

JJ Virgin: The doctor said, "You're going to have to let him go. We can't do the surgery he needs here. He'd never survive the airlift to the next hospital. And even if he were to survive it, he wouldn't survive that surgery. And even if he were to survive that, he'd be so brain damaged, it wouldn't be worth it." To which my 15 year old son standing next to me said, "Well, maybe there's a 0.25% chance he'd make it." And the doctor said, "Yeah, that sounds about right." And he goes, "Well, we'll take those odds."

Robert Glazer: Welcome to Elevate. A podcast about achievement, personal growth, and pushing limits in leadership in life. I'm Robert Glazer, and I chat with world class performers who have committed to elevating their own life, pushing the limits of their capacity, and helping others to do the same.

Robert Glazer: Welcome to the Elevate podcast. Our quote for today is from John F. Kennedy, and it is, "Physical fitness is not only one of the most important keys to a healthy body. It's the basis of dynamic and creative intellectual activity." Our guest today, JJ Virgin is a leading expert on helping people be healthier in all facets of life. She's a celebrity nutrition and fitness expert and the author of the four New York times bestsellers, including The Virgin Diet and The Virgin Diet Cookbook. JJ is a contributor to outlets including the Huffington Post, the host of the JJ Virgin Lifestyle Podcast, and has been featured on Dr. Phil, Dr. Oz, the Today Show, and more. JJ, welcome. I'm excited to have you join us on Elevate today.

JJ Virgin: Thrilled to be here.

Robert Glazer: So you've taken an interesting path through the fitness world starting as an aerobics instructor.

JJ Virgin: You had to bring that up.

Robert Glazer: Yeah. Then starting your own then starting your own gym and becoming one of LA's first personal trainers. What was it like starting a fitness career from scratch on those days?

JJ Virgin: Well back in those days, way back then. It was literally Jazzercise and calisthenics. And it was very interesting to watch how this whole thing has shifted because when I started doing all this in my teens, I was in high school working out in the high school gym with the football players. There weren't these gyms and health clubs and stuff to go to. And then, when I went off and I started as a personal trainer, there were three of us. There was no name for it at the time. And I don't know how it actually came up that we are now personal trainers, but I remember I moved to Florida and I went to get a business license. And they looked at me like very skeptically. Like you can't do that. As if I was a call girl or something. "I think you're not understanding what this is."

JJ Virgin: But what I love the most about what's happened over the last 30 years is that we have so much more choice now as to what people can do in order to move.

Think about it before. You did sports in school and then when you graduated from high school, college, that was that, right? There really wasn't a whole lot else. And now there's so many different things that you can do. You really have no excuse to not be active. You've just got to find your thing.

Robert Glazer: Yeah. You don't even have to leave your house. [inaudible] bring everyone to you. So what was the evolution? How did you move along to what you're doing today? Are you must've had some realization along the way or discoveries of things that were working or not working for either you or your clients, right?

JJ Virgin: Yes. Well I'd love to say that it was like this completely planned out path with this big vision and goal. And it was so not. So I went off to college as a theater major, planning to be a Broadway actress, discovered I can't act. And the acting department at UCLA was kind of silly. They were all talking about how we were going to become waitresses. So I became an English major, but there was an aerobics studio down the street. So I started teaching aerobics. I actually went off to Japan, taught aerobics there. Then the day I graduated, I had started personal training because someone wanted me to come to their house rather than come to the aerobics studio. That was the birth of personal training. So I started in grad school and biomechanics in exercise [inaudible] because I was like, I better learn this.

JJ Virgin: And what was so interesting in school back then, and I hate to say it because I think it's still out there today, which blows my mind. Is that we were taught that you should do aerobic exercise first because you should never lift weights if you want to lose weight. Which is silly and wrong. And then we were told if you couldn't do at least 30 minutes of exercise, don't bother because you need to get your heart rate into your training zone and burn more fat, which was also wrong. And that in order to lose weight, you had to create a 500 calorie deficit a day. So you needed to do either exercise more or eat less, and hopefully both.

JJ Virgin: Now we know that if you chronically restrict calories and you exercise more, exercising more makes you hungrier. And then you're told to eat less, which is just mean. And if you're eating less over time, it slows down your metabolism. So what was lucky for me back then was that I didn't have a sugar daddy or rich parents. So I was super lucky because if I wasn't making money, I was not paying my rent eating, staying in grad school. So what I discovered pretty quickly is what we were being taught in graduate school, actually didn't work.

JJ Virgin: So I went back to the library and I thought, all right, well what does work? And it turns out that what the Eastern Europeans were doing for training, all the high intensity interval training, weight training, eating lower carbs. If you started to look at what we've done historically that worked, it was not what we were being taught.

JJ Virgin: So I flipped things around and changed it all up. And I came out with this phrase. Years ago, I realized it wasn't about calories that yeah, they count. But where they come from counts more and that our body isn't a bank accounts, it's a

chemistry lab. And that really all these things had to do with hormones. And we weren't even taught hormonal exercise or anything like that in grad school. So this was like I was some kind alien saying these things 25 years ago. But you look at it now, Time just came out with the science of exercise and all this information is coming out now saying this stuff. I just knew it to be true because I actually was there working with clients. And if they got better, I got paid. If they didn't get better, they were going to fire me. So I was like, "That's not working. Let's figure out what will work."

Robert Glazer: Yeah. What's amazing to me is now we're looking at this historically like the '90s nutritional analysis that came out has probably made people more unhealthy than in the history of time. The vision of sitting there eating six boxes of SnackWell.

JJ Virgin: 100 calories though, it's okay.

