



A POWERLIFTING VEGAN'S GUIDE TO THE LONGEVITY LIFESTYLE

JOHN SOLLEDER



Longevity lifestyle isn't just a buzzword—it's the daily discipline of building health that lasts. In this energizing episode, [John Solleder](#), wellness expert, author, entrepreneur, and competitive powerlifter at 64, shares the deeply personal story behind his transformation and commitment to raw veganism, resistance training, and mindset mastery. From his early health struggles to world-class athletic achievements, John breaks down practical tools for aging with energy, clarity, and purpose—covering everything from cold plunges and saunas to simple ways to stay strong at home. Whether you're 40 or 80, John's message is a masterclass in living fully alive at every age.

The information presented in Fully Alive is for educational and informational purposes only and is not intended as a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified healthcare provider with any questions you may have regarding a medical condition or treatment and before making changes to your health regimen. Guests' opinions are their own and do not necessarily reflect those of the podcast host, production team, or sponsors.

Watch the episode here

```
<iframe width="560" height="695"
src="https://www.youtube.com/embed/c1Bt_Nc117s?list=PLtxMGw-aZvh
zKQbWjAulC2NDOOrJwWjPJE" title="" frameborder="0"
allow="accelerometer; autoplay; clipboard-write;
encrypted-media; gyroscope; picture-in-picture; web-share"
```

```
referrerpolicy="strict-origin-when-cross-origin"
allowfullscreen></iframe>
```

Listen to the podcast here

```
<iframe scrolling="no"
src="https://player.podetize.com/?id=kN6o5P_8f&epmode=true"
width="100%" height="200" frameborder="0" title="ShowCastR™
player"></iframe>
```

A Powerlifting Vegan's Guide To The Longevity Lifestyle With John Solleder

Welcome back to Fully Alive, the show where we explore the cutting-edge science and timeless wisdom that can help you live healthier, happier, and longer. Our guest is a powerhouse in every sense of the word. [John Solleder](#) is an author, an entrepreneur, a wellness expert, and a competitive power lifter who, at age 64, is still out there dominating masters track meets and lifting like a man half his age. John's real strength goes far beyond the gym.

With a background in finance, herbal, pharmacology, and sports nutrition, he brings decades of insight into what it means to age with energy, clarity, and purpose. From cold water therapy to saunas to root vegetables, we're going to cover it all. I promise you'll walk away from this episode feeling both inspired and equipped. Whether you're 40, 60, or in your 80s, John's message is clear. The number on your driver's license is irrelevant. You can train your body, renew your mind, and live life with full intensity at any age. Let's jump into this conversation with John Solleder.

“

John Solleder is living proof that with purpose, discipline, and grit, you can build the kind of health and strength that defies age and expectations.



John, thank you so much for being here with us. It's such a privilege to have you on. Ever since our conversation, I've been excited to have this opportunity to speak with you and for our audience to learn from you. Thanks so much for taking the time to be with us.

I appreciate the invitation. I can't wait. I was excited, too. I walked into the house after we talked and told my wife, "This was one of the best discussions I've had in a long time about health and longevity." I love what you guys are doing and what you stand for.

John's Journey: From Injury To Wellness Entrepreneur

Thanks, John. You have this unique blend of backgrounds from finance and working in the supplementation industry, herbal pharmacology, and entrepreneurship. You're an author. You've done

all these amazing things, like sports nutrition. Can you walk us through your journey? What led you into the world of health and longevity? Maybe share a little bit of your background and how you ended up where you are now.

Like a lot of people, I was led to a health journey because I wasn't healthy. Some people are gifted. Their entire life, they're healthy. You look at people like Jack LaLanne, Jay "the Juiceman" Kordich, and others who were led to what became careers for them because they were unhealthy themselves. That was my journey. I was born a long time ago, in 1961. I was knock-kneed and pigeon-toed as a child. I had to wear these braces at night. These were braces that connected my feet to straighten out my legs.

Do you mean like Forrest Gump?

