are more nourishing, you need to look up Alexx Stuart at LowToxLife.com. Alexx has a brilliant program about cooking with your kids. I think it’s called Thrive. She also talks about having conversations about food with your kids that don’t involve you saying things like, ‘Oh, I shouldn’t be eating this,’ or, ‘Oh, this is going to make me fat.’

I think if we look back on the conversations our parents had with us when we were kids, there was a lot of ‘That’s bad,’ or ‘That’s good,’ etc. It’s not useful and it sets us up quite badly as adults. But... that was all they knew. We know better now.

Having better conversations with our kids about nourishing and non-nourishing foods also gives them better ownership about what they choose to eat and not eat.

CARLY: That sounds really fantastic. It's really hard having these conversations without making people feel bad about their parenting.

I do find it hard putting out solid advice for parents when I don't have kids myself. But, I do have experience with *being* a kid with parents so I can comment from that point of view. And I remember having lots of food rewards when I was a kid.

We would go to McDonald's as a treat or, once I'd clean up my room, I could have my dessert treat. There was also a lot of, if we had a bad day, we'd go to the shops and get a treat. That kind of stuff. That's what a lot of parents did back then. It wasn't just my family that was doing it; it was most families. So I developed these ingrained habits of if I've had a bad day, I deserve a treat or if I've been to the gym, I deserve a treat. Or I did a good thing; I deserve a treat.

Which is why I think it would have been nice to grow up with different parameters in place. Such as never, ever, ever having food as a reward for things.

KELLY: Absolutely. 100%. This is something that's been ever-present for me as an adult. If I went for a four-hour training ride on my bike, I'd spend that entire training ride thinking about the giant muffin I was going to have at the coffee shop at the end. I'm not even joking.

CARLY: I can just imagine you on the bike thinking, 'I get to have a muffin, I get to have a muffin.'

KELLY: Seriously! Which brings me to another big habit I had to break once I finished triathlon. I had to stop rewarding myself with food for exercising.

So, yeah, let's make it easier for our kids when they become adults. Let's set a good example ourselves by rewarding ourselves with

something nice that's not food. Or if you choose to reward yourself with food, do it in a conscious way but not as a default.

As you said, we do tend to go, 'I had a bad day, I deserve that KitKat.' And that's kind of like KitKat's advertising, isn't it?

CARLY: Have a break. Have a KitKat.

KELLY: Exactly. So you have some thoughts around habits around treats, Carls?

CARLY: Yeah. If I want some chocolate, I only ever buy a single portion of that chocolate. Why? Because, if there are treats in my house, I will eat them. I will eat all of them until there are none left.

KELLY: I'm the same.

CARLY: It's such a weird thing, isn't it? And I don't think it has anything to do with metabolism or the way you present as a person because I'm a much bigger person than you are. I don't think you can look at someone and determine whether or not they're the type of person who has control when they eat or doesn't have control when they eat. I think it's just something that affects some people and doesn't affect other people.

KELLY: It's more that moderator and abstainer thing, isn't it?

CARLY: Exactly. We've covered this a few times, but I'll just quickly run through it again. Some people are moderators where they're able to have one chocolate biscuit and put the packet away and not have any more until maybe a week later. Abstainers are people who know that if they have one chocolate biscuit, they're going to have ten.

The easiest way for abstainers to stay in control of their eating is to not have a treat food at all rather than try to have a small portion of a treat food. Or, to have it very, very rarely because they know that

on that rare occasion when they do indulge in that treat, they will eat the whole packet.

Kelly and I are both abstainers, and I think once you figure out if you're a moderator or an abstainer, it actually just changes your life.

KELLY: Yeah, it does. Because you know what it does, it stops bad self-talk. Before, the self-talk for me was, 'You've got no discipline when it comes to food. Why don't you have any discipline when it comes to food? Get more discipline when it comes to food, Kelly. You should be able to have a packet of Tim Tams in the house and only eat one Tim Tam per day.' It was this really negative thing going round in my head.

Then when I found out about the moderator-abstainer thing, I was like 'Ahhhh. I'm an abstainer. And, as an abstainer, I'm making it really difficult for myself having this stuff in the house because it requires a huge amount of discipline to have just one serve and put it away.' My life got so much easier when I just stopped having that stuff in the house!

“ *Kelly and I are both abstainers, and I think once you figure out if you're a moderator or an abstainer, it actually just changes your life.*

CARLY: Exactly. I have this conversation with my partner all the time because he's definitely a moderator. He'll have two pieces of chocolate, and then he won't even think about it whereas if there's half a block of chocolate in the cupboard, it's like it's singing to me. And I'm distracted, and I know it's there. And he finds this behaviour quite fascinating because he'll go to leave the house and I'll say, 'That half a block of chocolate at the top of the cupboard ... you need to hide it before you go or I'm going to eat it.'

He will be super-incredulous, and all very ‘I don’t understand.’ I’m like, ‘You don’t need to understand. You just need to hide that damn half a block of chocolate.’

KELLY: (Laughing) Yeah Ben, if you want it to be there when you come home, you need to put it somewhere where Carly doesn’t know where it is.

CARLY: Exactly, and he also needs to hide it well because it becomes a game of me trying to find it. If I find it, I’ll send him a photo of it and be like, ‘Well done idiot. I found the chocolate, and now I’m going to eat it.’

And that’s the thing; I’ve accepted that about myself, which is why I only buy treats one at a time. A full block of chocolate never comes into my house unless I’m having people over for dinner and then if there’s half a block of chocolate left, it goes home with the people that came over.

“ *This is my strategy of convenience versus inconvenience. If you’re going to have tempting food in the house, put them in a container that’s high up on the shelf in your pantry.* ”

I love baking and because I used to work in a school I would bake maybe 24 mini muffins on a Sunday. I’d keep 10 for us and take the rest to school because two people don’t need 24 mini-muffins in their house over the course of a week. That’s just not a good thing to have in your house. So that’s the type of thing that I do.

Another example: I’ve got three really gunky bananas at the moment and I’m staying with my parents in Canberra so I’m going to make a banana bread, but I’m going to leave half with them and take half on the road with us when we leave for Melbourne tomorrow.

Bottom line, if I do bake, I make sure there are enough people to share it with. Otherwise, if it just sits there, I'll eat it because that's just what I do.

KELLY: Oh man, Alexx on her LowToxLife.com site has this magic banana bread recipe that's made with really good ingredients, really good wholesome ingredients. Ant and the kids all love it, which says something because they're hard markers for anything that is vaguely 'healthy'. But I make that banana bread and the whole thing's gone in the hour after I make it.

Which brings me to another habit. I don't bake anymore because if I bake and then this stuff's gone in a day, I think, 'Hmm, four people shouldn't eat 20 muffins in a day.' But I do understand there are people out there who really, really love baking and they're just not going to stop. If you're that person, try to bake from scratch using nourishing ingredients. Alexx has great recipes on her site. And then maybe consider tucking them in the freezer or something so they're not sitting on the counter there.

This is my strategy of convenience versus inconvenience. If you're going to have tempting food in the house – for instance if you're going to have lollies in the house – put them in a container that's high up on the shelf in your pantry.

If you have it on your countertop in a bowl, every time you walk past, you're going to put your hand in there and grab it. If you have to make an effort to go and get these lollies, you're less likely to do it.

It's a bit the same with fruit. If you have beautiful cut up fruit sitting there on a plate in your kitchen, you eat it. Which means this strategy works both ways. Make the foods that are nourishing more convenient to eat, and make the less-nourishing food harder to get to.

CARLY: I really appreciate that tip, Kelly, but there is nothing that will stand in my way of getting chocolate. Even if it's high up.

KELLY: (Laughing) Maybe that tip is more for the moderators.

CARLY: Ben once hid some chocolate on the top shelf which I can't reach without standing on a chair. And we'd only just moved in so we didn't have the chair. He came home and sprung me. I was on my tippy toes with the kitchen tongs pulling the chocolate from the top shelf.

He goes, 'Seriously? Seriously, what is wrong with you?' And I'm going, 'There's no other food in the house. We just moved in. Feel sorry for me.'

But again, I know that this is a problem for me and it's not a problem anymore because I just don't have it in the house and I buy really small treats at a time. Yes, it's more expensive but it's better for my health because otherwise I'm eating full packets of biscuits and things and rifling through the cupboards, straining my neck, trying to get some chocolate into my face.

KELLY: (Laughing) Oh my God.

Ok, since this episode is all about habits, this might be a good time to share a personality framework called The Four Tendencies. Gretchen Rubin developed it when she was writing her habits book, *Better than Before*.

She identified that people seem to respond to expectations in four different ways and knowing how you respond to expectations is quite crucial when it comes to building good habits.

If you take the quiz, (by going to bit.ly/habitsquiz), you'll be one of Upholder, Obliger, Questioner, or Rebel.

Upholders quite easily live up to both the expectations they have of themselves, and the expectations others have of them. Upholders

tend to find it quite easy to form good habits and don't really understand when other people struggle to do this.

Obligers readily live up to the expectations other people have of them, but struggle to meet the expectations they set for themselves. So, Obligers can create a habit if they have some external person holding them accountable. But if they have to hold themselves accountable, they struggle.

Questioners literally question all expectations, both internal and external, and if the expectation makes sense to them, then they'll buy into it and make it happen. They can form good habits if they feel the habit is a reasonable one to make.

Rebels resist all expectations, both internal and external. They find it really tricky to form habits because they don't like doing what other people tell them to do. But they also don't like telling themselves what to do. They feel quite restricted by the idea of habits!

“ *Gretchen Rubin identified that people seem to respond to expectations in four different ways and knowing this is quite crucial when it comes to building good habits.* ”

CARLY: Do you read Harry Potter, Kel?

KELLY: No. And I can't believe I haven't. I'll get there.

CARLY: You need to get on board. They've got the four houses and there's this Harry Potter site that tells you what house you'd be in if you were in the books.

Everyone goes to that site and when they find out they're not a Gryffindor person they're gutted. But, here's the thing. Gryffindor's

actually not the best house in Harry Potter. The kids in Gryffindor are loose cannons and a bit stupid to be honest. They make bad decisions. They act on impulse and how many of them are still alive is completely beyond me.

“ *We can't change our type, but we can change our behaviour to amplify our strengths and manage our weaknesses instead of trying to change a weakness into a strength.*

I'm a Ravenclaw, which are the ones who are really research-based and basically Type A. Because I'm a Ravenclaw, I think Gryffindors are idiots.

Anyway, the point I'm trying to make here is, be careful not to do this personality test, or any kind of personality test and think that one personality type is better than another. They all have their good and bad points. Gryffindor isn't as good as everyone says it is.

KELLY: Yeah, that's it. I know all Obligers hate being Obligers and they just want to be Upholders. Which is a little pointless because we're all who we are.

We can't change our type, but we can change our behaviour to amplify our strengths and manage our weaknesses instead of trying to change a weakness into a strength.

I'm very, very aware of what my weaknesses are and I've wasted sooooo much energy over the years trying to turn those into strengths.

For example, I'm an introvert and always considered that to be a major weakness. For years I worked hard to be more extroverted and not only was that completely exhausting, it was also completely futile because I was trying to be something I'm not.

Ever since accepting I'm an introvert and there are both good and bad things about that, I try to amplify the good things and manage the bad things.

So, for anyone taking the Four Tendencies Habits Quiz, don't waste time or energy thinking 'I can't believe I'm a Rebel or I hate being an Obliger.' Just go, 'I am that thing. That's how my mind works. Now I know how to best set myself up to create good habits going forward.'

CARLY: I absolutely love that. My partner has always had what I thought were really terrible sleeping habits. He's up at all hours of the night, doesn't go to sleep until maybe 2am or 3am most mornings and doesn't get up until about 11am. That bothered me for ages and then I realised that's just the way he is. He works for himself so he can do that and it's totally fine. There's no reason why he needs to change and I wouldn't even say that it's necessarily a weakness.

He's actually changed his whole life to be a business owner, basically, because of that reason. No one wanted to employ him from the hours of 2pm in the afternoon until midnight because no businesses run at those hours.

KELLY: Yeah, I think it's important to note that before you can go on and create good habits, you've just got to know yourself first and know how you respond to things. Once you know and understand yourself, you can create habits that are best suited to your personality.

CARLY: Another habit hack I wanted to discuss – and it's a difficult thing to suggest for reasons you'll soon see – is that I always prioritise my health over money. Now, I understand I'm in a privileged position to be able to do that because I'm a middle-class, employed person working in Australia so this isn't necessarily available to everyone. But, if you eat lunch at a café, a greasy burger is generally always half the price of a salad and that's true in most parts of the world.

I spent years ordering the cheaper items to save money because any child of a baby boomer saves money whenever they possibly can. And that's just completely ridiculous. I'm not swimming in money but I can afford to buy the meal that is \$5 more in order to add some vegetables to my plate.

I also try really hard never to question buying beautiful fresh foods. I love those little Roma tomatoes; they're so delicious. But they're \$4 for a little punnet. And for years, I would buy them as a 'treat'. Then I realised I wouldn't think twice about spending that money on a coffee or a protein bar. So I rearranged the way I thought about the value of food.

\$4 spent on really nourishing food is never \$4 wasted. I've seen people in the supermarket pick up an avocado and go. 'Oh it's \$3,' and put it back down and then buy a \$4.50 iced tea on the way out of the supermarket. I just think we need some re-calibration there.

We also need to re-jig our thinking around fresh produce being more expensive. People have this weird thing in their head where \$4 or \$5 is a lot to pay for *any* amount of vegetables but they don't question spending that on something a lot less nourishing. I know everyone has a different financial situation but if you're comfortable financially and you're ever questioning spending money on fresh wholesome food... stop questioning it.

KELLY: Yeah, I agree and you've summarised my thinking on that topic so well I'll now skip to my next tip which is something we've done a whole show about and that's aiming to have five cups of veggies every day.

You've done a five-cups-a-day challenge with your blog readers Carls so... tell me more.

CARLY: What was that habits type you mentioned – the one where people need people to be the boss of them?

KELLY: That would be Obligers.

CARLY: I think a lot of Obligers take part in challenges because they like...

KELLY: The accountability.