Robert Glazer: Cookies. Right. And look, I think Michael Pollan in his book said this best In Defense of Food, which is just one of the simplest books on understanding nutrition I've ever read. He said, "Look, what your body does when it has 1,000 calories of broccoli and 1,000 calories of soda is two entirely different processes that look nothing like each other." So a calorie is not-

JJ Virgin: Yeah, a calorie is not a calorie. And I did have a doctor. I remember I had a challenge with one of my clients and she went to see her doctor and she said, "My doctor told me that it didn't matter what I eat, that I could eat pie all day long as long as I was counting my calories." I'm like, "Fire the doctor." None of my doctor friends would ever say something so silly as that. It's like fire the doctor. Yeah, we definitely have come a long way. But we have, I don't think it was just the '90s Robert, I think it was the '80s. If you start to play it back as to when we decided that fat was bad and sugar was okay, and we pulled the fat out of foods because fat is going to kill us. And this was all Ames research. This guy Bruce Ames, who came out and said, actually misread the seven sisters cholesterol study and said fat is what is killing us. It was wrong. And then we started pulling all the fat out of food. And if you pull the fat out, fat's very satiating. If you pull fat out, you're putting higher carbohydrates and especially starches and sugar in, you're going to be more hungry.

JJ Virgin: Then all of a sudden, the snacking industry got in the business of this and went, "Cool, now we can just have you eating all throughout the day. Now you need to graze."

Robert Glazer: I remember people eating boxes of SnackWell cookies. This is my vision. The green box of, yeah.

JJ Virgin: Yeah. Those little, the little, what were those Mallomars? Remember when they knocked off the little chocolate-

Robert Glazer: Yeah. Yeah.

JJ Virgin: And the funny part is no one ate one or two SnackWells. Just like you said, they ate the box because they were fat-free.

Robert Glazer: Yeah. The stuff tasted all the-

JJ Virgin: It was disgusting like chemicals.

Robert Glazer: Yeah, just right. Disgusting. So I've been wanting to ask someone this and you're actually the right person. I've noticed in other countries where I'm looking at nutritional label and part of it's a language, but they call fat lipids. And it occurred to me that maybe one of our problems, because people have clearly gotten a lot fatter eating carbohydrate than fat. However, I think because we call the part of food that is fat the seam term that we use when we talk about, we've created this association with that. And if it had a different name, if it was carbohydrates, protein, and lipids, would people think of fat differently? Because again, carbohydrates can very easily turn into fat on your body as we've learned.

JJ Virgin: Carbohydrates are way more likely to turn into fat on your body than fat is, because of the hormonal impact of it. I mean again, everything comes down to hormones. And when you eat a carbohydrate, you raise blood sugar. When you raise blood sugar, you raise insulin to bring your blood sugar back down. Well, insulin is a storage hormone. So the first place those carbs could go is they can get converted to, depending on what type of sugar they are. Basically they can convert into glucose and switch to glycogen and stored in your muscles. Which is awesome, except there's not a whole lot of storage space there. So most likely when you have excess, they're stored as fat. That's why insulin's up to get it out of the bloodstream. Fat does not raise insulin.

Robert Glazer: Yeah. Right. And what I struggle with, and maybe you've seen this is still interesting. Maybe they're listening or not, but with both my parents and my in-laws I struggle that, I think people who are in their sixties and their seventies, when they talk about their food knowledge, "I don't want to eat this. It's fatty," they're still locked into that study. And it drives us, I'm like you're spreading [inaudible 00:10:34]. It's just not right.

JJ Virgin: Right. But here's a perfect example of this. And this was after The Virgin Diet came out, it had become a New York times bestselling book. And I went on vacation, I took my two boys to Kauai. And my mom's like, "I really want to come," I got all right.

JJ Virgin: So I had groceries delivered to the condo we were staying in, and I asked her what she wanted. And she wanted whole grain, wheat bread. So whole wheat bread. She wanted orange juice. She wanted skim milk, and cereal. Okay. Now, and jam, and jam. I mean everything that I write about that I'm like, "Don't eat

that, don't eat that. And don't eat that either." Those were all the things she wanted. And now we're going to have breakfast and she says, "I need to lose a little bit of weight. So I thought I would just have a light breakfast. I'm going to have juice, jam, toast." And I'm looking at her skim milk, I'm like, "Did you read my book mom?" Meanwhile I'm having like this big protein smoothie with coconut milk and an avocado and she's like, "Oh my gosh, so much food." I'm like okay.

Robert Glazer: So much fat, right? So much fat.

JJ Virgin: Yeah, right? Wow. An avocado. Yikes. So it is, it's very challenging to turn that tide around, but I think we're getting there with the fat. I think we're starting to get less and less afraid of the fat. The fat won't make us fat. I sure hope so. Because when you look at what's really happened over the last 30 years with the science experiment of pulling the fat out of our diet-

Robert Glazer: It's been a disaster.

JJ Virgin: It's been the biggest disaster ever. They say if it keeps going by the year 2030, it's like everyone will be diabetic. It is the worst science experiment, just like the food pyramid. They created a food pyramid based on nothing. There was no people who-

Robert Glazer: Lobbying.

JJ Virgin: Yeah. No people group in the history of people group had ever lived on that macronutrient ratios. That was the cereal and grain companies lobbying to get it built like that.

Robert Glazer: And the dairy. There was no vegetable lobbying company, right?

JJ Virgin: Yeah. Broccoli was totally underrepresented there.

Robert Glazer: So you've described noticing that traditional diets worked for some people and not for other, and then I think you had a moment of realization that changed your thinking. What was that moment and what did you discover and what can people really understand about health versus dieting, versus really where they should focus so they're not in this constant seesaw?

JJ Virgin: Actually I want to give you a new idea, a new way of looking at dieting. Is that cool?

Robert Glazer: Perfect.