It was not that bad. They were only at night that I had to wear them, but they were corrective shoes that had a bar on them to hold my legs and straighten them. When I started to play baseball when I was eight, I had to wear corrective bars on my legs so that I could play. I was a good ball player. I was blessed with some natural talent in that sport. After eight until about thirteen or fourteen, I was fine. I got involved in wrestling. I played football. I was pretty good at both of those things.

I was very devoted to them. I started to lift weights at a young age. At thirteen years old, I had a legitimate 300-pound bench press. I was that dedicated to sports that I thought, at the very least, that I would play in college. You never know what's going to happen after that. At the beginning of my sophomore year of high school, I got clipped in a football game. I got hit in my lower back. I was chasing a ball carrier, and a guy hit me in the lower back. I thought that I got dinged. In those days, you were dinged for everything.

I came off the field, and all of a sudden, I collapsed. I had no power in the right side of my body. They took me to the emergency room and did X-rays. It turns out I had a disease called spondylolisthesis, which is a mouthful. That was the end of my football career that day. I didn't know it that day. As a result of that, at seventeen, five days into my seventeenth year on the planet, I had corrective surgery for that. I had two spinal cord operations. I did what a lot of young people do stupidly. I got involved with alcohol. Fortunately, I never used drugs. Drugs always scared me, and I'm glad they did.

Alcohol didn't scare me. I embraced it wholeheartedly. On my twentieth birthday, I looked at my dad, who had been an alcoholic and a heavy smoker his whole life. I realized his life wasn't going to be very long. He was only in his early 50s. I said, "I could repeat that pattern. I could have that wonderful family tradition that he had established with that, or I could change something." I looked at him at twenty. I said, "I am not going to do that." That was my last drink.

I've never touched alcohol since. Even when I got married and had a champagne toast, my wife had it. I didn't. I had water. I became very dedicated to my health. Ironically, when I was also twenty, I found my first business venture. It happened to have been in the supplementation field. A guy I'd wrestled with in high school came in and told me about one of these network marketing things. It was \$32 to join, and I did. It turns out I was good at selling, so I made \$800 my first month doing that.

Ironically, Ronald Reagan spoke at my college commencement. Reagan talked about mentorship during his life, that in 1932 height of the Depression, he ran into a guy at the swimming hole. He was a lifeguard the previous summer. That gentleman guided him. They used to call him Dutch in those days. He said, "What you need to do, Dutch, is find a business that you're passionate about and then find somebody to mentor you in it." That's basically what was happening with me.

I heard President Reagan say those words in May of 1983. I like the fact that your readers are a little older because they remember May of 1983. For some young people, I tell them about May of 1983, and it might as well have been another planet that we live on. Most of your readers remember May 1983 and President Reagan. By June of 1983, I went to my very first business meeting. It was up in Hartford, Connecticut.

At that meeting, the fellow doing the meeting became my first real mentor in that particular business. He said these words, "For things to change, you have to change. For things to get better, you have to get better." I said, "That's in every aspect of my life. I need to make John the very best that John could be, physically, mentally, and spiritually." I was successful with that company. That company had some problems with the FDA a couple of years later, so that business ended for me.

I stayed in the health field. I continued to explore supplementation. What I didn't do was I didn't explore nutrition, per se. I figured if I took enough vitamins, I could eat a bunch of junk. I could get away with it because I'm young, I'm athletic, I'm working out every day, and I'm past the back surgery. I got very involved in the sport of judo. I earned my black belt in judo from the Kodokan over in Japan. I still do love that sport. I can't do it anymore, unfortunately, because of my age and my joints. Nonetheless, I got involved in judo and eventually in Brazilian jujitsu and also sambo, which is a form of wrestling and judo combined that the Russians created as their martial art.

I got very involved in those things. If you're going to do those things, you need to workout, you need to support it with weight, you need to support it with cardio, etc., as well as supplementation. Once again, you can't be drinking, smoking, and doing things like that that are adverse to your health. It's a total picture. That's where I started as a young person. I'm sure you're going to have some questions on this because we discussed it the other day. As I've gotten older, I've adopted a whole lot more disciplines that have helped me to have a healthy, so far, early 60 part of my life.