“ *People have this weird thing in their head where \$4 or \$5 is a lot to pay for any amount of vegetables but they don't question spending that on something a lot less nourishing.* ”

CARLY: Yeah, that's right. I think I had a group full of Obligers and everyone was really good but I was quite shocked by how much some people struggled with the concept of five cups of vegetables.

I had lots of people ask, 'Do you mean five serves?' And I had to say, 'No, I mean five cups.' Because what is a serve? I hate the word serve. Tell me millilitres or grams because 'a serve' means nothing. I quite like that thing some nutritionists do where they say, 'A piece of meat the size of the palm of your hand,' or, 'A serve of butter that's like the tip of your thumb.'

Anyway, I re-iterated that it was definitely five CUPS of veggies a day and some people were like, 'Sweet!' and they were eating five cups of potato. So, I had to change the challenge and specify: five cups of vegetables, three of them have to be leafy and green.

KELLY: The reason we love the whole five cups of veggies thing as a good habit is because it crowds out your plate with good stuff and it's also a healthier focus. Instead of talking about what foods you shouldn't eat, the focus is on foods you can.

Ultimately, very few of us are getting enough veggies into ourselves on a daily basis. So, it's not just a good focus for those who are looking to lose weight. It's a good focus for everyone. If you're

struggling to get your head around five cups of veggies a day, just start with having more veggies than you are now and build up to it.

CARLY: Yeah, I also think it's really important that people shift their thinking about where vegetables fit into their meals. One thing I like to remind myself of, and I had to talk to my partner about this too, was the use of vegetables as a garnish instead of a base.

You need to start with vegetables and then add things on top of the vegetables. You don't start with a plate of pasta, add some meat, add some creamy sauce, and then sprinkle some zucchini strings on the top. That's not enough vegetables.

I think when people were struggling with this challenge it was because they were used to vegetables being an afterthought. A side dish rather than a main dish. The whole point of the five cups a day is that you start with the vegetables and that's the bulk of your meal.

Another barrier is that we think vegetables are harder to prepare which I think is a little bit debatable. I think it takes five minutes to steam some broccoli.

“ *You need to start with vegetables... You don't start with a plate of pasta, add some meat, add some creamy sauce, and then sprinkle some zucchini strings on the top.* ”

KELLY: I will put my hand up and say it took me a long time to get back on board with vegetables because I'm an adult who hates cooking.

Back when I first started cooking for myself, anything that made cooking quicker and more convenient, I used it. Which meant packets. I was a packet cook for a long, long time.

When I quit triathlon and was also trying to remove additives and preservatives from my diet to manage a terrible sinus allergy, I had to re-learn how to cook from scratch rather than throwing the contents of packets together.

I started using ingredients that were fresh and close to the source, which meant a lot more veggies. It was not an overnight thing, but I did find that once I learned how to do something, it became quick to do. But I did have to go through the pain of learning how to do it first!

And I did have to get a little more organised in order to have time to make meals that took a bit longer to prepare than boiling some pasta and throwing some sauce from a jar on top.

CARLY: I'm a little hesitant to offer this short-term solution to your problem above – of needing convenience with cooking – because it's a little more expensive.

But, if you have the means, you can get packets of pre-prepared stir-fried vegetables at supermarkets now and little packets of roast vegetables. They're comparatively more expensive than chopping it up yourself, but I've recently shifted my thinking about that too because if I want to buy all the individual vegetables to chop up for a stir-fry, I have to buy much more than I need because I only cook for two people. If instead, I can grab a \$5-bag of pre-prepared stir-fried vegetables, this makes more sense for my household.

We've been taught this is both a lazy thing to do and a waste of money because we should just cut it up ourselves. But if the difference is between me having a microwaved lasagna or a bag of pre-prepared stir-fried vegetables, I'll go for the stir-fried vegetables every time. I buy a packet of those every day – every single day – because it saves me time and my time is worth a lot of money. It's also an investment in my health, and I don't feel guilty about that.

I know this option is not available to everyone. But if it is available to you, grab yourself a convenience bag of veggies and plan that as the bulk of your meal.

KELLY: Definitely. Ok, my next little food habit – well, it’s sort of a habit – is I’ve learned to be comfortable with being hungry. Again, the inability to feel hungry is a hangover from my triathlon days where an hour and a half was the longest I would go without eating. Also, back then, (and the idea persists today), all the nutrition advice was around grazing – that it was better to eat several small meals over the course of a day rather than three main meals a day.

CARLY: I remember that. I’m glad that’s not a thing anymore because that does not work well for my metabolism at all.

KELLY: Me neither! I worked as a health and fitness instructor at the gym at Uni when I was doing my Exercise and Sports Science degree and I remember the advice to give people at the time was, ‘Don’t let yourself get hungry because if you let yourself get hungry, you make bad food decisions. Yada, yada, yada.’ And, look, this is true. When we’re ravenously hungry, we do make poor food decisions as a rule.

But there is a difference between feeling ravenously hungry and feeling those first little pangs of hunger. We’ve lost the ability to distinguish between the two. So, as with anything I suggest you experiment.

When you feel those first hunger pangs 90 minutes after having breakfast, try sitting with them for 10-20 minutes. Go have a glass of water to make sure you’re not mistaking thirst for hunger.

If you’re eating a nutritionally sound meal at breakfast, you should be able to go four hours without eating; without needing a snack at morning tea. It’s actually optimal to allow your body to fully digest a meal before asking it to digest another.

CARLY: I'm totally on board with that. I've become quite comfortable with being hungry doing the 5:2 diet and I'm quite good at it.

Have you ever read that *French Women Don't Get Fat* book? It's a really good book actually. It talks about how food should be enjoyed and you sit down to enjoy it and you don't eat on the run.

And there was a really interesting thing about French parenting. They don't carry snacks for their kids. When you think about the way Australians approach this, it's the opposite. I'm not a parent but from what I've observed, Australian parents always seem to have bags of snacks on hand when they're out and about.

“ *It's actually optimal to allow your body to fully digest a meal before asking it to digest another.* ”

KELLY: I mean you can go to the park for two hours without taking snacks. That's just a simple fact. I don't take snacks to the park when I go with my kids more out of laziness than anything else. And I always feel a little bad because most of the other mums have things on hand.

But, what I've noticed is, if my kids know there's no food to be had, they don't come looking for food. If I do have stuff, they will. The kids will ask for food not because they're hungry, but because they know it's there.

Ok, moving on from the hunger thing!

My second favourite food habit after trying to get five cups of veggies on your plate every day is to serve yourself on a smaller plate. I have a plate at home that is not full-sized, but it's not kid sized. It's somewhere in-between. When I fill the medium-sized plate, the food on that plate is always adequate and satisfying. But,

give me a larger plate and I will fill that one too, and eat everything on it. I don't need that larger serve, but if it's there, I'll eat it.

One of the biggest things I struggle with when it comes to food is portion control so if you're the same; this little hack will make a big difference for you I reckon.

“ *I always make good food choices on my own in private so that if I am eating somewhere where I'm not in control of what's on the menu, it doesn't matter.*

CARLY: Another one I've got is that I choose my treat food wisely. I don't waste 'treat calories' on anything except wine, ice cream, and chocolate. I'm okay with cake, but I don't love it, so I don't eat it because, to me, that's a waste of treat calories. If you're not keen on hot chips, don't waste calories on them. Although if you're not keen on hot chips, please tell me your secret because I don't know anyone who isn't.

KELLY: Me too. I love those too.

CARLY: Mmm. Hot chips.

Oh! Here's another thing I like to do. I always make good food choices on my own in private so that if I am eating somewhere where I'm not in control of what's on the menu, and what's on the menu is not the most nutritious meal in the world, it doesn't matter.

So, if I have a hamburger at lunch and then go to a friend's place for dinner and that friend is serving up pizza, I'm going to stress a bit because I'm always watching my diet. But if I make a nutritious choice at lunch when it's within my control to do so, I don't have to stress when my friend serves pizza at dinner.

KELLY: Yeah, it's the whole 80:20 thing. If you're concerned about weight gain, the thing that's causing weight gain is not the 20% of stuff that you eat every so often. It's what you eat every day.

I take a very similar approach to you, Carls. When I'm in control of the food that I'm eating, I try to be very... I don't want to say strict because then it sounds like I'm really anal and constantly watching what I eat... but I know how to prepare and eat nourishing food. I mostly eat at home and I eat really good food at home.

When I go out to dinner, which is rare, and someone says, 'Do you feel like dessert?', if I feel like dessert, I'll have it. I won't sit there agonising about, 'Should I or shouldn't I?' Or, 'Am I going for a run tomorrow morning – will I be able to run off this treat?'

I don't know about other people but those neverending internal conversations about, 'Should I, shouldn't I,' can tip me over into disordered eating so I try to avoid them.

CARLY: Exactly. By giving yourself free passes and knowing that those are your free passes, that is a really good way of doing it.

Ben and I live in Melbourne and we have quite affordable restaurants near us. Sometimes it is quicker and cheaper for us to eat out so we probably eat out more than the average person would. When we first started doing this, I'd order whatever I wanted because I was 'out for dinner.' Then I realised that whenever I go out for dinner with Ben, that's not a treat. It is us eating us as quickly and cheaply as possible so that we could get on with doing whatever it was we were doing.

So now, when I'm out for dinner with Ben, I always make sure that I order a salad or something very, very healthy because I can't keep maintaining a Singapore noodles kind of diet like that!

KELLY: Yeah, definitely. And now... my final tip. I learned this from a challenge I did and I just kept going with it because I found it really kickstarts everything for me in the morning.

Every single day, the first thing I do when I get up before anything else is I have two giant glasses of water with a squeeze of half a lemon. Whether the lemon has any health benefits is debatable. I mostly have the lemon to make the water easier to drink! Anyway, I take about 10-15 minutes to drink them and do it while scrolling through Instagram or Facebook. You're quite dehydrated after you've gone 8-10 hours without drinking overnight so I find this wakes me up nicely and gets my whole system moving.

CARLY: Yeah, I also drink a shit ton of water. And I think it's really important for people to understand that thirst hardly ever presents itself as thirst. It presents itself as a headache. It presents itself as feeling lethargic, grumpy, sore muscles, not feeling productive... that's thirst. Every time you don't feel your best, there's a good chance you're thirsty. Every time I feel a bit headachy or like I'm not myself, drinking a couple of glasses of water fixes me right up.

KELLY: Yeah, it's interesting, isn't it? There are all these expensive detox programs out there yet the cheapest, healthiest detox program you can do is simply drink enough water every day. It keeps your system clear; it keeps your mind clear. It's so good for you.

EPISODE 81: HOW WE EAT TODAY

TIPS AND THOUGHTS SHARED IN THIS EPISODE:

- Revisiting the words ‘diet’ and ‘dieting’ and how we feel about them.
- Revisiting the concept of ‘moderation’ when it comes to diet.
- Where we stand on sugar.
- Where we stand on wheat.
- Where we stand on meat.
- Our respective days on a plate.

THINGS WE MENTION IN THIS EPISODE:

- *The Obesity-Eating Disorder Paradox*: harvardpolitics.com/covers/the-obesity-eating-disorder-paradox
- *The Paleo Diet*: thepaleodiet.com
- *I Quit Sugar*: iquitsugar.com
- *WHO Recommendations for sugar consumption*: who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2015/sugar-guideline/en/
- *Gut Feelings—the “Second Brain” in Our Gastrointestinal Systems*: scientificamerican.com/article/gut-feelings-the-second-brain-in-our-gastrointestinal-systems-excerpt

CARLY: In today's episode, we thought it would be interesting to go back to the topic of diet and food. We originally did a three-part series on that topic in 2016 where we talked about various food myths and discussed our philosophies around healthy eating, including the contentious use of the phrase 'clean eating'.

KELLY: Yeah, they were such interesting episodes, and they were really well received by our listeners. I think people appreciated both the pragmatic, and non-dogmatic approach we took because there does tend to be such a cult mentality around most of the ways of eating, at the moment. I was the one who suggested we come back to this topic because it's been well over a year since we did those three episodes and I reckon we've both shifted our viewpoints on a few things since then.

So, this episode isn't going to be tip-based like we normally do. It's going to be more of a general conversation about where we're at with our personal philosophies around what we do and don't eat. And I thought a good place to start would be to re-visit the word 'diet' and our thoughts around 'diets' in general. So, Carls, where do you stand on diets and dieting?

CARLY: My position is quite a controversial one for a responsible self-improvement writer in this day and age, but I'm quite a fan of the concept of dieting. I see lots of talk online encouraging people to simply 'listen to their bodies', eat whenever they're hungry and 'just eat the damn cake'. None of that has ever worked for me in my life, ever.

The way my body processes food means if I stop concentrating very hard, daily, on what I'm eating, I gain a kilo a week, steadily, until I stop doing that. If I embraced these holistic, mindful ways of eating that people are trying to advocate, I'd be at a very unhealthy weight very quickly without even trying.

I work super-hard to look like the type of person who doesn't care much about what they eat. And that's just my sad fate. I've accepted that I will always need to be on a diet or eating plan of some description in order to lose weight – or even maintain the weight I'm at.

I think some people think I'm quite obsessed with my weight and yeah, I actually am. But that's because I've previously gained 10kg in a year without even eating Tim Tams so it's really important for me to stay on top of it.

A thing that I struggle with a lot is there's a lot of talk about triggering eating disorders when we talk about diets and clean eating. But the obesity epidemic is a very real problem, and we can't fall into the trap of treating it with kid gloves at the expense of people who might be triggered into disordered eating.

There was a Harvard Politics article I found that I really quite liked, and there's a quote I just wanted to share. The quote is American-centric and people might think it's weird me mentioning it because I'm Australian but our obesity epidemic is on par with America's.

So, this is the quote.

“Failing to deal with the reality of America’s obesity problem for fear of perpetuating an unhealthy obsession with body image would be a disservice to the public and powerless for the health of the nation. However, it is equally detrimental to attempt to tackle obesity by promoting restrictive diets and extreme exercise regimens. Adopting approaches that focus on positive attitude and lifestyle changes not only protects against eating disorders and issues of body image, but also is actually more successful in preventing obesity. Therefore, America need not choose one fight over the other. The solutions to both are actually one and the same.”

I really enjoyed that quote. Just because I've declared that diets work for me, that doesn't necessarily mean they are going to work for everyone, and there is a different approach for every person. Having said that, if you don't need to lose weight, never ever diet. Just eat loads of vegetables and keep doing you.