JJ Virgin: Here's the big problem. And you brought it up with lipids versus fats. So a diet. If you look at the definitions for diets, it could be either something used to lose weight or it can be just the way that we eat for nourishment. Those are totally

different things. The challenge we have is that we need two different words. There is one word and this word now I'm going to use it as the diet word, the D word. So to me a diet is something that you do short term for a response.

JJ Virgin: So let's say you go on The Virgin Diet. It's built short term. People tell me, "I've been on The Virgin Diet for years." I'm like, "It's a four week program." It's not built for years, what it was designed to do, it's an elimination diet that helps you uncover your hidden food intolerances so that at the end of that process you can figure out, should I eat gluten or not? Should I eat dairy or not? Then, I did the sugar impact diet to help you go through, figure out where sugar is sneaking into your diet, figure out how many carbohydrates you should be eating. And get yourself metabolically flexible. Move into being a fat burner so that if you wanted to do a ketogenic diet or you wanted to do intermittent fasting or fasting, you have the ability to do so.

JJ Virgin: So when you look at diets, I think that they should be used therapeutically. And then, you pull out the information from them going, "I feel better when I don't eat sugar. I feel better when I don't eat gluten." And you pull those into your everyday diet. Then, we have to our everyday how we eat. And that's the term I haven't figured out yet, but-

Robert Glazer: I was just going to say, I think it's like your lifestyle eating or something like that, right?

JJ Virgin: But it's like everything I come up with and I always ask, every time I'm doing a talk I go, "What do you think?" And I get all these things and they're clunky because we need just a word like diet, you know? So that's the challenge I see is people go, "Diets don't work." I go, "Yes they do." Your body will react. Whenever you're doing a diet, you're getting super important information.

JJ Virgin: Let's say that someone listening says, "I'm going to go on a ketogenic diet," and they try it for three days and they crash. Well that's because they're not metabolically flexible. That's important information. They need to go back and figure out where their carbs, get themselves so they can burn fat for fuel. because if they can't do that and they try to do a diet like that, they're going to fail.

Robert Glazer: So this is something you're saying, I touched on this my book, but this is really important. I'd love to dive in this for a second. One of the things I see today, A, we're all different, right? There's the thing one man's, what is it? One man's poison is another man's something [crosstalk] one man's-

JJ Virgin: Food, I know what you're saying.

Robert Glazer: Or something like that. I'm not getting it right. But that people have totally different bodies which your diet is designed to help figure out. And that also I think we have changes in our own, I've eaten eggs for years and suddenly my

body is rejecting eggs. And there might be some factor. But something has changed and I've had to be aware of that.

Robert Glazer: The problem today is that people are, particularly with the blogs, whatever thing that they are doing is working for them. They are preaching that as an [crosstalk] as the rest of the world. And that's really bad advice. Right?

JJ Virgin: Yeah. And I see that. All my friends are in the, they're all entrepreneurs or health people, and a lot of them are health entrepreneurs. A lot of docs, a lot of health experts. And I always go, "Your diet is just the diet you like to do." And then you get on everybody else, they should do the same thing, but they don't have issues with [inaudible 00:16:54], or they don't have issues. They don't have issues eating animal protein. And people become very passionate about this. I bring together four to 500 health experts every year and I laugh because I've got to do meals. These buffets that a paleo, a vegan, a keto, everyone can eat at, no one loses their mind. And everybody's happy. But this idea that there's one diet for everybody, for all time doesn't make any sense. Because A, your diet's going to change. Just like you said, I used to be able to eat eggs. Now I can't. Well maybe you developed leaky gut due to stress, due to some medication you took. These things can happen all the time. Or maybe your microbiome shifted.

JJ Virgin: Even if you were to live in different parts of the world, your bacteria in your gut is going to shift too. So maybe your microbiome shifted, but you can't tell me that someone like a native Chinese person who's eight years old is going to need the same diet as say some 55 year old man in Uganda. This doesn't make any sense. So our ethnicity is going to matter, our age is going to matter, our sex is going to matter. Our lifestyle goals are going to matter, right? What's gone on with our body? If you've got diabetes, heart disease, cancer, all these things play into this.

Robert Glazer: Yeah. I have a good friend who went on the keto diet and he actually loved it, but he smartly did it with medical supervision. And he's one of these people, rare people where even though he's eating mostly vegetable, it wasn't like he was eating bacon all day and all this stuff. But his cholesterol just spiked way, way into dangerous level. And the doctor said, "I see this happen in a few people." He can't do that. Right? So this is again why you need to-

JJ Virgin: Well he might have the APOE 44 gene. There's a specific genotype that if you really kick your fat up, you will start to kick up your cholesterol. And hey, the question of cholesterol is a way bigger question because 30 years ago we looked at total cholesterol. Then we went, "Oh wait a minute. No, it's LDL and HDL." And then we went, "Oh wait a minute. It's the particle sizes of those HDL and LDL. Oh wait a minute, it's the enzymes, the PLAC that reacts to the LDL."

Robert Glazer: So which is it?

JJ Virgin: Yeah, so which is it? And if your cholesterol is elevated, is it a problem? Hey too low's a problem too. But there is a genotype that doesn't do well with a higher fat diet. So I mean that's why we have to look at all this stuff. There is never one way. If you hear someone saying everyone should be on a vegan diet or everyone should go keto, run. Run away.

Robert Glazer: Yeah. So to that personalization, can you explain a little bit more? I think people know about allergies, they understand food allergies. But this notion of food intolerance is a much newer one. So can you explain what it is and how common it is, and how people should think about it or help figure it out for themselves?

JJ Virgin: Yeah. So food allergies are not common. They are the person who's got the peanut allergy and if you open the peanuts on the plane. Now they're getting more common because of so much of the damage that we're doing to our immune system and our gut. But they're maybe 3% of the population versus food intolerance is your body's inability to handle generally the proteins from a food. And the most common of this is a delayed reaction due to immune your immune system.