Age Is Just A Number: Competing As A Master Athlete At 64

Thanks for sharing that. I always find it so fascinating where people's passions come from. It sounds like yours was born out of your pain, some disease, and trauma there, your father passed, and everything else. Congrats on never drinking again. That's a big accomplishment. You're 64 and you're still competing in masters track meets and powerlifting. You mentioned in our conversation earlier that we want to keep thinking like athletes as we age. What keeps you motivated? What drives you to keep pushing yourself like an athlete? You are still an athlete. Maybe tell us a little bit about your powerlifting and masters track meets.

Here's what happened with that. At 51, I realized I couldn't compete in judo anymore. I could. There's masters for judo. For anybody who plays judo, they're going to go, "You can do masters." Yes, but I started to have a lot of issues with my hips. I didn't want to take a breakfall. There's a thing called a breakfall in judo. It was like, "I don't see me doing that anymore. My hips were getting bad." I did what a lot of people do. I started to get lazy.

I was like, "I need something else to do." My daughter had tried track and field in grammar school. I had a shot put sitting in the closet. I was never in track when I was a kid. I was all baseball, wrestling, and football. It was three standard sports. I certainly knew what track was. I followed it. I knew some of the great athletes in it. I said, "Let me go out and start playing with this thing." I had no idea what I was doing, and no idea how to throw it. I know it's not a throw. It's a shot put. You're putting it. If you throw it, you will destroy your shoulder. I started playing around with that.

I was in Houston for a meeting for one of my businesses. I noticed a sign that says that there's a powerlifting meet taking place the next day. This was on a Thursday. On Friday, we're going to be at the weigh-ins for this powerlifting meet. Saturday was going to be the meet. I asked the guy behind the desk, "Where's this location?" He said, "It's the next mall over. You can walk to it." I walked over there. I saw this little gym.

I went in and talked to the fellow who is running the meet, who's a great powerlifter. He was a guy by the name of Tiny Meeker. There is nothing tiny about Tiny, by the way. He's one of the first 1,000-pound bench pressers in history. He's a massive guy. Where Tiny comes from, I'm not sure. You're going to have to ask him. He said to me, "Are you lifting?" I said, "Yes, I'm at the gym three or four days a week. I don't bench a whole lot. I do other stuff, but I bench. I know how to bench."

He was like, "Why don't you enter?" I said, "Sure." I entered, and I wound up getting a state record for my age group in my weight class. I didn't bench that much. I think I benched 264 pounds raw. I had no idea what I was doing. I had to borrow equipment from him, like a singlet. You wear a wrestling singlet. I stayed for that meet. I wound up here in Dallas meeting a guy named Mike Womack, who's also one of the first 1,000-pound bench pressers in history.

I said, "I want to get stronger to throw the shot at disc." He was like, "I'll teach you how to bench." I got involved with bench pressing and bench press competitions. I am still doing them at 64. I did one on my birthday weekend. I was 64. It was May 31st. I did that. I benched 350 that day. These numbers aren't massive. There are guys who do more numbers. I have had shoulder problems in my right shoulder. I've had three stem cell procedures for torn rotators in my right shoulder, so I don't go crazy anymore. My all-time great lift was 451. I did that in Tulsa, Oklahoma, a few years ago. You can still compete.

By the way, folks, here's what I'll tell you. If this is something that interests you, the weight doesn't matter. It's you versus the bar. It's like that song in Rocky. It's you against you. I forgot the rest of the words. Don't think, "I hear of another 64-year-old guy doing 700 pounds or something." You don't know their circumstance. You don't know what they're doing. You don't know what they might be on either. You don't know what somebody might be doing, which is jeopardizing their health. That doesn't mean everybody doing massive weights is doing stuff they shouldn't be. Some of them are doing it legit. They train their butts off. They can still do it. Whatever your circumstance is, whether it's powerlifting, masters track, masters swimming, whatever it is, find something.

I've got a friend who started masters swimming. One of my old judo buddies started doing that. His son is a swimmer at West Point. He got his dad into swimming at an old age. What's great is that there are all of these different organizations for masters athletics. There's the [NSGA](#), for example, which is a national organization. There are local organizations. There's Senior Olympics. Challenge yourself. Find something that you want to do. Pickleball has become the rage. That's probably the biggest senior sport out there.