KELLY: Yeah, there are two things I want to pick up on in what you said. One was where you touched on the topic of 'moderation' when you mentioned how people are just like, 'Eat when you're hungry, and listen to your body.'

So, I've got a friend who's a dietician and says people are forever asking him, 'What kind of eating method do you propose?' And he's like, 'I don't subscribe to Paleo, or gluten-free, or quitting sugar, or any of those things. I subscribe to moderation.'

The problem with this is that it's so easy for a dietician to subscribe to 'moderation' when it comes to diet because a dietician is totally up with what they should and shouldn't be eating.

That said, and you know this is a bugbear of mine: What even is moderation, when it comes to eating?

CARLY: Exactly.

KELLY: Your moderation, Carls, is very different to my moderation because we have completely different metabolisms and body types. You struggle to maintain weight – much less lose weight – even when you are eating 'perfectly' AND exercising every single day. I have less difficulty achieving and maintaining a healthy weight. What moderation looks like for me would look quite undisciplined to you!

The other thing I wanted to touch on from what you said earlier is this idea that talking about diets can perpetuate disordered eating and eating disorders. I have my own history with disordered eating,

and while I freely admit I can only speak for myself, I can say with certainty that diets were not responsible for my disordered eating. My own self-worth and self-esteem were responsible for disordered eating.

“ *The reality is if you are going to eat in a healthy manner then, by necessity, you are restricting yourself.* ”

So, when people point to diets like I Quit Sugar, or ways of eating like I Quit Sugar and Paleo and say, ‘These are going to trigger off disordered eating, for those who are inclined to eat in a disordered fashion,’ well, yeah, they probably will.

But here’s the thing: if you’re prone to disordered eating, you’ll find a way to eat in a disordered fashion no matter what diets are popular right now. Meanwhile, there are people out there who can benefit (and have benefited) hugely from re-learning how to eat by following things like Paleo and I Quit Sugar.

I don’t think we should stop them from being able to do that to protect people who are going to find a way to eat in a disordered fashion no matter what.

Ok, now that rant is over, where do I stand on diets and dieting?

To me, the word ‘diet’ has always simply meant, ‘the food that you eat, or the way that you eat’. I think the word ‘diet’ has a lot of negative connotations because people usually associate it with restricted eating. But here’s the paradoxical thing: the reality is if you are going to eat in a healthy manner then, by necessity, you are restricting yourself.

CARLY: YES.

KELLY: Nobody in the world can just eat whatever the hell they want without any kind of consequences. This is just not reality. When people moan that ‘Diets are so restrictive,’ and, ‘This way of eating is so restrictive,’ I’m like, ‘Well, you do realise that eating in a healthy fashion is necessarily restrictive, right?’

People are aiming for is the ability to eat whatever they want whenever they want. That’s just not realistic. This is why we’ve gotten ourselves in the trouble we’re in. We feel deprived when we eat well.

And that’s a crying shame. We’re so focused on what we can’t eat, instead of focusing on the great stuff we can eat.

So, I do get a little bit annoyed when things like Paleo or I Quit Sugar are referred to as diets in that negative way, when they’re both simply ways of eating. And the main ‘way of eating’ they both promote is a heavily plant-based diet where you just eat real food. No halfway intelligent person can argue that that’s a bad idea.

“ *People are aiming for the ability to eat whatever they want whenever they want. That’s just not realistic.* ”

With regard to dieting, I’m a little bit conflicted. If you use dieting or going on a diet as a way to ‘reset’ yourself when you’ve slipped into some poor eating habits, I’m all for that. I kind of use that method myself. What I’m not a big fan of is diets that heavily restrict calories way below what the normal is for humans. So, women need around 2000 calories a day and men need around 2500 depending on their size. A lot of calorie-restricting diets are 1200 calories a day for women and 1500-1800 for men. That’s not a lot of food, and it’s not sustainable.

CARLY: Particularly if you're exercising, as well.

KELLY: Exactly. If you 'restrict' yourself to a heavily plant based diet where you're mainly eating vegetables every day, all day ... you don't have to think about calories. Stick to eating real food you've prepared yourself, mostly veggies and you will probably lose weight.

If you restrict your calories to 1200 calories but those 1200 calories are from Mars bars, you'll lose weight, but not only is what you're doing there unsustainable, it's not teaching you good eating habits.

CARLY: And you'll get scurvy, as well.

KELLY: (Laughs) Yeah, and those are the things that lead to this cycle of weight loss, weight gain, weight loss, weight gain. And they're the things that lead to unhealthy mindsets around food. So, I'm very pro the diets that teach you how to eat well. I'm not pro the diets that starve you all the time. That's the difference for me.

CARLY: Yeah, exactly, and the thing with diets is when I'm on a diet, it's not actually that different to the way I eat every day, normally. I eat extraordinarily healthily, but if I'm actually trying to lose weight, I will do things like cut out dairy. When I am in maintenance mode, I eat yoghurt. When I'm trying to lose weight, I will cut that out.

KELLY: At the heart of it all we just need to become better educated about the stuff we're putting into our bodies. And we're going to try and address some of that today by talking about where we stand on a few contentious subjects. So, Carls, where do you stand on sugar?

CARLY: Ah, sugar. Honestly, I'm not a huge fan, but I also don't freak out about it. At the beginning of the year I was loosely following the ketogenic low carb, high fat diet. I wasn't seeing results. Ben saw great results, so good for him. That's great. I think he's lost about 10 kilos in the year, the bastard. I wasn't gaining weight, but I wasn't losing weight either. So, I've made some other changes. As a happy

accident, I have, sort of, given up sugar this year without even really trying. There has been a Magnum ice cream in my freezer since April, and I haven't eaten it.

KELLY: Oh my God.

CARLY: Which is so weird because that's just unheard of. Ordinarily if there was ice cream in my freezer it would have been gone 20-seconds after it got brought into the house. I adore ice cream, a lot. But I just haven't really felt like it. Also, sugar has started tasting a little bit coppery to me, and a little bit like blood, if that makes sense.

So, yeah, it's very unusual, but I just find sugar unnecessary in my day-to-day life. If I'm going on a hike I'll still have a muesli bar, or a slice of dessert if someone made it for me. I'll have sugar in yoghurt because I love yoghurt, even though I'm light on dairy these days. I love a full fat flat white coffee, and that's got quite a bit of sugar in it. So, I eat sugar occasionally. I try not to seek it out, but if someone opens up a bag of Sour Patch Kids I'm going to have one because they are my absolute kryptonite.

I'm dancing around the topic here a bit because it's sort-of difficult when you say, 'Oh, I don't eat sugar,' because I don't, but then I don't want to be at a conference and have someone see me eat a Mentos or something and...

KELLY: Haha! I know!

CARLY: So, yeah. I'm very strict, but I'm also not binary. When I say, 'I don't eat sugar,' I mean 95% of the time I don't eat sugar, and then maybe Ben and I will split a gluten-free caramel slice when we're away for the weekend. But when I say, 'Occasionally,' I really do mean occasionally. Not twice-a-week instead of seven-days a week. I mean, like, once every month.

KELLY: Exactly. Now, here's what irritates me about sugar. (Sorry, I'm going to be ranting a lot in this episode – apologies in advance.) What irritates me is hearing people say they hate the whole I Quit Sugar movement because it's asking people to eliminate an entire food group. Sugar is a simple carbohydrate. Sugar itself is not a food group.

“ *The only way to reduce your sugar intake down to the WHO recommendations is by dropping processed foods from your diet, and eating a diet that is based heavily around plants.* ”

Secondly, anyone who's actually done the I Quit Sugar program will tell you it's not about totally eliminating sugar. Yes, I know the name of the program might suggest that's what it's about and it's unfortunate that's what the program had to be named because – marketing – but I Quit Sugar is about reducing the amount of sugar in your diet down to the World Health Organisation (WHO) recommendations of around six teaspoons or 25 grams of sugar a day. I know I sound like an ad for the program but I'm not anything to them beyond having done the program myself.

The only way to reduce your sugar intake down to the WHO recommendations is by dropping processed foods from your diet, and eating a diet that is based heavily around plants. I Quit Sugar shows you how to do this.

I mentioned in Episode 30 that I grew up to be an adult who hated cooking so I went to packets because they were the fastest way to cook meals. And that was not good for me. My allergies were completely out of control. My gut health was terrible. There were so many consequences for my body and when I did I Quit Sugar it just

changed everything for me. It changed how I cooked. It taught me how to eat foods close to the source. It got me away from packaged and processed foods. So it kind of blows my mind how vociferously people can campaign against a diet that's teaching people how to cook for themselves and gets them away from processed foods!

Where do I stand on sugar, specifically? I think it's a huge factor in the obesity epidemic plaguing the Western world. I also think it's having a huge impact on gut health in the Western world. More and more research is showing that poor gut health is linked, not just to poor physiological health, but really poor mental health as well. It appears our guts are like a second brain for the body. When you remove processed sugar from your diet and reduce your overall sugar intake to the WHO recommendations, you drop excess weight. Your skin improves. Your mental clarity improves. Your behaviour improves. The benefits are manifest and I kind of can't believe we're still having this conversation.

“ *It kind of blows my mind how vociferously people can campaign against a diet that's teaching people how to cook for themselves and gets them away from processed foods!* ”

The knowledge is becoming more mainstream, however. Go back nine years when David Gillespie first wrote *Sweet Poison: Why Sugar Makes Us Fat*, and even seven-ish years ago when Sarah Wilson did her first version of *I Quit Sugar*, they were just outcasts for even making the suggestion. It's kind of hilarious to me, today, to see in mainstream media that everyone's like, 'Well, yeah, duh. Of course, sugar's bad for you.'

Ok, enough of me ranting about sugar now! Carls, tell us, where are you on wheat?

CARLY: Well, my partner is a celiac, so wheat doesn't really come into my house. The only place I have wheat, and it's actually gluten, not wheat, is in oats. I like bread, and think it's a good food as long as it's grainy and brown. But it's not a daily part of my diet, and hasn't been for over 15 years. If my body allowed it I'd have a fresh brown bread and salad sandwich every single day with butter on it. That would be my ideal lunch. But it doesn't agree with me – bread is not food that I function well on.

Interestingly, there's scientific research that shows you can be allergic to gluten, but you can't have an intolerance. In my test group of one, however, I call total BS on that because sometimes I'll go to a mate's house, and they'll have garlic bread, and I'll eat it because I'm human and garlic bread's amazing. And I eat garlic bread once every five years. But it does terrible things to my gut.

I'm not going to demonise gluten, however. I don't find it necessary in my diet, and I know lots of people that have had really good results from giving up gluten. But if you don't feel like you need to, and it doesn't make any difference to your life, keep eating your beautiful sourdough spelt bread with a big salad on the side. That's totally fine.

KELLY: Yeah, I'm a little the same as you. Neither Ant nor I eat wheat anymore, but for different reasons. For me, it's because I find my gut works better when I don't eat wheat and I'm a big fan of my gut working well. I also find in avoiding bread and pasta that I have better brain clarity.

The reason Ant doesn't eat wheat is because he had these permanently aching joints for years. I had seen some research that showed gluten can inflame joints and make them feel achy so I suggested he come off wheat/gluten and see if it made any difference. And this thing that he had for literally years and years,

and thought was a normal part of life, suddenly disappeared when he stopped eating wheat. So, he just stays off it now because otherwise his joints hurt.

All that said, I'm not totally anal about it. If I look at a freshly baked loaf of sourdough, and I really, really want a piece of it with some butter lashed across it I'm just gonna have it. If someone bakes me a cake for my birthday I'm gonna eat it. I guess I employ the 80/20 rule when it comes to wheat. Our kids eat bread, and they still eat pasta. My kids kill me because they will only eat store-bought white bread and let's be honest, there's not a lot of good nutrition to be found in store-bought white bread.

My goal is to learn how to make a really genuine proper sourdough. I figure if they're gonna be eating white bread, I'd rather they be eating that kind of white bread. In a genuine sourdough, the fermentation process does something to the gluten. It doesn't eliminate it, but it breaks it down and makes it easier for the body to process.

In general, with wheat, however, I think just experiment on yourself. If you find coming off it makes absolutely no difference to how your body operates, how your brain operates or how your gut operates, I am very envious of you. Go for it. Just eat as much wheat as you like.

CARLY: Just in the interest of sharing, I'm not a huge fan of pasta. Like, I could happily not eat pasta ever again. There are a whole bunch of things that are involved with wheat that I give zero shits about, but I will crawl over my dead mother for a dumpling. I love dumplings so hard, and I don't care what I'm doing, or what kind of diet I am on. If we're going out for dumplings I am participating fully in that situation.

KELLY: (Laughs) I'm a bit like that with dairy. We're not specifically talking about dairy today, but I had to come off dairy years ago because it triggered sinus allergies in me. I really, really miss dairy, and it took me a really, really long time to get off it for that reason. It's just everything I liked was related to dairy. So, I feel your pain.

“ *In a genuine sourdough, the fermentation process does something to the gluten. It doesn't eliminate it, but it breaks it down and makes it easier for the body to process.*

CARLY: See, I'm currently not doing dairy at the moment because I get really intense period pain, and I had a few people suggest cutting back on dairy would help with that, and it straight up did. I find it a really hard thing to self-police, however, because I'll look at this delicious, beautiful coconut yoghurt and think, 'I just want to eat you.' But then it's like, 'But do you want to be in pain in three weeks' time?' It's such a weird trade-off because you're, kind of, going, 'But I might not be.'

KELLY: It's such a future-self thing, isn't it?

CARLY: It's so future-self. I'll be all, 'But 'now' Carly really wants to eat this yoghurt.' But I've been very good and it's been making a very big difference.

Ok, let's move on to meat. Here's where I stand on meat. I used to buy organic meat and very sparingly, but I watched a great doco on SBS by Michael Mosley called, *The Truth About Meat* and it opened my eyes up to some really interesting stuff.

For example, there's a lot of research that shows factory farming is actually better for the environment than free-range and organic meat farming. Many organic free-range practices are based on,

what they call, human vanity metrics. So, we think cows are happier in green fields and being fed grass when there's no real evidence to show this is true. A lot of these happy animal practices came into place because people were seeing grain-fed cows in brown fields and thought, 'Oh no, they look really sad,' but there wasn't really any evidence to suggest that they were.