JJ Virgin: So the challenge with food intolerance is you'll eat a food, and it could be an hour later, it could be 24 hours later. You might get joint pain, headaches, fatigue, craving, bloating, skin problems. So you don't connect the dots between what you're eating and how you feel.

Robert Glazer: It's not an anaphylactic.

JJ Virgin: It's not like they open the peanuts and your throat closed. It's I ate something. And also, we're not used to tying in. We're so used to as a society going, "Oh no, it's totally normal to have headaches. It's totally normal to have heartburn." No, it's not. None of these things are normal. And they can be a sign of a food intolerance. Now they could be other things as well. But some of the most common signs of a food intolerance, and I'll explain how you get them, is gas and bloating, headaches, fatigue, skin problems, joint pain inflammation. It also can trigger autoimmune conditions. And the reason these are so common is your gut, which is a semipermeable membrane, becomes more permeable from a variety of things. These things are number one, stress. We were never set up to have chronic stress as a people group, right? So we now have chronic stress in that we have our phones with us all the time, right? There's never an off-

Robert Glazer: We're running fight or flight.

JJ Virgin: All the time. Yeah, all the time. Light's on too long. We've trashed our circadian rhythm. So there's all this stress. Stress makes your gut more permeable. Then, gluten triggers the release of something called zonulin. It makes your gut more permeable. Fructose, which the worst thing I ever saw happen is this idea that [inaudible] is some kind of healthy thing. [inaudible] is like the most

concentrated source of fructose we can get, which is the worst sugar there is out there. And one of the things that fructose does is make your gut more permeable. Then you have things like antibiotics, antacids, all these things that change the gut microbiome, that can set you up for these food intolerances. So that is why they are so common. Plus, we tend to eat the most common food intolerances come from gluten, dairy. So when I was doing the testing and found this, the top ones, gluten, dairy, eggs. Next were corn, soy, peanuts. So the challenge is when you look at processed foods, it's all of this. That's all it is.

JJ Virgin: So if you had one of those proteins in your diet once a week, your body launches a little immune attack on it and then it forms a little immune complexes, and the macrophages eat it up and get it out. But when it's everyday little bits, it builds up. Your body can't get rid of it fast enough. It overflows a little bit, and then it will lodge itself. Brain, joints, GI, skin, and create these low level things that you've come to think are normal for you. You go, "Oh no, no, no, I always have a little bit of a rashy thing or my joints always ache a little bit."

JJ Virgin: I have someone who has chronic tendonitis in their ankle. They'd gone to a PT, a physical therapist for a year. They stopped eating gluten. One week later, gone forever. Crazy.

Robert Glazer: Well, I'd love you to talk a little bit, a couple of things about explaining the leaky gut syndrome and that sort of Eastern Western connection. Also with gluten, I don't know where your stance is on roundup and the whole-

JJ Virgin: I just made a note about that, [inaudible] glyphosate. So the other question with gluten and corn and soy is, is it the gluten in corn and soy or is it the glyphosates? And we don't know. And I mean the glyphosates, which is what you get in Roundup is the scariest thing going on. It changes the gut microbiome.

Robert Glazer: Let's assume people have no, will you take it up?

JJ Virgin: Yeah, I'm going to take this down to fifth grade.

Robert Glazer: And where Roundup even comes. I don't even people know that it's 90% of the U.S. wheat crop, right?

JJ Virgin: Yeah. So here's the challenge is we use these pesticides to kill the weeds around a crop. But they get into the soil, and they get into the crop, and they get into you. And they get into the cows and they get into the chickens. So they're in everything now. And when you ingest them, they are going to damage you there. These are weed killers. They're built to kill things and now they're in you. And they're changing your gut microbiome. They're killing off the good bacteria in your gut.

JJ Virgin: And it turns out, we're going to find I think in the next five to 10 years that everything is about the gut microbiome. We have more bacteria than we have cells. And this bacteria now, they control your blood sugar, they control your mood, they can control your weight. Everything we're finding is linked to your gut microbiome. And one of the big things that starts to shift it are these glyphosates. And it's the pesticides that you keep hearing about Monsanto and Roundup. That's where the glyphosate is coming from. And when you think about they're spraying it on the crops, it's getting into the soil. Then the soil, the water runs into ... so even if you were having an organic farm, if you're downstream from another crop that's got Monsanto sprayed Roundup, guess what you're getting? And then you've got animals eating this. I mean, look at what they're feeding cows and pigs, and chickens. They feed them soy and corn, and they brag about it. "I love corn fed beef." I'm like, "Who wants corn fed beef? I don't want corn fed beef."

Robert Glazer: Right. The restaurants do brag about it. And someone once told me that the mechanism by which Roundup attacks the bugs is to break down their intestines, right? It's not toxic. Well, the stories of the salespeople drinking, I don't think it's toxic in the short term. But yeah, I've seen some correlation graphs of the use of, I mean some disturbing stuff if you look them up.

JJ Virgin: Here's the challenge too. Is we've got this toxicology going on in our, I call us, we're all like our own little chemistry labs. Right? Not only is your body a chemistry lab, it's also history book. Our detoxification systems were never built to handle the level of toxicity that we are getting hit with. It is absolutely insane. Besides, let's not even talk about like 5G [inaudible] and all that.

Robert Glazer: Yeah.

JJ Virgin: Just the chemical toxicity from the water, and the air, and all the dry cleaning, and the cleaning fluids, and everything. So we get all of that stuff into our body. And if you are not getting it out on a regular basis, your body stores it into your fat. And then your body starts to cool you down. Because if you don't want to have this circulating, so your body wants to store it away in the fat and make it harder for you to lose weight.