Whatever it is, make it something that you like to do. Otherwise, you're not going to do it. Get passionate about it. Because your license says that you're not an athlete anymore, and because people in your particular sport are 25, doesn't mean that you can't do it. Enjoy it. Push yourself. Get yourself in better shape. Do all the things that come with being in better shape, from your diet to your rest to your training. Make that a lifestyle. I know a lot of senior athletes in a lot of different endeavors who are doing some great things.

I have another friend at the gym who did his first triathlon. He was in his late 50s. He said, "I wanted to always do it my whole life. I had no idea what I was doing." He started to train and did his first mini-triathlon. I have another friend in Germany who is 79. He still does mini-triathlons. Once again,

don't let that number on the license dictate how you think, because how you think is everything. If you think, "My license dictates that I shouldn't be doing anything but sitting in the corner watching Netflix," you're going to die prematurely. Don't do that to yourself. Take every full advantage.

Tweet: The number on your license shouldn't dictate what you can do.

Here's the other thing. I'm not retired yet. I still am very involved with podcasting. I still own two businesses. I'm still at work every single day. I love to work, by the way. I'm a workaholic. My wife says, if I stop working, I'll probably die, so I'm going to keep working as long as I can. That's me. If you're retired, take full advantage. You worked your whole life to now be in that situation where you've got those extra hours that you can go to the gym, the rink, the swimming center, or whatever it is that you want to do. Maybe it's something that you never had a chance to do. Maybe you were in one sport that you were good at young, and you always said, "I want to try something different." Try it. Always be an athlete. Until the day they close the box on you, be an athlete.

Tweet: Be an athlete until the day they close the box on you.

The Power of Resistance Training: Building A Foundation For

I love that. It is that mindset. It's fun. We can still keep going, doing these great things, learning new skills, and challenging ourselves. Thanks for sharing that. I love how you said, too, that the age on our driver's license is a number. The number on our driver's license is irrelevant. You talked about resistance training being the most important thing we can do as we age. I've heard that from so many experts. It's perfectly aligned with what I'm hearing across the board. I'd love to hear about what made you come to believe that. What does your regimen look like? You're bench pressing 350 pounds. That's pretty amazing.

There are a couple of different things that I want to point out on this. First of all, you're right, Zach. Scientifically, there's so much science to show that resistance training is fundamental to longevity. Lift something. People say, "What should I lift? Do I have to go to a fancy gym?" No. You can find a number of things. You can go to construction sites and find things that they're discarding, like cinder blocks, for example. I've got cinder blocks in my backyard. Sometimes, I'll go at 8:00, 9:00, or 10:00 at night. I'll feel like lifting something. I'll go outside. I'll do some curls with them, or I'll do some farmer's walks with them.

Second thing, I'm a firm believer in what I call farmer's walks that other people might call suitcase carries. It's the same idea. Put something in both hands and carry it. You can carry it by your side, like you would a suitcase, for example, in the airport. The idea is that you're stimulating your heart and your blood flow. All of your upper body skeletal system is engaged, particularly your shoulders, your rhomboids, and your grip strength.

Our grip strength as we get older is important to our longevity. You shake hands with some old men, and you're like, "That guy has got a grip." You shake hands with other old men, and you think you're shaking hands with their wives. Be that guy who still has that firm grip. There's a lot that goes into that mentally. Resistance training is going to help with that. Here's the other thing. You go back to earlier in your life. Whatever your sport was when you were younger, you probably had some level of resistance training to prepare for that sport.

My son was a good hockey player, for example. He did a ton of resistance training. Why? You need grip strength to be able to rip the puck hard. Basketball players use it to be able to grab the ball out of the air

in a rebound. Certainly, in judo, jujitsu, wrestling, and anything like that, you're gripping your opponent. In football, you're using it constantly. Why? If you're defending, you're using your hands one way. If you're on offense, you're using your hands in a protective manner.