“ *It's really hard to find peer-reviewed research on this because whatever your stance on meat is, you can find research that supports your stance.* ”

I mean, I'm obviously not advocating cruelty to animals in any way, but I do believe I'm higher on the food chain and that is how the circle of life works. I've also got a weird iron thing where my body doesn't store excess iron. Most people can have, like, one piece of red meat a week and then their bodies will draw on their excess iron stores. I don't store the excess. I only use what my body can use in the moment and then the rest gets thrown away. So, I have to top up my stores a bit more than other people.

I realise I haven't really made a stand on meat, but I have lots of information and ideas swirling around, and that equals small, quality portions of meat, once or twice a week.

KELLY: Yeah, it's really hard to find peer-reviewed research on this because whatever your stance on meat is, you can find research that supports your stance. It's a really difficult topic to research accurately. So, my stance on meat is, I like it, and I'm not philosophically opposed to eating it because, like you Carls, I feel we're up the top of the food chain in the world as it stands currently. I am, however, opposed to the idea of the animals I'm eating having a terrible life while they are alive.

My friend Alexx Stuart says, 'Ideally, the worst day of the animal's life should be the day they die to become your food,' and I am down with that. I'm currently trying to become better educated on that element of this topic, and I'm trying to ensure that the meat my family eats is sourced from places where animals are treated well while they are alive. I'll definitely take a look at that Michael Mosley documentary you've mentioned, Carls.

CARLY: That one is UK based, and again, I don't base everything I believe on that documentary. But it did give me some really good ideas and things to question because I was just mindlessly buying organic meat thinking that was the best thing to do when the emissions are so much higher through organic farming than they are through factory farming. Then you've got the dilemma of, 'Well, do I care about the animals, or do I care about the environment?' That is a really huge question.

KELLY: Yeah, right. I have to admit, I avoid a lot of these shows about how animals are treated because I think if I watched them I just wouldn't want to eat meat. But I know a lot of the shows are not reflective of what happens in Australia or Australian practices. So, yeah, it's very difficult to be truly across all these things. And if anybody does have any really, genuinely good, well-researched, trustworthy stuff that they can point us to that would be awesome.

On the topic of whether we actually need to eat meat or not... look, at some stage homo sapiens gained control of fire, and with that, the ability to cook meat. There's a lot of debate around whether we are genuinely omnivores (meat and plant eaters), or whether we're herbivores (plant eaters) who have learned to be omnivores. (Because we can cook meat now, and the cooking of meat means our teeth and guts can handle meat better.) It doesn't matter whether we are genuinely designed to be herbivores or omnivores.

The fact is, we can eat meat, and the ability to eat meat and access the calories, nutrients and fats available in that meat allowed our species to survive in times and climates (cold ones) where there just weren't a lot of plants around. Also, our ability to create fire and thus cook meat, allowed our guts to get smaller, which allowed our brains to get bigger.

CARLY: It's quite ironic, actually. The reason we are smart enough and have the consciousness to question whether or not we should eat meat, is because...

KELLY: ... we ate meat. And that's another interesting part of the debate. The ability to cook meat and eat it 30,000 years ago gave us a competitive advantage. But, do we need to eat meat today, in modern times?

The answer to that is 'probably not' because we do have the ability to access most of the necessary nutrients from other forms of food. However, there are a lot of people, like you Carly, and I am like this to a certain degree, who struggle to maintain their iron levels when they stop eating meat. So, yes you can get iron from supplements, and from eating lots of spinach, but it's not as bioavailable as eating meat and getting iron that way. You would have to eat bags and bags of spinach to get the amount of iron you'd find in a palm sized piece of steak. It's not really practical.

Like most things we've mentioned today, it kind of comes down to you and your philosophical leanings, your personal preferences and beliefs, and an understanding of what works for your body and what doesn't. I think that's the approach that ties us together, Carls. We've both researched and we've experimented on our own bodies, and we've figured out what works for our bodies. And that's the way we follow, but we try not to be too dogmatic about it. Do you agree?

CARLY: Yeah, definitely, absolutely.

KELLY: Cool. Ok, we're gonna finish up this episode by sharing what a typical eating day looks like for each of us because this is something we do get asked quite a bit. So, Carly, what does your typical eating day look like?

“ *I'm so glad that the number on the scales is shifting now, because it wasn't shifting before, and I couldn't understand it.* ”

CARLY: At the moment I'm being extremely strict, and I've started fasting from 8pm at night until mid-day the next day, and it's been working absolute wonders for me. I tried the 5:2 diet a few years ago and it was very effective, and my body responds quite well to having those fasting days because I have a really, really slow metabolism. If there is any food at all in my body, my body will squirrel it away, and burn it. That's just not effective for weight loss at all.

KELLY: Or even weight maintenance.

CARLY: Or weight maintenance, exactly. So, I've lost seven kilos now, this year, which is good.

KELLY: Wow!

CARLY: Yep, I only have to lose another four centimetres off my waist for it to be in the healthy zone. I've lost 13 centimetres off my waist this year.

KELLY: Wow, that is amazing. I'm so glad that the number on the scales is shifting now, because it wasn't shifting before, and I couldn't understand it.

CARLY: It's so motivating, and it's not like I've actually made massive changes. I've just tweaked little bits and pieces because, as I said, I

eat healthily pretty much all the time and have done for 15 years. And I've been exercising five times a week for years and years too. The whole 'getting to a healthy weight thing' has been a very frustrating experience for me. I'm now only about 10kg over what I want to be, and that's really hard to lose because the closer you are to your optimal weight the harder it is to lose it. If you are 50kg overweight, losing the first 30kg is easier than losing the last 20kg.

“ *Over the course of the day, I do try to eat 3-5 cups of vegetables. Three cups minimum.*

So, at the moment I don't eat until midday. Then I will have a spinach, mushroom and goat's cheese omelette. Then at 4pm I'll have a big salad – it'll be a salmon salad with avocado and spinach and some whole egg mayo. I make sure I've got lots of vegetables and good fats in every meal that I have. Then for dinner I'll have fish or meat with roasted broccoli and cauliflower. I try, again because I'm being very strict at the moment, not to snack in between. But, if I'm particularly hungry I'll have some nuts or peanut butter celery sticks, or a green smoothie. A few times a week I'll have an unsweetened coconut milk sugar free hot chocolate because I'm crazy like that.

But, I do really want to reiterate that I'm being extremely strict at the moment. Before I started fasting I'd always have breakfast, but I'm coping very well without it. Also, one night a week I'll have three glasses of wine, and I enjoy that, and I won't stop doing that. And when I'm not in a weight loss phase I'll start having wine more nights. I very rarely drink during the week but Friday and Saturday nights I'll have a couple of glasses of wine. I've got four more weeks to go on the current challenge I'm doing, and when it's relaxed I'll have some dinners out and that kind of thing and go back into my maintenance mode.

KELLY: Yeah, cool. Unlike Carly, I have a body that, so long as I'm eating reasonably healthily and exercising regularly, I will maintain a healthy weight and my weight doesn't fluctuate too much.

So, my typical eating day today, is I have a green smoothie for breakfast, and I just love that because it takes all the decision making out of breakfast for me. Then I'll have some nuts and/or a piece of fruit around morning tea. Lunch will usually be leftovers of whatever dinner was the night before, or I like doing frozen veggies fried up in a pan with some eggs. Early afternoon I'll have some more nuts and/or fruit as a snack. Then for dinner, which I tend to eat dinner around 6pm...

CARLY: Oh my God, that's such a pensioner time to eat dinner.

KELLY: Yeah, I've just always eaten dinner really early, I don't know why. I think...

CARLY: It's because you go to bed at 8pm.

KELLY: (Laughs) Yeah, well, that's probably why. So, I eat dinner around 6pm, and it's usually something like roast veggies with roast meat, chicken or fish, or rice and a meat dish like curry or mash with some bolognaise. Over the course of the day, I do try to eat 3-5 cups of vegetables. Three cups minimum.

I get a good amount of vegetables in my green smoothie. Then I get some more in my lunch because that's usually the leftovers of the night before. Then I'll always have veggies or salad at dinner. I don't usually eat dessert because we just don't have dessert stuff in our house. If you don't have it in the house you can't eat it. After I've eaten dinner I usually don't have anything else to eat for the night.

As you said, I go to bed at 8:30pm so that's how I get away with that. If you're staying up until 11pm you're gonna get hungry. What I

find is most days I end up having a 12-13 hour fast between dinner and breakfast. I find that makes it very easy for me to maintain a healthy weight.

CARLY: Night time snacking is not ideal for anyone because...

KELLY: It's a habit. It's not a need, it's a habit.

CARLY: Yep. You're not doing anything – you're just sitting around. It's not like you need extra energy. You're eating purely because you want to.

“ *I take a very 80/20 approach to eating. When I'm at home, and I'm in control of what I'm eating, I eat well.* ”

KELLY: Yep. So, my approach works for me because I eat healthily, but I don't have to be super, super strict about what I eat. I might put on one or two kilos if I go on holiday and just don't think much about what I'm eating. But then what I find is when I come home I revert to my normal eating and exercise habits, and those kilos drop back off. I think I've mentioned before that I take a very 80/20 approach to eating. When I'm at home, and I'm in control of what I'm eating, I eat well. If I go away to a conference, (like I've just had two successive weekends away at a conference, and I reckon I ate more sugar on those two weekends than I'd eaten all year), I can do that because I eat well 80% of the time. Which means the 20% of the time I just kinda go, 'Mmm, I'm gonna have this giant brownie,' it doesn't really matter because I'm not doing that every single day. So, closing thoughts to finish up this episode.

I personally feel if people are trying to improve their diets and make positive changes and don't want to get all caught up in Paleo this, sugar that, low carb this and high protein that ... probably

the most impactful thing you can do is to move your diet away from processed foods towards food you make yourself. This allows you to take control of just how much added sugar, preservatives, and additives you're consuming. That in itself is a really big, good health move. Then the other thing that both Carly and I both love focusing on is eating more veggies. We've done a whole episode on that – just go to straightandcurly.com/005 to listen in.

If you try to eat three to five cups of veggies a day, this is going to crowd out your plate with things that are high in nutritional value, and leave less room for things low in nutritional value.

SECTION 2: DETOXES

EPISODE 6: GIVING UP ALCOHOL FOR A MONTH

TIPS AND THOUGHTS SHARED IN THIS EPISODE:

- Why the drinking culture in Australia makes it hard to give up alcohol.
- Is there a 'safe' amount of alcohol to drink?
- Tips for giving up alcohol for a month.

THINGS WE MENTION IN THIS EPISODE:

- *Is there a 'safe' amount of alcohol to drink:* theguardian.com/science/2011/mar/07/safe-level-alcohol-consumption
- *The Australian Guidelines for reducing the health risks of drinking alcohol:* nhmrc.gov.au/health-topics/alcohol-guidelines
- *Carly's article, How to give up alcohol without actually giving it up:* smaggle.com/how-to-give-up-alcohol-without-actually-giving-it-up
- *Peter FitzSimons: My year of living healthily:* smh.com.au/comment/peter-fitzsimons-how-i-gave-up-the-grog-20151202-gldn92.html

CARLY: Alright. Here we go. The dreaded topic of alcohol and the idea of taking a break from alcohol on occasion. In this case – a month.

Kelly and I come to this topic from completely different places. Kelly is pretty much a permanent non-drinker. I am definitely a drinker but I don't drink alone and I don't drink during the week. If it's a Saturday, however, I will drink all the drinks. Literally all the drinks.

When discussing the concept of alcohol, it's important to acknowledge the drinking culture in Australia and how difficult it is to give up drinking in a country where beer and wine consumption is a very popular hobby.

There's also a big divide between 'drinkers' (me) and 'non-drinkers' (Kelly) and the way we navigate this in social situations.

Kelly, you're a non-drinker. What are the reasons why you're a non-drinker and what do you define as a non-drinker?

“ *It's important to acknowledge the drinking culture in Australia and how difficult it is to give up drinking in a country where beer and wine consumption is a very popular hobby.* ”

KELLY: I've been a non-drinker forever and the main reason is I don't like how it makes me feel the next day. Also, I'm actually a bit intolerant to alcohol and it aggravates my sinuses. If I drink anything other than vodka, it's not worth it.

That said, I don't not drink. I do like the relaxed feeling I get from alcohol, but I generally reserve it for very special occasions. Like at my own wedding, I drank but I could have driven home. I only had two drinks and I danced all night. That's one of the good things

about not being a drinker is that you can have one or two drinks, but then you're still in control of how you're getting home because you can sober up in a few hours and drive yourself home!

So, I will have a drink on an occasion. And I certainly don't look at people and think 'You shouldn't be drinking'. It's the next day thing for me more than anything else.

CARLY: My partner is very similar. He doesn't drink and it's quite odd to manage that because the drinking culture in Australia is so hard core. People automatically assume he's an alcoholic and he's in rehab but the truth is he just doesn't like it that much.

He's very similar to you so the reason why he doesn't drink is because he gets cluster headaches and when he drinks alcohol, it exacerbates them. It's similar to people who have experienced migraines and if they have chocolate, it makes it worse.

Also, he's very, very sensible. It drives me a bit nuts sometimes. He says drinking alcohol gives him a headache and when I point out that it gives everyone a headache he very sensibly questions why anyone does it at all and that's a very important concept to shed some light on. If it makes us all feel so rubbish, why do we do it?

KELLY: Obviously, I can't really weigh in too heavily on the debate of taking a month off drinking alcohol, because that's pretty much every month for me. I know you've done it several times, however.

So, why do you do it and what are the benefits?

CARLY: I don't drink on my own and I'm not a daily drinker so my drinking is very peer pressure-based. If I go out with my girlfriends on a Saturday night, I will have like five glasses of wine and then I won't have a glass of wine for two weeks. But I suffer hangovers very, very badly. And I eat so much crap when I'm hungover.

It's an experimentation thing as well. I don't know for sure if there's a food out there that is going to make me feel better when I'm hungover but by gee, I do my best to try and find it. I'll have a Tim Tam and I'll have some chips and then I'll have a burger and then I'll have a diet coke. And by the time you add up all the calories I've consumed with the alcohol I drank the night before and all the recovery calories, I've had a week's worth of calories in 24 hours.