JJ Virgin: It's one of the reasons why if you want to go and lose body fat, the first thing that you have to ensure is that you are a good detoxifier. Because if you start to free up fat, you free up toxins. And if you have not put the nutrients on board because detoxification's a nutrient dense process. It's not like go on a juice cleanse. The worst thing you could possibly do is ever go on a juice cleanse. Besides hijacking your blood sugar, you don't have the amino acids on board to pull the toxins out of your body. It's this stupidest, whenever I hear these juice cleanses, it makes me just want to rant. Juice cleanses are right there with the [inaudible] and artificial sweeteners. If you look at some of the worst things that we can do, juice cleanses are right up there at the top.

Robert Glazer: Yeah, there's a lot of bad info out there. You mentioned, I think it was The Virgin Diet before, how it was designed to figure out what works for you. Can you explain that a little more? If someone's listening to this and like, "I've got acid reflux and eczema, what do I do? How do I isolate?" Because look, I've been trying to figure out some problems I have and the multi-variant and trying to isolate has been really, really hard. Because there's a lot of different factors and I've gone across spectrums of doctors and nutritionists. And other than eliminating and trying one thing at a time, it can get complicated. So it sounds like you've created a system for this.

JJ Virgin: Yes. Now here's the thing. I love functional medicine doctors. I refer to them all the time. This to me is the thing you do before you go because it will make life so much easier. Where this came out of was I was going in, I used to teach at class called Overcoming Weight Loss Resistance. It was a two day workshop. I taught it to doctors all over the country. One part of that was figuring out your food intolerances because they can be inflammation and weight gain. Part of that was I was looking at a bunch of food sensitivity tests. So I had the opportunity to look at hundreds of food sensitivity tests, but then also talk to all these doctors running them as well. So literally I had the intel of thousands of tests. And what I saw was the traditional elimination diet, which has been used for decades to help people get healthier, had these foods being pulled out that I never saw people reacting to on tests. It was citrus and berries, and very rarely do you see that. Those are outliers.

JJ Virgin: What I did see was that gluten, which is a different type of test, 40% of the people I saw had some kind of an intolerance to gluten. Now there's also straight out celiac, which is like 1%. But then about 40% were intolerant. But what I found was when people pulled that out, almost everybody felt better. Again, it might be the glyphosate, it might be the Roundup. But it was gluten, dairy, eggs, corn, soy, peanuts. So at first, I started just pulling those foods out of the diet. Now I pulled all of them out 100%, because even a little bit will trigger that immune response again. I pulled them all out for at least three weeks to give your body time to get rid of all the built-up immune complexes, and get the antibodies gone that are lying in wait to protect you. And then at the end of those three weeks, I have you go back one by one and with a three to four day washout.

JJ Virgin: So you'll test a food. You will test it for three days in a row. At the point that you start to notice any symptoms at all, you stop. So if your weight goes up, that's a sign of inflammation. If your joints ache if you've got gas and bloating, if you've got headaches, fatigue, your skin breaks out. So the minute you start to notice that, you stop. And depending on the symptoms, if you've got severe symptoms, it stays out. If after four days you noticed just the teensiest bit, well that's something you could potentially rotate back into your diet. And we do that food by food.

JJ Virgin: So I started doing this online with thousands of people. And what I discovered pretty quickly is that when I pulled out these foods, first of all, I had to give

options that you could put in. The Virgin Diets built on swaps. So you're going to pull out the eggs, have a smoothie for breakfast. You're going to pull out the pasta, have rice pasta, or use butternut squash noodles, right? So I had all these swaps built in. But what I noticed was people were eating a load of sugar.

JJ Virgin: Now I'm not a sugar eater. I don't like sugar, I don't like sweet stuff. So I was like, "What are they doing?" So that's why I have dropped seven foods and sugar is the final one. And really when you look at it, sugar, and especially fructose is going to make your gut more permeable and create food intolerance. So it's pull out those seven foods, swap in foods that help heal and reduce inflammation. Do that for at least three weeks because the antibodies that your body has kicked up to protect you go away, and immune complexes come back down, and then go back. And I have you connecting the dots with those symptoms and your weight, and the food.

JJ Virgin: So that to me, this is super empowering because it's a very different discussion. When you know if I eat a pizza, my skin is going to break out, my joints are going to ache, and I'm going to gain three pounds by eating two pieces of pizza. You're not going to do it.

Robert Glazer: Well you finally understand the cause and effect.

JJ Virgin: Yeah, you do. Right? So that's what it was designed to do. And then like first time I did it, I had a big reaction to eggs, which was really a bummer because I think eggs are one of nature's perfect foods, except we've managed to really mess them up. And if you look at it now, unless you're eating pastured eggs, do not touch eggs because you've got chickens who are being fed that really crappy glyphosate [inaudible] and soy, they're not fed what they normally, by the way, what chickens normally eat is whatever chickens can find. They're scrappy. But I found that I couldn't eat eggs. I had to go through and really heal my gut, and then I could go back and do it.

JJ Virgin: But we're also, if you look at it, we're supposed to eat seasonally, local, organic, and rotate our foods. We're not supposed to be eating the same darn four things. Gluten, dairy, eggs, soy. Corn, peanuts, every single day, which is what we do.

Robert Glazer: Yeah. When you can't eat any of those, you start to learn what else that substitutes them.

JJ Virgin: But there's lots of options. When I first started this, Robert-

Robert Glazer: They're just harder, right? And that's not an excuse, but all that stuff is easy and fast for people.

JJ Virgin: Stop whining. It's not harder. It was harder seven, eight years ago when I first started. 10 years ago when I first started pulling out all this stuff. It was super

hard. Coconut milk was in a can in the Asian part of the store, there was no milk that you could find. And soy sauce, coconut aminos. You could not find those. Now all of a sudden we have all these different variations of pasta, noodles, everything from ready-made butternut squash noodles in the grocery store. I mean, that is so awesome. We didn't have any of that. We have lentil pasta, all sorts of crazy stuff,. So it's a lot easier than it used to be.