Whatever the sport is, you're going to find an application of it. When you were young, you did that to prepare for your particular sporting endeavor. As we get older, it becomes that much more important, even than when you were young, because it's preparing you for life. It's giving you that strength that you're going to need for life itself, whatever life throws at us. As we get older, life does throw a lot. I don't think I've gone a week that I don't hear of another friend that's passed away, about to, or sick somewhere. A lot of times, I do look at their lifestyle. It is not unexpected, but regardless, it is still sad. Unfortunately, as we get older, we know life's not that much fun in that respect.

If you're that guy or that gal that's leading that life, not sedentary, still training, still doing the things that we're talking about, and still vital, you're probably not going to be the person they're talking about that way. You're the one who's going to be hearing that news. I don't mean to make light of it. It's sad. It breaks my heart every time I hear that stuff. I'm sure it does yours, too, as a reader. Be that person who says, "Somehow, I'm ahead of the curve because I'm still doing fill in the blank."

With resistance training, the science is there to prove it. I love to see older people lifting weights. You don't have to be bench-pressing 350 pounds. Maybe you're benching the bar. Maybe you're using dumbbells. Maybe you're using kettlebells. I'm a big believer in kettlebells, by the way. You can buy cheap kettlebells for your home. You don't have to always go to the physical gym. If you belong to one, great. You probably should because they've got adequate equipment. All of them are pretty good as far as the equipment.

Don't use the gym as an excuse. Maybe you live in a place where the weather gets a little crazy in the wintertime. You say, "I don't want to drive in it." I understand that. Have some stuff at home. Have some stuff either in the backyard, the garage, a spare room, or a spare corner of your bedroom. Have something that you can always be lifting, playing with, working with, and also working on that resistance strength, which is also that grip strength. It's all vital to your longevity.

My Plant-Based Transformation: From Cheeseburgers To Raw Vegan

Thank you for sharing that. Like you said, it doesn't have to be complicated. You pick up heavy things and carry them. That's going to stimulate and cause the growth of our muscles, blood flow, and everything else.

Amongst a lot of vehicles that we have here at the house, I've got a 1999 Chevy Silverado. The back of it is filled with rocks and stones that I've picked up at construction sites that are oddly shaped. I will use those things sometimes to do farmer's walks and or curls, to have a different thing. I don't know what they weigh. Some of them are small. Some of them are mid-sized. Some of them are fairly large. Is that a fancy gym? No. Do you know what it costs me? Nothing. Always have that home gym.

The other thing I want to mention is to get some bands. Bands are great. My friend Scott Erickson is also a senior athlete. Scott believes in what he calls micro-workouts. Why? It is because he's also an electrical engineer. He spends a lot of time sitting on the internet and a lot of time at Starbucks. He's always got something that he can sit at his desk and stretch with, pull on, etc. It doesn't have to be elaborate.

We all want to belong to the best gym in town. Maybe that's not practical for financial reasons, or geographically, it's not where it needs to be. You can make do with a lot of stuff. By the way, a good walk

is probably the best exercise any of us can do. You don't have to leave the house. Go out the front door or the back door. Walk in your backyard if it's big enough. If not, find a street that you're comfortable with.

It doesn't have to be complicated. We don't necessarily need the AI-powered Oxford. That would be nice, too. Maybe we can shift gears for a few minutes because you mentioned earlier how nutrition wasn't a big part of what you were focused on. You were just, "I can eat whatever I want because I'm supplementing all these things and exercising." I know that nutrition has become a much bigger deal for you. Maybe you could share a little bit about your journey into becoming a vegan. It's also something interesting that you don't equate most power lifters with eating a raw plant-based diet, a whole food plant-based diet, but you are. I'd love to hear about your experience with that.

There are more of us now than there's probably ever been for a lot of reasons. I might be one of the reasons. You'd be surprised how many NFL players are now vegan as well. Let me tell you my journey on that. I was at a restaurant here. I was eating a four-cheeseburger and a milkshake on a Friday night. I'm not going to tell you it didn't taste good because it did. My son was at a hockey practice. I was sitting there, and I said, "I know this isn't good for me with everything I know about science and nutrition. I know this isn't good for me." Tomorrow was going to be a Saturday. "I'm going to take Saturday. I'm going to not eat meat. I'm not going to go vegetarian. I'm just going to not eat meat for a day. See how I feel."