Given I have the world's shittiest metabolism to begin with, I can't afford to be having all these extra calories, feeling crap *and* not exercising. If I do that every weekend for a month, I've wasted four weekends. It all comes back to whether you're a moderator or an abstainer with alcohol and I'm an abstainer.

It's much easier for me to completely give up drinking for a full month rather than dabble around with having one glass here and there because if I have one glass, I'm going to have five.

KELLY: I'm completely an abstainer when it comes to eating. I don't have any self-control. If you give me one Tim Tam, I'll eat the whole packet. If I make a sweet treat, I can't have one slice. I'll just keep going back and having more and more slices. So, the only way I get around that is just by not having that stuff in the house.

But I guess with alcohol, I'm a moderator. I'm able to have that one or two drinks and then go, 'I'm happy now' and that's it. What sits over the top of that is the feeling of happiness and enjoying yourself but if you have any more, tomorrow you're going to feel a bit shit and it's just not going to be worth the happiness or the extra calories in the next two drinks you're going to have.

You mentioned before the Australian culture of drinking and you mentioned that you kind of fall prey to peer pressure.

CARLY: I'm very susceptible to peer pressure. Look, I'm not the kind of person to be led down the garden path. If someone suggests

dropping some acid I'm definitely not going to do that. But my two closest girlfriends are both daily drinkers and I would drink far more with them than I would ever drink in any other night because they pour it for me. And obviously if you have three or four glasses, you start getting into the really good juicy conversation and you crack open another bottle.

I love sharing a couple of bottles of wine with a girlfriend but my metabolism can't support that. My lifestyle can't support that and I feel like I'm constantly battling against this thing that feels so natural. It's the Australian mentality that you have a drink.

“ *I don't know for sure if there's a food out there that is going to make me feel better when I'm hungover but by gee, I do my best to try and find it.* ”

KELLY: That's how we relax, isn't it? Or that's how we're encouraged to relax.

There's also the message in the Australian culture that you can't have a good time if you don't drink. And I noticed from observing my husband and his friends, it's unacceptable to *not* drink. If someone says they're not drinking, it becomes everyone else's mission to get them to have a drink. I find it really infuriating that people aren't able to just quietly opt out of that. A lot of the guys, they do the same as you. They'll give up for a month because they're trying to lose weight, or they're trying to be a bit healthier, or they want to have clear heads for a month. But if they go out with their friends, they're just constantly deflecting the insistence from their friends that they have a drink. And that does make it really difficult.

When you take that month off, do you find that hard?

CARLY: I do find it hard. Some people are better than others to be around when I'm off alcohol. None of my friends are super pushy about it but honestly, when I'm not drinking, it's not fun being around people who do. One or two glasses is fine but having a conversation with someone who has necked a bottle of red while you're sipping on a soda water isn't a great way to spend an evening.

“ *The main thing they discovered is how damaging it is to binge drink and daily drink in combination.* ”

Another thing is that as a woman who takes a month off drinking here and there, if I say I'm not drinking people automatically assume I'm pregnant. I'm not having a baby. I'm not drinking for a month because I value my health. I take several months a year off alcohol so people should really assume that's just a part of my life by now.

I come from a household where my parents were daily drinkers – not hardcore drinkers – just a drink with dinner like typical Baby Boomers. My partner's family aren't daily drinkers and so our house is just randomly a non-drinking house. We don't keep wine in the house. So, if I've got friends that come over, we buy wine as people come over.

KELLY: Yeah, Ant has a beer in the evenings when he comes home from work and his dad (who we're living with at the moment), will have a glass of wine most evenings as well. Now, I don't think there's anything wrong with drinking a glass or two of wine or a beer or two every single night.

But, what's really interesting is I was doing some research for this episode and I was looking to find out, 'Is there a safe amount of alcohol to drink?' and what I discovered is there isn't really a 'safe' amount of alcohol.

The alcohol consumption guidelines in Australia that suggest a limit of two standard drinks a day for guys and one for women – they're not actually there to make us safer or healthier, they're just there to provide guidelines for moderation because people don't generally know what moderation is.

They're not actually saying, 'This is a safe level of alcohol to drink,' however. Which is what most people think they are saying.

CARLY: I watched a documentary not long ago and I don't know the name of it because it was one of those random things that just pop up in the middle of the night. But it was a study on alcohol and the differences between drinking every day and binge drinking. They got two doctors from the UK who were twins, so they're the same age and they've technically got almost identical biological makeup, as identical as it can be when you're identical twins. They do all of these really awesome experiments where one of them will go on a diet and one of them will go on a different diet and they'll see which one gets thin or which one gains weight or which one has high cholesterol at the end.

They did this one where they drank the exact same amount of alcohol as each other for a full month but one twin had to have his alcohol everyday so it was spaced out over the month. He would have just one-ish drink per day and the other brother had to have ten drinks every Saturday for a month. And it was horrific.

They took blood tests, did cognitive ability tests and they took weight and body measurements. The overall conclusion is that binge drinking is infinitely worse than daily drinking. But the clincher was at the end of the show. The main thing they discovered is how damaging it is to binge drink *and* daily drink in combination.

The 'best' way to drink is have 1.5 serves of alcohol per night and never have any more, otherwise it puts you into the binge drinking category.

KELLY: Yet, our culture applauds binge-drinking. You know that thing where you walk into work on Monday morning and you're looking a bit dusty and people are like, 'Oh big weekend, hey?' And you nod and they kind of pat you on the back.

If there's one thing I could change about Australian culture – but it's almost impossible because it's so deeply ingrained – it's this behaviour. Can't we just learn how to drink for fun as opposed to drinking to obliterate ourselves? Australians are taught from a very early age to binge drink. We do it at school and then we really crank things up a notch when we go to university.

The whole university social culture is built, not just on drinking but on getting absolutely smashed every single weekend, all weekend. And then that just carries through past uni into working life.

If there's one thing I'd love people to take away from this podcast, it's not necessarily to give up drinking forever but just learn to moderate it better.

CARLY: Also, for the record, I love wine. I'm actually just an enormous fan of it but I was never a huge wine drinker growing up. Then I moved to Melbourne and I was like, 'Wow this stuff you guys have at every bar is amazing!' So now I'm quite into red wine, it's kind of my thing. I never, ever drink to get drunk though. I drink to have a good time.

Drinking alcohol has become a daily habit for a lot of people, however, and it's not okay health-wise to drink every single day *and then drink crazily heavily on a weekend.*

We don't want to make anyone feel bad about this but I just did a whole load of work for some health brands that I'm an ambassador for and I spent a lot of time with this doctor and he basically said Australia's screwed. We are just drinking too much. We *know* we're drinking too much but continue to act like it's not a problem.

KELLY: Yeah, it's like you're asking people to cut off their arm when you ask them to *maybe* not drink every single day. Or have alcohol-free periods. People just can't even process that.

I found some great ideas from Peter FitzSimons. He's married to Lisa Wilkinson and he's a former Wallaby and last year he quit sugar and he also ended up quitting alcohol as well. Something he wrote in his article for Sydney Morning Herald summed it up really well for me. He said:

'When you quit grog, you really do bring your A-game to everything. You think clearly. You need less sleep. You're twice as productive and you're a much less bad-tempered prick. I never used to think grog affected my moods but now I get it. It did.'

I'm not saying to anyone. 'Give it up forever.' But give yourselves breaks from it. And then really take notice of how different it makes you feel.

“ *Australians are taught from a very early age to binge drink. We do it at school and then we really crank things up a notch when we go to university.* ”

I think what happens when you're having a glass of wine every single night or a couple glasses of wine every single night – the fuzziness that comes with that and the behaviour that comes with that, it just becomes normal because you're doing it every single night. So, you don't know that there's anything different.

Carls, do you have any tips for people who want to give up alcohol for a month?

CARLY: I wrote an article not long ago that was titled *How to Give Up When You Don't Want to Give Up Booze*, because no one wants to give up

booze. It's lovely. But we also don't want to drink ourselves into an early grave. And I do get that a lot of people would find giving up booze for a full month really, really difficult. And there are ways that you can go about it without completely cutting yourself off.

One thing I like to do is go for at least two full months a year without alcohol. If I'm feeling a bit toxic in between these months and I feel like I need to have a break from alcohol, I'll have a month where I pre-book in the days I'm going to drink.

“ *This approach means you're not quitting drinking, but you're neither bingeing nor drinking every night. And that's a much healthier approach to things.* ”

For instance, if I get to the end of March and I've been a bit boozy, I'll look at April and think, 'I really should abstain from alcohol that month, but I've got an event in the first week and then a wedding in the second week. And then I've got my best friend's birthday in the last week.' That's three events where I really would like to drink so I 'book in' those days and don't drink the rest of the time.

I also hold myself accountable for it. So, I'll say to my partner, 'I'm not giving up booze this month but I'm only drinking on these three days.' It just stops me from doing those random Friday night drinks or meeting someone for a coffee and then it turning into wine. Or having a friend over and then she brings a bottle of wine and then you run out so you open another bottle. It stops all that incidental extra alcohol and extra calories that you're consuming just randomly without even thinking about it.

Another one that I really like is a concept I came up with when I was talking to someone who is a straight up daily drinker. I was

thinking if I was a regular drinker and I was trying to cut back on my drinking, I would stop drinking from Sunday to Thursday because if you're a drinker who drinks every day, by Thursday, you're going to be desperate for a drink if you haven't had wine since Saturday. So, you don't drink on Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, or Wednesday night. On Thursday night, you can have one glass of wine. On Friday night, you can have two. And on Saturday, you can have three.

KELLY: It's a little reward as well. One of the hardest things about 'not drinking' is the sense of deprivation. No human likes to feel deprived. And generally, anything we give up makes us feel like that. I feel your system takes away the deprivation feeling. It gives you something to look forward to and it gives you a good amount as well. But it means you're neither bingeing *nor* drinking every night. And that's a much healthier approach to things.

I know a lot of people equate having a drink with relaxing. When they feel a bit overwhelmed or a bit anxious they think, 'I just need to have a drink to take an edge off.' And alcohol is the first drink they go to. Many 'How to stop drinking' articles recommend finding a substitute. I'm hesitant to recommend substitutes because people are just going to go, 'Don't be ridiculous. A cup of tea is just not going to cut it.' But I feel making yourself a spritzer or something like a nice soda water and lime, kind of gives you the feeling that you're having a drink.

CARLY: And you don't want to be replacing your alcohol with sugary drinks. So, keep it light and try not to have soft drinks or juice.

Another thing to do is to avoid social events where people will be drinking heavily. This is a really big one. I hate admitting this because it's so gross but I used to be a social smoker. I can't even believe that that was me. I'm so embarrassed. I quit three years

ago and I quit at the same time that one of my friends ended her marriage so I feel I can't ever start doing it again since my non-cigarette anniversary lines up with her, 'I ditched the dickhead,' anniversary.

During this time of quitting I avoided friends of mine that smoke. I just flat out avoided them. If they invited me over I'd say, 'I'm really sorry but I'm trying to stop social smoking and I can't be around you right now because I know I'm going to do that.' I ended up avoiding several close friends for three months while I was doing that.

I'm not saying that you need to quit drinking completely but if you're trying to go a full month without booze and your friends are having a board game night on a Saturday and you know there's a case of wine there and you don't trust yourself, don't go. Missing a few events isn't going to hurt you and you're only going a month without alcohol. So just suck it up. Don't apologise for it.

KELLY: At the end of the day, they're either your friends or they're not.

From having watched a lot of Ant's friends give up alcohol for a month and also watching Ant give up alcohol for a month and seeing the way that they all try to peer group pressure each other into having a drink when they're trying to abstain, I just feel like saying to them, 'If you've given up alcohol for a month, just own it.' State your intentions. Make it clear to everyone that you've done it, why you've done it and try and get them on board rather than trying to deflect it.

CARLY: I find if you're not drinking for a month and then you go and have drinks with friends, after an hour, they get so drunk anyway and start talking crap. You can sit there very quietly around drunk people and they won't even notice. You can leave without them noticing.

KELLY: You'll also get an insight into how you behave when you're drunk. Peter FitzSimons mentioned this in his article. He said he started to get an idea of where the conversation went when alcohol was involved and was a bit mortified.

“ *No one I know who has gone without alcohol for a month has ever regretted it.*

CARLY: So, a full month without alcohol. Should you try it?

Unequivocally, try it. No one I know who has gone without alcohol for a month has ever regretted it. I know lots of people who have gone a full year without alcohol and they've never regretted it. There's nothing bad that's going to come of giving up alcohol!

It can be difficult, particularly if you're quite socially tied in with alcohol. But give it a go. Try cutting back. Try booking out the days that you're going to drink to start off with. But definitely try a full month. It's absolutely life-changing.

KELLY: One more quote from Peter FitzSimons. Something to ponder as you wonder if you should try going without alcohol or not. He says in his article:

*'While it is better **night** with grog, it's a better **life** without it.'*

EPISODE 17: GIVING UP COFFEE FOR A MONTH

TIPS AND THOUGHTS SHARED IN THIS EPISODE:

- Do humans actually need to limit their coffee consumption?
- How much caffeine is in your coffee?
- Every individual metabolises caffeine at different rates.
- Is coffee actually dehydrating?
- When is the best time of day to have coffee?
- Our tips for giving up coffee if that's something you'd like to do.

THINGS WE MENTION IN THIS EPISODE:

- *No Evidence of Dehydration with Moderate Daily Coffee Intake: A Counterbalanced Cross-Over Study in a Free-Living Population:* journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0084154
- *Early Morning is Actually the Worst Time to Drink Coffee:* time.com/3903826/coffee-early-morning-worst-time
- *An examination of consumer exposure to caffeine from retail coffee outlets:* espace.library.uq.edu.au/view/UQ:295651
- *23 and Me Genetic Testing:* 23andme.com/en-int

CARLY: Time to tackle the concept of giving up coffee for a month! Kelly felt a bit bad after we did our episode on giving up alcohol for a month. She thought she was a bit dismissive about how hard it is to give up alcohol since it's something that's not terribly difficult for her because she's an infrequent drinker.

So, in the interest of research, Kelly decided to give up something that would be as hard for her to give up as some people find alcohol hard to give up. That thing is coffee.