JJ Virgin: Here's the thing, it's hard at first because you're basically learning a new language. We're very habitual. When you look at people who are healthy, they have consistently good habits. So it's just learning new habits. It's learning which other choices. And I find for most people, when they make that shift, right? They go, "You know what? I actually like this better." It's just learning new foods. It's learning to choose, say avocado oil instead of corn oil.

Robert Glazer: Right.

JJ Virgin: That's all.

Robert Glazer: That is how I meant it. I was less whining for myself.

JJ Virgin: I was trying to bust you a little bit. Whining for everybody else.

Robert Glazer: I was trying to play the persona of someone listening and saying, "Oh wow, but what am I going to eat?" But I agree with you, even I started eating a lot less dairy two years ago. And just the coconut yogurt that I would have now tastes totally different than the stuff that was available two years ago. It's advancing quickly.

JJ Virgin: Yup. Tastes delicious now. Remember way back when you tried to find any kind of alternative nut milk, anything? Nut milk, so delicious dairy free, one gram of sugar ice cream is amazing. And now there's these smoked provolone nut cheeses that are incredible because now there's the demand for all of this.

Robert Glazer: There's more almond milk variety than craft beer at this point I've noticed. It's like each week someone's like, "I found that," I'm like, "I've never heard of that one." It is interesting. So we're talking about food, but let's talk about the exercise and stress components too. People are under more stress than they've ever been for not a lot of good reasons. So how does the stress degrade their health and where does exercise, and can you explain the biological counterbalances that we need to kind of keep this stuff in equilibrium?

JJ Virgin: Yeah, stress and toxins are the two biggest things taking us down. Because when you look at it, our bodies were designed tens of thousands of hundreds of thousands of years ago. They were not designed in the last hundred years. When all of a sudden we have lights, and we have 5G, and we have Roundup. They were not designed to handle all of this stuff. So when you look at it, and I

also think we have a culture that celebrates overworking, that celebrates being so stressed. And I've got so much to do. That's some kind of cool thing.

JJ Virgin: I feel like there's a little bit of a counterculture coming on with meditation, and tapping. So I feel like we're starting to get to it. But if you look at it stress, even if you were eating correctly and exercising correctly. If you are under stress and you are not getting good sleep, because if you're under stress, you're not sleeping well. You will be at risk for diabetes and obesity.

JJ Virgin: When you're under stress, your body starts to break down muscle. It raises blood sugar. In fact, I can see this in lab tests all the time. I'll see someone who's got really good triglycerides, the fat in their blood. That looks great, their cholesterol looks great, and their insulin levels look good. But their blood sugar is elevated and it's elevated because of stress, because your body is like, "I need to run from the tiger, break down muscle, and dump that into the blood stream so I can run away."

JJ Virgin: So you're breaking down muscle, you're lowering testosterone. If you look at what stress does, it makes you age faster. It shrinks what's called your telomeres, the end caps of your genes. So it makes you age faster. It makes your gut more permeable. It lowers your testosterone, so it makes you lose your sex drive. It starts to break down muscle. There's nothing positive here with this.

JJ Virgin: Now, here's the difference though is you want a little bit of stress like what exercise does. When you do resistance training, you put your body under stress temporarily and then it rebuilds to get stronger. That's the kind of stress we want, and that's why I like doing short burst training or high intensity interval training and resistance training because it basically teaches your body how to handle stress and get stronger.

Robert Glazer: Yeah. All right everyone, we're going to take a quick break for a word from our sponsors, and we'll be right back. When you started your business, I'm sure you didn't dream about all those admin tasks like drafting proposals and contracts, and tracking down payments. Of course you didn't, and that's why you need HoneyBook. HoneyBook's an innovative online management tool that organizes your client communications, booking contracts and invoices all in one place. It makes it really easy to run your business better. Professional templates, e-signatures, and built in automation keep everything on track and make you look good. They can even consolidate services you already use, such as QuickBooks, Google Suite, Excel, and MailChimp. And that's why it's the number one choice for client and business management for freelancers and business owners. And right now, HoneyBook is offering our listeners 50% off when you visit honeybook.com/elevate. Payment is flexible and this promotion applies whether you pay monthly or annually. So go to honeybook.com/elevate for 50% off your first year. That's honeybook.com/elevate. And we're back with JJ Virgin.

Robert Glazer: So flipping again for a sec, one of your recent books, Warrior Mom actually focused on your personal story, including parenting. Can you talk a little bit about the story behind that and your inspiration to write that book?

JJ Virgin: Yes. The inspiration to write that book is something I hope no one ever has the inspiration for, because it's like that book ... when I was writing The Virgin Diet and I was actually a couple of weeks from pub day. And I had invested every dime I had into making that book go big, and I had done a public television special. I'd created a really big online book launch. I had Brendon Burchard as my coach. I mean I had done everything to make that book go big. And I was the sole financial support for my family and a single mom, boys 15 and 16 years old. And my 16 year old son, a couple of weeks before this book is coming out, was crossing the street in our neighborhood, and he was hit by a car going, we estimate 40 miles an hour. Hit and run. She got out of the car, looked, got back in her car, drove off. Thankfully a neighbor saw all this, pulled his truck up to protect my son, and called 9-1-1.

JJ Virgin: He was airlifted to the local hospital. When we got to the local hospital, they told us that with the torn aorta that was going to rupture sometime in the next 24 hours if it wasn't repaired, and his multiple brain bleeds, he was in a deep coma. And 13 fractures, skin literally sticking through his leg. I remember looking at him and his tibias, his shin bones were sticking through his skin. He had both his femurs, his thigh bones were broken in half. So everything was bleeding. He had road rash covering half of his body, glass sticking out of him. And the doctor said, "You're going to have to let him go. We can't do the surgery he needs here. He'd never survive the airlift to the next hospital. And even if he were to survive it, he wouldn't survive that surgery. And even if he were to survive that, he'd be so brain damaged, it wouldn't be worth it." To which my 15 year old son standing next to me said, "Well maybe there's a 0.25% chance he'd make it?" And the doctor said, "Yeah, that sounds about right." And he goes, "Well, we'll take those odds."