I didn't feel great, to be honest with you. I felt okay, but I didn't feel great. I said, "Let me try that for a day, just for the heck of it." It's Sunday morning. I was going off to church, and I said to my wife, "I think I'm going to do today, too." She said, "Okay." I was 80 pounds heavier than I am right now at the time. Part of it was weight. What's great with the sports that I play is that you can play heavyweight, and there's no weight limit.

Whether you weighed 250, 350, or 450, you competed against the same guys. That was a good thing in one respect. It wasn't like some of the smaller guys who were always cutting weight to make a weight class. It also meant you didn't worry about the scale like you should have. I said, "Let me check my weight." I was 333 pounds that Saturday morning. I was six feet three. For that level of weight, I was in good shape.

You were strong.

My vital signs and everything else were good, but I was still significantly overweight. I didn't even do it for that, to be honest with you. I did it because the inflammation in my body was getting to me. I said, "If I don't eat meat, maybe the inflammation will get a little bit better." I was in pain. Let's face it, folks. A lot of times, pain is the stimulus. I said, "Let me try it." I got to that Thursday. There's an old saying, "When the student is ready, the teacher will arrive." We've all heard that.

Tweet: Pain is the stimulus—let it lead you to change.

I remember it was Thursday morning. I was on the treadmill at Life Time Fitness here in Dallas. I was walking on the treadmill. I couldn't even run because I was too heavy. I was walking. I was doing my cardio. I was watching this show. There's no sound on the shows, but they have the words because you wear a headset and you can hear them. Otherwise, they have the word translation. Megyn Kelly had a talk show at that time. She shows a picture of these three huge guys. All of a sudden, they come through. They break through like they do at a high school football game when they run through the thing, and they break at the beginning. They come through that. These three guys are no longer obese.

All three are in really good shape. They sit down as she's interviewing them. It turns out they started a running club over in Louisiana. They were related, cousins, brothers, or something. The one guy mentions that one of the things that's been a tool for him is a documentary called Forks Over Knives, which I had never heard of. I came home. I said to my wife, "Can we check Netflix and see if we have this thing, Forks Over Knives?" We did. I watched it that night. I'll never forget Dr. Caldwell Esselstyn from the Cleveland Clinic. He was one of the many doctors there. He was showing a study that in 1939, when the Germans went into Norway, they commandeered all the feedlots, the pigs, the chickens, the cows, etc., from the Norwegian farmers.

In 1939, their cancer rates and heart disease rates were parallel to the United States. What happened was the Germans said, "As long as you guys continue to run your feedlots, we get the pigs, the chickens, and the cows for our army. You can grow root vegetables to feed your family." What are root vegetables? That's your beets, your potatoes, your carrots, things that'll grow out of the ground, your garlicks, your onions, and things like that. By 1944, we showed up to tell the Germans, "It's time to go home, fellows, with the Allies." By the time we showed up, those heart disease and cancer rates were way down in that population. Esselstyn talked about that study. I'm like, "If it's true for them, why wouldn't it be true for me?" I'm not fighting a war.

It made total sense. The science was very clear that he talked about. That's not a one-off. There are thousands of studies consistent with what he talked about. He's 91 and still touring the world giving lectures. The proof is in the pudding there. He adopted this plant-based lifestyle many years ago. His family is all involved with it as well. I saw that documentary. Just talk about timing. If it had been the week before, I may not have been watching her show. I wasn't watching her show, outside of the fact that it was in front of that particular treadmill. I could have been on another treadmill watching ESPN or something and missed it.

That wasn't the thing that convinced me to stay with the lifestyle, but it was consistent with what I was starting to read. I'm a voracious reader. I started to read all kinds of stuff by Dr. Michael Greger, Dr. Colin Campbell, Dr. McDougall, and all of these different plant-based docs. I started to read, listen to their podcasts, and everything else, and say, "These guys aren't crazy." I went back to one of my idols in fitness, who was Jack LaLanne. The great Jack LaLanne had a statement. That statement was, "Nutrition is king. Exercise is queen. You put them together. You build a kingdom." I said, "I'm missing one of those elements."