Kelly, would you like to tell us about your relationship with coffee?

“ *I wasn't even actively enjoying it anymore. It was just something I was really dependent on and it was a habit more than anything else.* ”

KELLY: Well, I have been drinking coffee pretty much my entire adult life. I've consumed it daily since I started drinking it at 22. Yes, I was a little late to the coffee party, but I'm 38 now so I've been drinking coffee for a really, really long time and have never really come off it except when I was pregnant.

As far as I'm concerned, it's my one vice. I don't really drink alcohol. I don't smoke. I don't eat sugar. I don't even eat bread anymore. So, coffee is my 'one thing' and I'm quite attached to it. But, as Carly said, I felt I was a bit blithe about how easy it should be for people to give up alcohol. Then, after listening back to that episode, I thought, 'Oh, it's probably not that easy, is it?'

So, I thought, 'What's something that I drink every single day that would be quite hard for me to give up because I'm actually quite addicted to it?' And that thing is coffee.

In the months before I gave up coffee, I did also come to realise

that I was drinking it more habitually than anything else. It was just something I had when I woke up first thing in the morning and it's something I had when I got home from dropping my son at school. It was something I had in the afternoon. And I wasn't even actively enjoying it anymore. It was just something I was really dependent on and it was a habit more than anything else. That's kind of the definition of an addiction. So, I thought it would be an interesting challenge to give it up for a month.

CARLY: My relationship with coffee is similar to Kelly's relationship with alcohol. Giving up alcohol for a month for her just wouldn't be that big an issue. I'm not addicted to coffee. I pretty much only drink coffee if someone else suggests it. I guess I'm a peer pressure coffee drinker! If someone else is getting a coffee, I'll get one. But if I'm in my house on my own during the day and no one gets a coffee or hands me a coffee, I won't even think about it. It just doesn't occur to me.

I recently got back from a trip around the US for a month and I pretty much didn't drink coffee the whole time because coffee is gross there. Sorry America, but your coffee is literally like medicine to me. There's no enjoyment in consuming it. Sometimes I'd get a coffee there and I couldn't even swallow it. So, there wasn't a huge amount of coffee drinking for me during this time and I have gone a long time without drinking coffee on several occasions.

My partner, however, is hugely dependent on coffee and absolutely cannot function without it. His whole family is the same. His dad literally takes an espresso to bed with him for a night cap. It blows my mind. I watch him do it and even just the smell of coffee makes me feel like I'm not going to have a decent night's sleep. I also can't have coffee in the afternoon because it does affect my sleep. I also don't like black coffee. And I'm not overly fond of drinking several

cups of hot milk in a day. It's just too much stuff. So, I'm a zero to one, maybe two on a bad day kind of gal.

Back to Kelly, the coffee addict. How was it to go for a month without coffee? Did you get bad cravings and how did you deal with them? And did you find in your cold, cold heart just a little bit of sympathy for those of us who can't survive without our glass of red wine at night?

KELLY: (Laughing) Oh my God. I found a huge amount of sympathy. It was really interesting. But, just so that people here know, no one makes coffee like we do in Australia. Australians are horrendous coffee snobs.

CARLY: Huge coffee snobs.

KELLY: And Carly lives in Melbourne which is like the coffee snob capital of Australia. So, when Carly was making fun of coffee from other places...

CARLY: I know my shit. I know what I'm talking about.

KELLY: And, here is an indication of where I am with my coffee addiction. I can't be without it when I travel overseas. But you can't get a proper cappuccino literally anywhere else in the world other than Australia. So, I've learned to drink my coffee black. Just so I can drink it anywhere in the world.

Anyway, how much coffee was I drinking a day? (Before I did my 'no coffee for a month' challenge?) On average, four long blacks a day. That's a lot of coffee. And this is where I got my sympathy for the people who I blithely told, 'Oh, just give up alcohol for a month. How hard can it be? You'll feel so much better about yourself.'

So, what happened to me when I gave it up was I got to see what triggered a craving for coffee. Waking up in the morning triggered the craving. Being even vaguely tired meant I instantly craved

coffee. Another interesting one was if I got a little bit hungry, I really craved coffee. Going within ten kilometers of a coffee shop triggered a craving for coffee.

CARLY: That's very similar to my partner. He sniffs out coffee and can smell roasters. He can go into different types of roasters and tell by the smell as to whether or not he's going to enjoy the brew. I have no such skill. I think most coffee smells nice.

“ *If you're going to give up coffee, February is the month to do it, right? Of course, I chose the month where February had freaking 29 days instead of 28.*

KELLY: Ok, I'm not quite the aficionado Ben is but I do love the smell of coffee. If I smell coffee, I need to have coffee. It was interesting to see how many times during the month I thought to myself, 'No one's going to know if you just have one. Just have one.' Also, February was a really intense month because I was finishing off my book.

CARLY: Yeah, I thought that was an interesting time for you to do that in the launch of a big project, I was thinking 'Really? Is that when you want to do this Kel?'

KELLY: You know what I was thinking? I was thinking February is the shortest month. So, if you're going to give up coffee, February is the month to do it, right? Of course, I chose the month where February had freaking 29 days instead of 28.

CARLY: I do love how aware you were that there was an extra day in February for the leap year.

KELLY: Well, it's interesting because coffee is such a habit for me and people do like to say it takes 21 days to break a habit. The reality is, it takes a really variable amount of time. It just depends how badly

ingrained that habit is. As deep into the month as 27 days, I nearly broke. I rationalised, ‘Hey it’s only two days to go. I’ve basically done a month here.’

But, just so you guys know, I didn’t break. Giving up coffee was awful, however. I thought about it every day. I couldn’t go to coffee shops because it was just wrong to go to a coffee shop and not have a coffee. I couldn’t have a pot of tea at a coffee shop. So, all you people who I told to just go to the pub and have a drink of sparkling water with some lime in it, I apologise. I really, really apologise.

“ *Within three days of getting off coffee, my mood considerably lightened. The effect was undeniable.*

I couldn’t go to coffee shops and on the few occasions that I did, I was really, really resentful of being at a coffee shop and not being able to have coffee. Of course, I replaced it with something because you have to replace with something. I begrudgingly replaced it with tea and as any dedicated coffee drinker knows, tea is not a replacement for coffee. They don’t taste anything like each other. They’re just not the same.

Anyway, here’s what was really surprising. I gave up coffee and I told people, ‘I really hope this doesn’t make my life better because I would be devastated to have a reason not to go back to coffee.’ But, within three days of getting off coffee, my mood considerably lightened. The effect was undeniable. Of course, I went racing off looking for research on this (and couldn’t really find any).

The other thing was, my anxiety had been ramping up a bit lately and over December and January I’d been having to go to the medication that I use on an ‘as needed’ basis more than I ever had

before. And then February, which was a hugely stressful month, I didn't have to use my medication at all, which was really, really interesting. And also disturbing because then I had to admit that maybe coffee wasn't helping with anxiety?

So, even though on day 27 I was resentful of not being able to have coffee, when it got to March 1 and I knew I could have one and I didn't feel like it, I could not believe it.

Out of interest, I stayed off coffee and waited to see how long it took before I really, really wanted one. I made it to March 4 and still hadn't had a coffee and I thought, 'This is ridiculous. I can have a coffee. I should have a coffee.' So I had one, not because I needed it or because I wanted it. It was just because this is what I do, I go to coffee shops and have coffee. So, I had a coffee and it did nothing for me – mentally or physiologically. And this is after being off coffee for a month. You'd think it would have had some kind of effect! But it didn't even taste good to me.

So, this was horrifying as you can imagine. This is probably a good time to talk about whether there's even a point to giving up coffee.

CARLY: This is a huge thing we've been discussing with our listeners because a lot of people do try to give up coffee and we're not actually convinced that people know why they're doing it or have a particular reason why they want to. There is so much research about coffee and we've come up with some pretty solid answers on if and why you should give up coffee.

KELLY: That's right. And the main one is, I found no research to suggest that even as much as what I was having – which was four long blacks a day – was bad for you. If you're having coffee that's laden with milk and sugar, that's a different issue. With milk and sugar, you're consuming a lot of calories and that's not optimal. But if you're having straight up long blacks, there's just nothing out

there that suggests this is unhealthy unless you're someone who's particularly sensitive to caffeine, or if coffee causes cortisol spikes for you.

Cortisol is the stress hormone and what it does is it makes you feel jittery and on edge because it triggers a flight or fight reaction. Some people get massive cortisol spikes from drinking coffee because of the caffeine in it. I didn't get that so, realistically speaking, there was no good reason for me to stay off coffee once I tried it for the month. The only reason I stayed off is because of the mood thing.

CARLY: My partner does a lot of research on coffee because he's so dependent on it. Something he turned up recently is that the University of Queensland and the Queensland Alliance for Agriculture and Food Innovation discovered there's no real way to know how much caffeine is even in a cup of coffee. They had a control group where they experimented with different types of coffee from the same cafe and some cups have 10 milligrams of caffeine and a cup brewed 10 minutes later had 150 milligrams of caffeine. There's obviously a huge difference between those two levels of caffeine. This is why sometimes you can feel totally buzzed from a cup of coffee and other times you don't feel buzzed at all.

This is just some food for thought if you are trying to measure the amount of caffeine you're having. Your measurements are probably off because there's no real way of knowing how many milligrams of caffeine are in a cup of coffee. The way that the beans are brewed, the temperature of the water, the way the coffee is actually made, all these make a huge difference to how much caffeine is actually in the cup that you're consuming.

In some cases during the study, they found that a cup of instant coffee had more caffeine in it than an espresso made at a cafe. So that's just something to be aware of. Another thing we discovered is that people metabolise caffeine differently and it's genetic.

Years ago, Ben and I did the 23andMe testing. We had to spit in little jars and sent our saliva off and, yes, it's just as disgusting as it sounds. After we did that we got sent back all this really incredible information about ourselves and our genetics. Ben's results came back that he metabolises coffee a lot faster than I do which makes perfect sense because I have one cup of coffee and that's enough to last me until the afternoon whereas he'll usually have two or three because his body is burning through it a lot quicker. And this makes sense because he inherited it from his midnight coffee drinking parents.

“ *If you're having long blacks, there's nothing out there that suggests this is unhealthy unless you're someone who's particularly sensitive to caffeine, or if coffee causes cortisol spikes for you.*

KELLY: My mum is the same. My mum can have a cup of coffee at, like, midnight and go to bed at a quarter past 12 with no dramas.

CARLY: That's not me at all. My whole family is quite caffeine sensitive. We sort of stop having our coffees in the afternoon and we're definitely not after dinner coffee drinkers. You assume behaviours like that are learned but they may be genetic. Also, be conscious of how quickly you think your body metabolises caffeine.

Another fact I found out about coffee is that coffee isn't dehydrating. That's a total myth. We get told you should have a glass of water for every cup of coffee that you have. It's actually not true. I mean obviously, drink lots of water all the time. That's always excellent but it's not necessary to match your water and coffee consumption.

KELLY: I've got a couple of other things that research has shown.

The first thing is that there's actually little point having a coffee first thing in the morning to wake you up because your cortisol levels naturally rise on waking anyway. And studies have shown that a big glass of water is just as effective as coffee at that point in time of the day. Your cortisol levels naturally dip around mid-morning and around mid-afternoon so say around 10-10:30am and again around 3pm. Those are good times to have a cup of coffee if you're going to have some because that's the point where your cortisol has naturally dipped.

“ *There's actually little point having a coffee first thing in the morning to wake you up because your cortisol levels naturally rise on waking anyway.* ”

The other thing where you might consider giving up coffee is if you're doing everything right from a weight loss point of view. You're eating really well. You're exercising every day. You're doing high intensity exercise mixed in with your cardio. And you still can't shift that bit of extra weight around your belly. That might be a cortisol related thing and a lot of people have noticed that once they gave up coffee, they were able to shift the belly fat that they were really struggling to shift before.

But overall, there's no real reason to give up coffee. I experimented on myself and found to my horror that life is better without coffee – but only from an anxiety and mood point of view. I've had maybe two or three cups since then more out of desire than need. It's been from more of a, 'Well I'm at a coffee shop. I'll have a soy cappuccino as a treat,' kind of thing. And I just keep finding that those cups of coffee are not doing anything for me. I'm very attached to this new, 'lighter' mood I have. That's why I'm going to stay off it.

Meanwhile, I've become one of those insufferable tea drinkers. I've rediscovered English Breakfast tea. Nobody else can make it for me. I have to make it for myself because it's got to be just that right strength and it's got to have just the right amount of milk in it. I can't believe what I've become.

CARLY: (Laughing) Ok, we've put together a few little tips to help you get off coffee if it's something you'd like to experiment with or you're finding that coffee does have a negative impact on you in some way.

One of the things we came up with was that research shows that if you want to decrease your dependency on coffee, you need to make your consumption irregular. So maybe if you have it every second day and sometimes you have it with breakfast, sometimes you have it before lunch.

Another thing is that the half-life of caffeine is about eight hours. If you drink coffee after 4pm, it will have an effect on your sleep in some form depending on how quickly you metabolise it. So, just be aware of what the caffeine is doing to you and how long it will take to get out of your system. There's actually a really interesting app called Up Coffee and it's really, really cute. You enter how many glasses of water you've had and how many cups of coffee you've had and it has a little moving infographic that shows how much caffeine is in your system. It swirls around and shows what time you need to stop drinking coffee in order to get a good night's sleep. That's a really good way of being aware of your consumption of coffee and helping yourself cut down on it if that's what it is that you're aiming for.

Also, I listened to a podcast with Dr. Karl and a dietitian and they were talking about whether or not you should have full-fat milk or low-fat milk in your coffee. The dietitian standards in Australia

recommend having low-fat milk. While there are more nutrients in full-fat milk and there's a movement towards having full-fat dairy in recent times, the dietitian said yes, in general, having full-fat dairy is better for you but that that's only if the rest of your diet is completely impeccable. If you have excess calories in any other form, the excess calories from having full-fat milk in your coffee bump up your total caloric intake for the day. So, unless you're really disciplined on counting your calories and know that you can afford to have extra calories in your milk, it is actually better to have a low-fat cup of coffee rather than a full-fat cup of coffee.