JJ Virgin: So I went into full mama, mama bear warrior mom, protective mode of we are overruling you. My ex-husband who's a med mal trial attorney, he started throwing out all of these very litigious terms. And lo and behold, he got him airlifted to the next hospital, where it was an entirely different scene. He got airlifted to the number two trauma center in the country, and there was a doctor, Dr. Carlos [Donayre] who got the facts about this at midnight, accepted the case on behalf of the hospital, recruited five surgical teams between midnight and 5:00 AM, found a stent that was no longer even available and only supposed to be used in adults and said he'd ask for forgiveness later, and did all of this. And when we walked into the hospital at 5:00 AM, he's like, "Don't worry, I got this. I do this all the time." I'm like I don't know who this guy is, but I'm going to believe him.

JJ Virgin: So yeah, he did the surgery. Came out to tell us that [Grant] was fine. He's like, "Okay, stent's in, he's fine." And he goes, "I don't know about his brain though. I'm just the plumber."

JJ Virgin: So Grant was in a coma for weeks and then in the hospital for months. Lots of surgeries. He had a crushed heel. Again, he had those two femurs that were broken in half. It was just crazy what was going on. But I made a decision that first day in the hospital after I got over a total freak out about the whole thing. Don't think I was going, "I'm going to think positively." No. I went completely like, what the hell do I do?

JJ Virgin: But after that freak out, I stood there and I went all right. In order to pull this off, because if the book doesn't go, I'm the financial support for this family. I will be bankrupt and I will not be able to provide. I'm going to make sure, I told Grant, I said, "Your name means warrior. You're going to be 110%. I'm going to fight for you. You have to fight for you, and we are going to do this." And he squeezed my little hand even though he was in a deep coma and supposedly couldn't respond.

JJ Virgin: And I just realized that in order to pull that off, I was going to have to put my self care above everything else. Because if I got sick, I wasn't going into the pediatric ICU. And I had to make life and death decisions on a regular basis. And I had a little interview room, they set up for me at Harbor-UCLA and I was doing interviews for my book. So I had to make the book go in order to pay for my son's bills, and I had to be there for my son. I wasn't leaving. So the only way I was going to pull this off is if I was eating right and exercising. I was running up and down the hospital stairs. I was getting my eight hours of sleep every night, and I was doing all these things to manage stress. Like I was doing-

Robert Glazer: I was going to say stress doesn't help you in this situation. Right?

JJ Virgin: Here's the thing. When you really get down to stress, unless you're say a Navy SEAL who's in combat. But for most of us, it's a completely mental game. And I was very fortunate that this was not my first rodeo. When you really look at life, to me, becoming more successful purely means you become more resilient. I don't know any person out there who is super successful who hasn't gone through just a bunch of crap, really ridiculous stuff. I don't know anybody. And the people who are successful learn to build bigger and bigger stress tolerance.

JJ Virgin: Now, I had gone through some massively stressful things in my life already and I had done a lot of mindset development work from the time I was 30 years old. So it was in me. I didn't have to go, "All right. Time to learn to meditate." Nope. I already had in me all this mindset stuff. So it was my nature to look at the situation and go, "What can I do here? What is the big goal?" My immediate thinking once we got through the first oh my gosh was okay, you're going to be 110%. What do I need to do that? And that was just what I did every day. How do I get him to be 110%? How do I get him to be 110%? And it's a very different operating principle than how do I keep him alive? Because I saw a lot of kids up there in that pediatric ICU who were in wheelchairs, and paralyzed, and that was not where I was going.

Robert Glazer: Yeah. And look, what you were dealing with is not a first world problem. I think that's a real problem. The stress level that I see among parents today dealing with kids who have very first world problems and probably who are exuding more stress and energy and whatever than you had trained yourself to use trying to save your son's life. It's a huge problem today. I see people so worked up over something like in a in an affluent suburban neighborhood and can't step back and be like this is a first world problem. It does not deserve my fight or flight reaction.

JJ Virgin: Everything's perspective. I remember early on as a trainer, I had all of these super high profile CEOs, and actors. And then I had this one gal and she was a doctor's wife, and she lived in a very affluent area in Westlake Village, California. And she had a huge multimillion dollar house. And I came over to see her, and this was our first meeting. And she was a complete basket case. So stressed out, so struggling. Why? Because her daughters bat mitzvah was coming up. I didn't even know how to respond to this. I mean I was going that?

Robert Glazer: This was before your situation though, right?

JJ Virgin: This was before my son. But I remember just thinking hey, I'd already been through some pretty stressful stuff. But for her, this was her son getting in a hit and run, you know what I mean? That's why I realized gosh, all of this stuff really is a mental game when you come down to it. Whether it's dealing with looking at your son on a stretcher, hovering between life and death. And how you show up is your decision. And that's when I realized wow, we can control how we show up.

Robert Glazer: Yeah. And how and where we use our energy, right? Energy is, it's a limited amount each day.

JJ Virgin: So I had a great, I love that quote by Wayne Dyer that says, "When you squeeze an orange, you get orange juice. What do you get when you're squeezed?" I had someone working for me who did something totally out of integrity and illegal. And when I said, "What are you doing?" And he said, "It's because my dad was dying and I was super stressed." I go, "What happens next time you get stressed?" "I'll never get stressed like this again." I go, "But it's okay that you did that because you were stressed?"

Robert Glazer: Yeah.