Tweet: Nutrition is king, exercise is queen—put them together, you build a kingdom.

I've been good with the supplementation. I've been good with the exercise. I've always been religious with my exercise. However, I have to clean up my nutrition. That's what I started to do. I became what we call a junk vegetarian. I wasn't eating meat, but there were a lot of substitutes I was eating that weren't necessarily all that healthy. They were healthier than eating meat, but not healthier than other alternatives I eventually would find out about.

What happened was a fast forward. At the end of '23, I was on Facebook. I joined a lot of Facebook groups. I would suggest this to people. Join some of the Facebook groups that are out there for people over 50, if you're in that group, over 60, if you're in that group, and over 70, if you're in that group. There are a lot of fitness groups. You're going to see people, and you're going to go, "I don't look like that." I don't either. Some of these guys are in really good shape. They look like they came off the stage posing. Most are normal human beings who are into their health as they age.

One of the ones that I joined was a vegetarian group or a vegan group. I don't even remember what it was, to be honest with you. This fellow reached out to me from Argentina. He said, "Have you ever considered going raw vegan?" I wrote him back and I said, "I know what it is, but I haven't. I think it's probably too difficult for my lifestyle." He wrote me back. He said, "I'm starting a group in January. If you're interested, it was \$30. You can join. If you like it, great. If not, just drop out. No big deal."

I did. January 1st, 2024, was my first day eating raw vegan. I'm 95% raw vegan. I occasionally eat cooked food. When I say cooked food, it is cooked vegetables. We've got a special dehydrator that we use to make them in. Technically, they're cooked, but they still qualify as vegan. Are they raw? I don't know. A real raw vegan might want to debate it. I still think that they're raw. That's what I went. Not only did it help me lose more weight and keep it off, but it also started to open my eyes to other things. For example, I did a 21-day water fast.

It was dramatic. Would I suggest you do it? If you ever do, do it. You've got to be medically supervised. I was medically supervised the whole time. It's not something you just do at home. For a short-term, a couple of days fast, you can get away with it. For a long-term one, anything over five days, you want to be medically supervised. I did that. I never thought I was going to do that. That was a game changer. That changed some things in my physiology, for example.

Starting Small: Baby Steps To A Healthier Lifestyle

I'm going to do a five-day one from the 5th to the 10th of July. It is a cleanup one, like a tune-up on a car you do after you do a long-term fast. That opened my eyes to that. I went to Costa Rica for a week-long raw vegetarian seminar that I got back from in early May. I never thought I'd be doing these things. These were not things that I planned on doing. The more you get into these communities, first of all, you're going to meet some wonderful people. That's one thing.

Secondly, you're going to meet people who have walked a similar path. Nobody is judgmental. Let me say that because one of the things your audience might be thinking is, "This all sounds great, but if I did that, my kids or my next-door neighbor are going to yell at me." You're going to find people to support you in these communities that have gone through what you've gone through health-wise. I go back once again to what LaLanne said, "Exercise is king. Nutrition is queen. You put them together. You build a kingdom." That's what I'm trying to do. That's what your readers are trying to do to the best of our ability that we can do it. Everybody is different.

Some people are more disciplined than others. Get some discipline in your health. You're going to find that things start to change. What happens is that incrementally, you want more. Let me give the caution, Zach. If you haven't been to the gym in twenty years, I'm not telling you to go to the gym tomorrow, get on the treadmill, put it at the highest level, put it all the way in the air, and run for an hour. That's not what I'm saying at all. What I'm saying is that for me, it was baby steps on different things. For you, it's probably going to be baby steps for different things. If you haven't trained in a long time, go with the baby steps. If you've never been on a fast, don't go do a 21-day water fast.

FULLY



**Discipline your health
and your life will start
to change.**



Start with a day, maybe.