“ *I was testing an assumption that I could never, ever give up coffee because I love it way too much. And that assumption has been categorically busted.*

KELLY: If you're like me and drinking coffee is a habit more than anything else, my tip for giving it up (if that's what you want to do), is to replace the drink with something else. I replaced it with tea. I wasn't game to try and get off caffeine (as opposed to coffee) during the month of February. I couldn't deal with the headaches and stuff. But if you want to get off caffeine as well as coffee then you replace it with herbal tea.

And then watch your triggers. For me, it was often tiredness or hunger. And if that's the case for you, you'd be surprised how physiologically effective having a big glass of water is. A big glass of water is not psychologically effective though. It would probably just make you angry and resentful at the fact that you've given up coffee. But from a physiological point of view, it removes that physical craving and then it's up to you to deal with the psychological craving.

Coffee is good for your blood pressure. It's good for your cardiovascular health. So as with most things, there are good things and bad things to it. As I mentioned before, I'm a big believer that we're all experiments of one.

If you're like me and you suffer from quite bad anxiety, I'd be really interested in hearing how you fare coming off coffee for a month. I always find it interesting from a self-improvement point of view to just experiment on yourself and test assumptions.

For me, I was testing an assumption that I could never, ever give up coffee because I love it way too much. And that assumption has been categorically busted. So that's all we're encouraging people to do: test assumptions and see what works and what doesn't work.

Update from Kelly: I'm back drinking coffee now, but only 1-2 cups a day. And more because I just really like it rather than any real dependency on it. If I find I'm struggling a bit with mood, I come off it for three or so days. That always lifts the cloud over my mood and returns things to what I consider 'normal'.

EPISODE 19: WE DECIDE TO DO A DIGITAL DETOX CHALLENGE

TIPS AND THOUGHTS SHARED IN THIS EPISODE:

- Why you'd want to do a digital detox.
- The rules of the challenge.

CARLY: Have you ever done a digital detox? Kelly and I have set ourselves the challenge of going for a full 48 hours without using our phones or the internet and in this episode we discuss the rules of the challenge and how we think we'll go with it.

So, Kelly, can you tell us why you're keen to go for a full weekend digital detox?

KELLY: Not sure if 'keen' is the right word to use here! I'm actually really frightened by this challenge because I do everything on my phone.

If a question pops into my head and I don't know the answer, I go straight to Google. (So much so that, if my six-year old asks me something and I say, 'I don't know', he says, 'Why don't you ask Google?')

My books are on there, in my Kindle app. My entertainment's on there – Instagram and Facebook. It's my notebook because I'm a writer so ideas pop in my head and I go straight to Evernote and put them in there.

But I will say I'm interested to do this challenge because phones are a bit of a barrier and whenever I'm on my phone at the moment, it's not obvious what I'm doing and I could be doing anything. Sometimes when I'm with my family, I kind of want to just shout out and say, 'I'm just going to look up where we're going on Google Maps,' or, 'I'm just answering an email,' or, 'I'm reading my book right now.'

I don't want people looking at me on my phone and assuming the only reason I'm on there is because I'm so addicted to Facebook or Instagram. I kind of feel the need to justify that I'm doing legit things on my phone. I'm not just being anti-social.

Would you be looking at me like that if I was reading a book? No, you wouldn't. I'm actually reading a book on my phone right now.

CARLY: But you wouldn't read a book when you're hanging out with someone. You just wouldn't do that. You wouldn't consciously decide, 'I'm sorry I'm a bit bored by your presence right now. I'm just going to open up my book and have a bit of a read.' You wouldn't do that. So why is it okay to do that with your phone?

KELLY: Mmm true. Anyway! I'm really interested to see how I'm going to go with this. I'm really going to struggle with the fact that if I have a question or if I'm bored for two milliseconds, I reach for my phone. I think I'm going to have to be prepared in advance. I might need to go camping or something.

When we go away, I don't have trouble being off my phone because we're out of the normal home environment and it's easy for me to not be on it and often there's no internet access. In those circumstance; your phone becomes completely obsolete, so it's a great break. I'm interested to do this at home on a regular normal weekend and see what strategies I'd come up with to do stuff I would normally do on my phone.

CARLY: I'm the same. Ben and I camp quite regularly and it's quite easy for me to not use my phone when I'm away and out of range. I, too, am keen to give this a go on a weekend when I'm in my home. But I will admit that, for this particular challenge, I won't be at home. I'll be at Ben's family's farm.

“ *I kind of feel the need to justify that I'm doing legit things on my phone. I'm not just being anti-social.* ”

And I do have to preface that I totally sprang this on Kelly and I'm kind of dragging her along for the ride on this one. The main reason I'm keen to give a digital detox a go is to test my FOMO levels. We've spoken about my FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) issues lots in previous episodes and I check my phone way too often because I'm scared of missing out on something like a cool conversation or a great article or something awesome. The thing is – all those things will still be there at the end of the digital detox. I am 99% sure I'll miss absolutely nothing.

Another thing, and this is more of a selfish reason of why I want to try the digital detox, is I really want to train my friends into not changing plans at the last minute. I'm very organised and if I say I'm going to be somewhere that's where I will be. But I find myself wasting a lot of time waiting for other people because they have the option to text me to tell me they're going to be 20 minutes late. The problem I have is that it doesn't change the fact that they're still wasting 20 minutes of my time.

So, with the digital detox, anyone who's made plans with me is going to have to stick to the plan or else just leave me sitting there not knowing where they are. So that's another really big one for me: just making sure people around me are held accountable for

being where they say they're going to be. I'm making my friends sound like totally rubbish people and they're not. I promise.

KELLY: I've got friends like yours. Just habitually late.

CARLY: It's the same with clients as well. If you have a meeting, someone has the ability to contact you via email and say, 'Can we please change the meeting?' with an hour's notice. And I don't like that. I think there should be a better social etiquette of being where you say you're going to be and not having the option of changing it at the last minute just because everyone is so contactable.

I recently saw an interview with Shailene Woodley, the actress from *The Fault in Our Stars* and *Divergent*. She was interviewed and she said she went without a phone for a full year. I'm sure it was quite easy for her because she's got a manager and an agent and staff. But I was thinking if a film star can do that for a year, then certainly I can do it for a weekend because I like to think that I'm super important and couldn't possibly be un-contactable. But I'm not a film star and surely they need to be more contactable than me? So much more is riding on their careers than on mine!

Also, I'm not sure if anyone's read this amazing article that I haven't been able to find but here's the basic run down of it. Apparently, Bill Murray doesn't have a mobile phone or an email address or an agent and the only way to get in contact with him is by a 1-800 number and then he may or may not listen to the message. If he does, he encourages you to leave your address and your phone number. Since he doesn't have a phone, he won't call you back. He'll just show up and find you. So, this guy tried to get him to do a movie and left a message on his 1-800 number and never heard a word. Three months later Bill Murray shows up at the front of this guy's house with golf clubs and was all 'Do you want to come play golf with me and talk about doing the movie?' I'm no Bill Murray so I should be able to go for a full weekend without my phone.

I found another article on Fast Company where they sent a test group of millennials to the desert for 30 days without technology and interviewed them afterwards. Some of their points were really excellent. They said that Google is a conversation killer. If you keep grabbing your phone and finding out the answer, it stops that inquisitive conversation where people are learning things and trying to figure things out and it stops you from using your brain in a critical way. It's important to take a break from that and actually remember how to have a critical conversation. The control group also slept better and reported increases in short term memory after being technology-free for 30 days. That's another excellent reason to try to cut down on screen time.

“ *Am I only going to take photos now if they're good enough to share on social media? What happened to just capturing moments for yourself?* ”

KELLY: I actually caught myself doing something a bit concerning the other day. I went to take a photo of my kids – but it wasn't a social-media-worthy shot. When I realised that, I nearly put my phone away because I was thinking, 'What's the point of taking the photo if it can't be shared?' I can't believe I thought that. Am I only going to take photos now if they're good enough to share on social media? What happened to just capturing moments for yourself? So that was a really frightening thought for me to kind of come up against and a good reason to take a weekend off my phone!

That said, another reason I'm struggling with the concept of being off my phone for the entire weekend is because I feel like I'm going to miss out on connection. This comes from the introvert in me who's just addicted to social media because it allows me to connect with people without having to be around them in real life. I'm

going to feel so disconnected if I don't know what's going on in people's lives for a whole weekend!

Carls, do you want to explain the rules of the challenge while I just go curl up in the foetal position and cry?

“ *The main premise is to go for an entire weekend without your phone or the internet from 9pm Friday to 9pm Sunday.*

CARLY: (Laughing) Ok, so, the rules are quite strict but also a little bit flexible if you have extenuating circumstances. The main premise is to go for an entire weekend without your phone or the internet from 9pm Friday to 9pm Sunday. I do understand that some people need to leave their phone on. For instance, they might have young children who are having a play date and they need to make sure that they're contactable in case of an emergency. Or they might have elderly parents who need to contact them. In these situations, the rule is you have to use your phone as a phone. So basically, you use it as a landline. If it rings and you're at home, you can answer it but you can't text or email or do any social media from your phone.

My plan to combat this is to have my phone put up high on a shelf on loud. If it rings, I can answer it. I'll turn off notifications for text messages so I can't see text message. I'm not overly fond of the idea of people taking their phone with them so I won't be taking my phone with me when I leave the house. But, I do understand if you are a parent or you have a family member who has medical problems and you need to be contactable, absolutely take your phone with you. But make sure people know that you will only be answering phone calls and not text messages.

If you make plans, you need to make them in advance and tell your friends if they want to contact you, they have to call you. You can only call people if you're at home just like a landline phone.

KELLY: This is so weird to me. I don't even have a landline phone.

CARLY: I've never had one as an adult so, I'm kind of excited about the concept of people only being able to contact me when I'm actually at home. It's really quite exciting. If you want to go TV-free too, that's totally cool but it's not compulsory. This digital detox is more about getting off your phone and being present and un-contactable. It's not a screen-free detox. Also, the thought of having a full weekend without being able to watch a movie breaks my heart because I love watching movies. I don't feel bad about watching TV or having screen time on my digital detox but if you would like to do that as an added bonus, by all means go and do that.

EPISODE 24: DIGITAL DETOX REPORT

TIPS AND THOUGHTS SHARED IN THIS EPISODE:

- Carly loved the digital detox – Kelly hated it.
- Which things each of them struggled with the most.
- Is there a narcissistic bent to how Kelly and Carly use their phones currently?
- Did they miss anything important by being off social media and the internet for the whole weekend?
- Interesting findings from various studies.

THINGS WE MENTION IN THIS EPISODE:

- *Habits make smartphone use more pervasive:* link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s00779-011-0412-2
- *Are You Sleeping With Your Smartphone?* hbr.org/2012/05/are-you-sleeping-with-your-sma
- *To Break a Phone Addiction, Turn Your Screen Gray:* theatlantic.com/video/index/480240/adventures-in-grayscale
- *Are girls (even) more addicted? Some gender patterns of cell phone usage:* socio.ch/mobile/t_geser3.pdf

CARLY: A few weeks ago, we challenged our listeners and ourselves to a weekend without phones or the internet. That meant 48 hours without social media, YouTube, internet-based apps, email, or texting. You were actually allowed to use your phone, but only for phone calls. So essentially, it was a landline. If it was at home, you could answer it or make calls on it. If you were out and about, you weren't allowed to take it with you.

I did kind of spring this one on Kelly and she wasn't super keen on it. In fact, I dragged her kicking and screaming into it. But, we were also kind of excited because we've had a few listeners write in to say they would like if we disagreed sometimes. When Kelly and I first started Straight & Curly, we thought we were very different and it turns out we're actually the same person.

After this Digital Detox, we did disagree on a few things which I thought was good. Adds some light and shade to our discussion, right?!

So, Kelly, I loved the detox and you didn't love it. Do you want to talk to us about that?

KELLY: Ok, yes. Look, I got through it fine because I was very organised in that I downloaded recipes I knew I was going to want to cook and maps I was going to need for the places I had to go. I also bought two real books to read. But the thing I found really hard was, unlike you, (Carly was at Ben's family's farm all weekend), I was at home. If I was away, I think it would have been a bit different. But when I'm at home, I've got all these little mini systems and processes that are built up around having access to the internet.

So, I definitely found the whole weekend very discombobulating. An idea would pop into my head and I wouldn't be able to action that idea because... no internet. Or I'd be getting my clothes ready to go for a run the next morning and I wouldn't be able to check

how cold it was going to be. It's just little things like that and there were a lot of them.

“ *I found it really hard being deprived of information. I'm very used to being able to just jump online and look something up straight away and I don't cope well when I can't do that.*

The other thing I found that made it a little bit hard for me was that I was a bit behind in work heading into the weekend. Ordinarily, I would use the weekend to catch up on those few little things. It might only be an hour or two of work over the course of the weekend but I couldn't do any of that stuff because I couldn't get on the internet. Everything I do for work requires being on the internet.

I also found it really, really hard being deprived of information. I've never really liked relying on newspapers for information or the TV. I'm very used to being able to just jump online and look something up straight away and I don't cope well when I can't do that.

CARLY: I found a lot of that as well – where I was writing something and couldn't research it. All the writing I did on the weekend is full of the place holder 'blah'. I'd write 'blah' said this or the 'blah' research supports that this 'blah' thing happened. Then I'd go back and look at what I wrote and it was total crap.

KELLY: I know a lot of people would say, 'Who cares, first drafts are always shit anyway.' But, given the amount of writing you and I do over the vast variety of places and people that we write for, every single thing we write cannot be a dodgy first draft. It has to be a functional first draft a lot of the time. I was completely unable to write any functional first drafts on the weekend. I did write some dodgy first

drafts which have come in useful this week but still the information deprivation was, out of everything, the biggest thing for me. If I'm away on holiday and I don't have access to the internet, I'm fine because I'm not trying to do all the things I normally do. When I'm home, however, I want the internet!

CARLY: I share a lot of stuff – funny observations and things like that – and honestly, I do get off on the reaction and engagement of these posts. There were a few times when something happened where I really felt the need to share it. And then when I thought about it, I really had to question how incredibly narcissistic I was being.

KELLY: Is it narcissistic? It's a writer thing I think. I just feel like pithy observations need to be shared and I do want people to know when I'm being a bit clever. I don't know if it's narcissistic but I definitely missed that as well.