JJ Virgin: It's not okay. That doesn't allow you to go and do false billing or anything. No, no way. You can't do that, you know?

Robert Glazer: Yeah. And one of my mentors Warren Rustand he always when he's speaking, he offers people \$10,000 if they can come back in the room with a can of stress to make the point that it is not an external thing. It is an internal reaction. And yeah, some of us, there are people who get stressed dealing with their logistical

coordination of their yachts and mansions out there. And then there's people that-

JJ Virgin: Yeah, that's very stressful.

Robert Glazer: Yeah. Stress trying to find food. But in seriousness, they're having the same biological reaction, both of those situations. Right?

JJ Virgin: Yeah, exactly. That's why it's so cool because once you know that, you realize that this is within your, so much of this is within your control. It's incredible. Right? You just sometimes have to step out of the situation. That's what I had to do. When I was standing in that hospital looking at the situation and listening to this doctor who was telling me how my son was going to die. I took a break. I went outside, I stood there in the super quiet. And I basically said, "Grant, what do you want me to do?" And I heard this big fight for me. And that's when I just went back and went, "All right, this is what we're doing." But it's sometimes just remove yourself from the crazy situation. I've learned, one of the biggest things I've learned in life is to never hit send on the email sometimes.

Robert Glazer: Some of the best emails I've ever written are still in my draft folder.

JJ Virgin: Right? Yeah. But you just needed to do it for you. And then to process it and go, "Wait a minute." And I think one of the most important qualities that we can have as human beings is the quality of empathy. Because we see it from our place, but we don't know what's going on with that other person. This morning I walked in, I need to get a PO box in Tampa. And I walk in and this gal is ignoring me, not paying any attention. And we got in there right at eight because we had a limited amount of time. We need to get this thing done. And then I overhear her, and her son had just gotten in a car accident.

Robert Glazer: Yeah.

JJ Virgin: Right? And I'm like, all right this is clearly not a good time. We'll let her do her thing. We can do this later. You know? It's like be empathetic. We don't know what's going on in that person's life.

Robert Glazer: Yeah. One of the things I've come to when I talk about people, I think emotional capacity is something that you can train. Just like physical capacity. You lift a weight everyday, you can lift more. We can train how we use our energy and our emotional capacity. And one of the litmus tests I've been saying a lot I and I look at is the rain. I think there are people who really obsess about the rain and weather, and it's going to rain, and it just mess up. And there's people like it's going to rain today. I'm either going to get wet, or I'm going to wear a [inaudible] it's not something they control. So [inaudible] versus people that they just can't get off their weather app and are actually worrying about something that's going to happen that they can't control. And somehow that for

me has become very, an illuminating thing on how I see people where they've evolved their ability to cope and process with something that they don't control.

JJ Virgin: Yeah. And just get, the other day we were in Miami and we were coming to Tampa, and we got out on the tarmac. And the pilot came on. He said, "All right, they just closed the airport in Tampa. We're going to hang here." I'm like, "Okay, I can do some work here." And then I get a text from another buddy going, "I'm stuck on the tarmac." And I'm like, "Do some work. It's fine."

Robert Glazer: BLOWing a gasket, right? Yeah.

JJ Virgin: Big deal. You didn't just crash. Hello.

Robert Glazer: All right. So last question for you, JJ. I always preface this by saying it could be singular or a repeated one. But what is the personal or professional mistake that you've learned the most from?

JJ Virgin: This is so funny. This came up the other day and I was like going, I tend to move off of those things so quickly and forget they ever happen. But there is one, and I view it in a very different way. The biggest challenge I've had in all that I've done is putting people into places, into roles in my business that they shouldn't be in and then not recognizing it soon enough to really free them up to where they should be, which is not there. Right?

JJ Virgin: So you hire someone, and you just don't remove them fast enough. And I think we need to think of this in a very different way. It's not you firing them, it's not them being bad. They're in the wrong position. It's just like when a relationship doesn't work. For the most part, it's not because one person sucks. It's because it was a mismatch.

JJ Virgin: My ex husband's an awesome human being. I told my new husband, my forever husband. I said, "Listen, just so you know, holidays, my ex husband lives down the street. We hang out together, we have holidays together, and he's a really good friend, and he'll probably be in the wedding," which he was. And he's like, "Okay." And they hang out now too. And he's a great guy, we just were a mismatch. So often in businesses, if the person you hired or you're in a position it's not working, it's just you're not a bad person. You aren't lame, it's just not the right place for you to be. And the sooner you can remove that person from that position, the better. That's the biggest thing I've done is they say hire slow, fire fast. I hire fast, fire slow. So it's flipping that equation.

Robert Glazer: I resonate with a lot of what you said there. So JJ, how can people get ahold of you and your work?

JJ Virgin: Probably JJ Virgin is the hub for it. If they're a health entrepreneur, Mindshare Collaborative.

Robert Glazer: Okay, great. Well JJ, thank you for sharing your story with us. You've innovated our understanding of one of the most important things in life, which is our health. And I think you've done a great job helping people understand the holistic importance of a healthy lifestyle and the way that our physical health affects our performance and our mental wellbeing. So thank you for sharing your insights today.

JJ Virgin: Awesome. Thank you.

Robert Glazer: All right, to our listeners, thanks for tuning in to the Elevate podcast. We'll include links to JJ and her books on the detailed episode page at robertglazer.com. If you enjoyed today's episode, I have a huge favor to ask. Love if you could take a few seconds to leave a review for the show. It really helps new users discover this great content. And our goal is to make an impact. So if you're listening on Apple Podcast, all you have to do is hit the library icon, click on Elevate, and scroll down and leave your review. If you're using a different service, we have a bunch of ways to connect to review right on the podcast link at robertglazer.com. Thank you again for your support. Until next time, keep elevating.