“ *I share a lot of stuff – funny observations and things like that – and honestly, I do get off on the reaction and engagement of these posts.*

CARLY: I had never thought of sharing my pithy observations on social media as being anything other than, ‘Hey, let's have a conversation about this thing.’ But then I observed my behaviour and motivations over the weekend. In not being able to go online and share my funny anecdotes, I felt like the public were missing out. How conceited is that?

KELLY: (Laughing) It's a validation thing. And we all need validation. I know there is a school of thought that you shouldn't need the validation of others to feel good about yourselves but I personally think that school of thought is a bit BS. We all need validation and this is the great thing about the internet. It gives us validation

when we need it. I missed my validation on the weekend. I will put my hand up and say that.

CARLY: I'll put my hand up and say that as well. I didn't exercise on the weekend for a variety of reasons but one of the other main reasons was, if I go for a run and I can't tweet it, what's the point?

KELLY: (Laughing) Well, as I said to you when you threw this idea at me, I thought it probably wasn't such a bad thing to try because I caught myself the other day going to take a photo of my daughter doing something quite funny and then I was like, 'Oh but I can't put that on the internet,' because it was just one of those photos that wasn't beautiful. It was just a regular photo. And I questioned whether there was any point in taking a photo I wasn't going to share. That's something that needs further unpacking.

Interestingly, I didn't find the not going on social media thing as hard as I thought I would. There were a few occasions, however. I made a recipe from the Merrymaker Sisters and I was going to put it on Instagram and tag them and I then realised I couldn't. I also read my friend Caroline Overington's new book which is called *The One Who Got Away* and everybody has to read it because it's amazing. It's a bit *Gone Girl*-ish. I really wanted to jump on Facebook and tell her it was amazing. But both those things could wait until Monday and they did wait until Monday and it was fine.

I found once I broke that twitch of going on social media the millisecond I got bored, I quite liked being off it for the weekend. I read two books which was nice. But I already read a lot and I can read two books any weekend I want if I so choose. Probably the biggest difference for me was simply not having my phone in my hand all weekend. That was probably a good difference.

What about you, Carls? You loved it.

CARLY: I absolutely loved it. One of the things I really enjoyed was how clear I felt on Monday morning. I barely looked at a screen the whole time aside from my Kindle screen while I was reading. I just felt really clear and my head didn't feel full of too much stuff and I didn't feel headachy and nauseous from scrolling. I feel like it's got a lot to do with my eyes as well.

I've actually got really good vision. I went to an optometrist and she said I have perfect 20/20 vision so I'm sitting there being super smug about my perfect 20/20 vision and she says, actually it's not a good thing because perfect 20/20 vision is a very Neanderthal trait. It's a basic human capacity and it means that my eyes haven't evolved enough to start taking in screens the way people with poorer eyesight can. She also says my eyes are going to crap out when I'm 50. So, I've got this weird theory that my Neanderthal 20/20 vision eyes can't cope very well with the constant scrolling of screens. Being away from my phone for the whole weekend and not having 20 minutes of scrolling every hour or two, I think that really cleared my head and made me feel quite good on Monday morning. That was a definite plus.

I also enjoyed not feeling like I was 'pending' anything. Having my phone near me is like having a toddler silently poke at me but since it was away and on a shelf, I didn't even really think about it. I also turned my phone off. I chose to have it off the whole weekend. I used Ben's phone to call my mom on Mother's Day and that's the only thing I used a phone for.

Actually, there was one other incident. Ben's grandma asked me to help her enter a competition that Qantas sent her to win some points or something. So, I clicked one button in her email as well. But I figured that didn't count. You can't say no to a grandma, that's the worst karma ever. I don't even think that that counts but I just really need to be honest with you guys.

I read two books and that was incredible. I honestly feel like crying when I think about how much I don't read anymore. I read before bed most nights but not for very long because I'm usually quite tired. My main takeaway from this was to waste as little time as possible on social media and spend much more time reading. One of the things I really liked was logging back on Sunday night and having missed absolutely nothing. There was not one thing that I missed.

“ *It's made me a lot more aware of what I'm consuming, of how I'm seeing the same stuff again and again, and also how 99% of what happens on Facebook doesn't interest me.*

KELLY: I know. I've noticed this because I tend to go on social media every time I get bored and find I'm just scrolling through the exact same things over and over. Then I just go, 'What am I doing? I'm just looking at the same things on Facebook and the same conversations and there's nothing new here and yet I'm still scrolling through here.'

CARLY: It's made me a lot more aware of what I'm consuming, of how I'm seeing the same stuff again and again, and also how 99% of what happens on Facebook doesn't interest me.

KELLY: And doesn't make your life better.

CARLY: It doesn't involve me and doesn't need any of my attention. That was a really eye-opening thing and I've been using the internet a lot less since the detox because I don't want to waste time on my phone. I would rather spend that time reading or crocheting or hanging out with people that I enjoy. I'm planning on going social media free from 9am to 6pm during the day from now on.

The main thing I learnt is I can do everything I need to do on social media in two 20-minute sessions a day. The only thing that will be a bit hard for me is Snapchat because I really love it right now. Are you into Snapchat yet, Kel? *(Note from future Carly: Past Carly's love of Snapchat was very short lived. She's an Instagram stories gal now.)*

KELLY: I've applied the, 'Just because it works doesn't mean you have to do it,' rule to that one. I know it probably would be amazing but I just can't fit it into my life right now.

“ *The main thing I missed was being able to watch something else when everyone wants to watch something boring.*

CARLY: It took me ages to actually understand it. I'm pretty savvy with the internet and it doesn't take me long to figure out how to do things, but I found Snapchat hard to figure out. There's so much swiping but once you figure it out, it's good. In terms of my business and my presence online, I get a lot more engagement and a lot more fulfilment from being on the internet first thing in the morning and last thing at night and I think that's when most people are the most active on social media anyway.

The main thing I missed was being able to watch something else when everyone wants to watch something boring. Ben's family have SBS on constantly, to the point where other channels don't really exist. I'm really into politics and I think it's important to be educated and to make your vote count. That's officially where I stand on politics but I don't need 24 hours of world news and politics on in the background all day, every day and that seems to be a thing that we do at the family farm.

After watching another hour of Barnaby Joyce talk about stuff that was just not very interesting, I really wanted to watch old episodes of *Degrassi High* on Youtube and I couldn't. Sad panda. I read my book instead, which was awesome. So, it was actually no big loss but that was one thing that I didn't love.

Another issue was I went into town with my brother-in-law to grab some stuff for lunch and he went to go and get some bread rolls and I was going to go into the newsagent because I was starved of entertainment. I actually thought, 'I'm going to buy a magazine.' So, I'm looking at the magazines and had to trust that he would come and find me again. He followed through so that was good but I was a bit nervous.

It also rained for most of the weekend and ordinarily, I'd go for a walk or I'd go for a run. But if it's raining, I do a YouTube workout or internet-based app workout and I didn't have access to those so I ended up just not exercising at all.

There's an article I read recently on the Atlantic and there's a guy that suggested that if you turn your phone to monochrome mode, it will help you break the addiction because your phone isn't as bright and colourful and fun. If you feel like you can't last for a full weekend, this is a good little thing to try if you want to get yourself used to it. Just go to Settings > General > Accessibility > Display Accommodations > Colour Filters, and then choose Greyscale. The theory is that by switching your phone to black and white it makes your phone less vibrant and appealing and therefore makes you less likely to spend too much time on it.

I did this right before the Digital Detox and it really worked because it makes Instagram really boring. It makes Snapchat really boring. Facebook isn't sort of alive with pictures and lovely things so it's a bit of snooze fest. Switch your phone to monochrome for the weekend for a mini-detox.

KELLY: You found another great study that showed phone addiction is different between men and women. I found this really, really interesting in that women tend to *participate* on social media by commenting and having conversations whereas men tend to *consume* – watching YouTube videos and just surfing and reading in general. I found that so interesting and certainly in our house, it's true.

So, if you're looking to break the addiction to your phone, having an understanding of what it is you're actually addicted to might help. I know I do like to participate on the internet. I do like to leave comments and chat with people on social media and if I'm honest, I do those things a lot of the time for the validation that it gives me as a person.

CARLY: Yeah, I found that was very similar as well in our household. Ben is certainly a consumer of the internet and I'm definitely a participator. I'd actually really be interested if you could tweet and tell us if that is true of your household too. I also found another study that was done by Leslie Perlow; she's a professor at the Harvard Business School. She did a study of 1,600 managers and professionals so it's a fairly small test group but still it's quite interesting. She said 70% of that test group checked their smartphone within an hour of getting up and 56% of them checked their phone within an hour of going to sleep. 51% of them checked their phone continuously when they were on holidays. And 44% said they would experience a great deal of anxiety if they lost their phone and couldn't replace it for a week.

I completely agree. If I have the choice between someone stealing my phone or my wallet, I'd choose my wallet every time. I think a lot of people don't actually realise how much time they do spend on their phone. As we were saying, we're very reliant on it for everyday

little things like checking the weather, listening to a podcast, tracking exercise, tracking weight, tracking food or whatever it is that you're doing. There are little things we do every day that we're not even really aware that we're doing.

“ *Women tend to participate on social media by commenting and having conversations whereas men tend to consume.* ”

I've actually been experimenting with an app called Moment app and I've got it on my iPhone. It shows me how much time I spend on my phone on any given day. Right now, it's midday on a Wednesday and I have used my phone for 2 hours and 15 minutes today. That's a huge chunk of my time already today. It's quite sobering to do that – it just makes you really aware. On a bad day, I can spend 4-5 hours on my phone which is terrible. What am I doing on my phone for all that time? It does count all phone activity though including listening to podcasts which would make up 90% of my phone usage.

So, I feel a little bit better because I listen to a lot of podcasts.

KELLY: The final bit of research that we found, which again I found really, really interesting because I saw my own behavior mirrored in it, is a 2011 study published in the journal *Personal and Ubiquitous Computing*. It found that people aren't so much addicted to smartphones as they are addicted to checking habits that default with the phone use. And this is totally me. That's the twitchiness in our hands, isn't it? That study found certain environmental triggers like being bored or participating in lousy conversations trigger the habits.

I mean, on the weekend I was watching football. I love football but I couldn't just watch the game. I really, really wanted to be able to get on Twitter as well and see what other people were saying about the game. So, it's interesting to note what triggers your checking habits. This is something I'm going to do going forward – try to eliminate that twitchy, checky thing. You know the thing where you walk past your phone and immediately press the button to bring up the home screen to see if there's anything interesting to see there.

“ *I think coming to terms with your own need for validation is a really good reason to do this because we both struggled without that validation.*

CARLY: I found the checking was really detrimental. You don't need to check your Instagram pic when two people have liked it and then when four people have liked it and then when ten people have liked it. If you check it at the end of the day, the full amount of people will have liked it and you'll be getting the exact same information that you would have received incrementally. You just receive it all at once and it saves so much time.

I think coming to terms with your own need for validation is a really good reason to do this because we both struggled without that validation. We got to the end of the weekend thinking, 'If people aren't enjoying us as people, what's the point in existing?'

KELLY: And should we not be focusing on the real people in our lives? Although in my defense, I do spend my whole day with the same people and two of them are kids.

CARLY: So – listeners – should you try a digital detox? I say, absolutely.

We were met with quite a bit of shock and push-back when we suggested going for a full weekend without our phone which is totally fine but I really do think that the more scared you are of doing it, the more you probably need to do it. It's easily one of the healthiest things I've done this year and I fully intend on doing it again.

I would like to do it next time when I'm in my own home because I think that will be a lot harder. I was quite lucky because I was in a very picturesque beautiful location where I do generally spend a lot of time relaxing and doing lovely, pottery things. It wasn't that much of a stretch for me to go without my phone for the weekend. I think doing it in my own home would be a big challenge and one that I'm ready for.

KELLY: Yep, I'm definitely interested to hear how you go at home as opposed to being on the farm.

For me, I don't think I can do a completely off the internet thing again. Not by choice anyway. If I'm away, yeah, that's fine. I can make that work. But at home, I just don't like it and it's too restrictive for me by way of not being able to work, not being able to just enhance my brain by looking things up. I like being able to find things out straight away.

But I can definitely go without social media. And I'm keen to try a form of the detox again. Just maybe not a full 48 hours.

THANK YOU

The first and most obvious people we have to thank are our listeners. Podcasting is a funny old caper. It's not like blogging where you throw up a post and immediately know if its hit a chord because people will leave a comment and tell you.

Right from the very start, however, we had listeners finding ways to message us and let us know they were enjoying the show. This was so gratifying.

When we finally had the good sense to start a Facebook group, that's when our listeners became an integral part of the show. The people in the Straight and Curly Facebook group are smart, motivated and, most importantly, able to debate topics and ideas in a respectful manner. They are also absurdly helpful and some of the incredibly informative threads in our group have gone on to become full shows.

So, thank you Straight and Curly listeners and group members. We wouldn't still be doing the show if not for you!

We'd also like to thank our partners. Mainly because that's what you do in this bit of a book, right?

Carly's partner, Ben, and Kelly's partner, Anthony, feature heavily in the show and we're so grateful that they allow us to share so much of them with our listeners.

A huge thanks also has to go out to the beta readers of this book. Ellen Ronalds Keene, Dena Beckner, Michelle Unsworth, Jane Pacey, Jessica Vassallo, Liz Nelson and Saskia Brown all provided feedback, tweaks and typo-checks that made this book a tidier read!

Finally, we'd like to acknowledge Brooke and Ben McAlary from JackRabbit.fm. While the network no longer exists, the launching of the network in 2016 gave us a long-awaited opportunity to finally work together, and gave us exposure we'd have struggled to secure on our own. We will be forever grateful.

STAY IN TOUCH

You can find us online at our respective websites:

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Straight and Curly: straightandcurly.com

On Twitter we are [@kellyexeter](https://twitter.com/kellyexeter) and [@smaggle](https://twitter.com/smaggle).

On iTunes and Spotify simply search for **Straight and Curly**.

If you want to email us something nice, hello@straightandcurly.com is the place to do that.

If you want to email us something mean, benice@straightandcurly.com is the right address for that :)

And, of course, if you want to join our Facebook group, we thoroughly endorse that desire. facebook.com/groups/straightandcurly is the place to be.