Start with baby steps, whatever those baby steps are for you. If you haven't walked around the block in ten years, and you're saying, "The only time I see the other side of the block is in my automobile," take your dog for a walk. Take your spouse for a walk. Take your grandkid for a walk. Take yourself for a walk. Get up early in the morning, put your sneakers on, and say, "I'm going to walk to the corner that I can see. I can see the corner of my street here." If I hadn't walked in a long time and I looked at the corner of my street, it's probably 100 yards.

If I say, "I'm going to go to that marker on the corner. I'm going to turn around and come back," I'm going to walk 200 yards, whatever that is in steps, 800 steps or 1,000 steps. That's no big deal. You can do that.

Tomorrow, I will look at the end of the street. I will go, “I’m going to go to the left, to the next corner,” wherever that happens to be for you, where you live. Start with the baby steps. The baby steps are going to make you start feeling better. As you start feeling better, your body is going to tell you, “I want more. I like this. John, Mary, Bob, whatever, you did well yesterday. Today, do a little bit more.”

Before you know it, you’re going to be doing things maybe that you didn’t think you could do anymore because you looked at your license, it said a certain number, and you said, “I can’t do that.” My answer to you is yes, you can. Maybe there are physical limitations. I’ve had multiple surgeries. I get it. I’m not the guy physically I was when I was playing judo and fighting 350-pound guys. I can’t do that anymore. It’s unrealistic, but I can do what I can do.

You can do what you can do. You just have to figure out what that is that you can do. If you haven’t in a long time, do it. If you’re reading this and you’re going, “I’m doing all of this already,” great. Continue to do it, but tell somebody about it. Be an inspiration for other people who are getting up there in years, a little bit. All because our hair is gray, or maybe we don’t have any anymore, doesn’t mean we can’t achieve things physically like a younger person can. It might be different than what they’re doing, but we should do it.

The other thing is this. I’ve always felt like I wanted to be a good example for my children. I don’t have grandchildren yet. I’ve got children. My son is 21, must be 22. He’s at the gym four days a week. He’s always lifting. He’s always doing cardio. He’s always working out. My daughter is 20. Same thing. She’s not a gym person. She’s a bike person. She’s on her bike pretty much six days a week. My older daughter lives in California. She’s at the gym religiously. Everybody eats well. Nobody smokes. To my knowledge, nobody drinks.

I’m sure they’ve all tried it, but they don’t seem like it’s anything. We had a birthday party for my son’s girlfriend at her house. My son was drinking water. I watch, but I don’t watch to be judgmental. I watch to see if I see anything because it runs in our family. It skipped this generation, but it didn’t skip the prior generation type of thing. All that aside, with those good health habits, your kids and your grandkids are watching what you do. If grandma is going to the gym, doing yoga three days a week, walking around the block five days a week, and when you go to her house, she says, “Bring your sneakers,” that’s a good sign. Be that grandma or grandpa.

Tweet: Every generation is watching—your habits become their blueprint.

The Biomarker Boost: Rolling Back Your Biological Age

I love that. Thanks. I’d love to hear a little bit, too. I have one question back to going raw vegan. You’ve been eating a vegetarian and then a vegan diet for eight years. Are you someone who measures your blood biomarkers, your epigenetic age, and things like that? Have you done that previously and then seen an improvement? You’ve lost 80 pounds. That’s huge. That helps, but how are your biomarkers? How has that changed after switching your nutrition?

I’m coming up to my next test. I was 51 with my biomarkers. I was 63 years old, but I showed 51. I’ve got twelve years. I didn’t have that when I started years ago. I can assure you that. I probably didn’t have that last January either. My biomarkers are going backwards.

It is going in the right direction.

I do a couple of other things. I’m a firm cold water advocate.

I wanted to talk a little bit about that, too. When we talked before, you talked a lot about how you do some training in the sauna. You do a lot of cold therapy as well. How's that impacting you? How do you tie those to get them into your regimen?

I started the cold water therapy during COVID. My pool had been frozen. We had this weird weather system in Dallas where everything froze for a week. When it unfroze, I was like, "I'm going to go in the pool." Practical reason, too, was that your pool could crack during that weather because in this part of the country, things aren't built for that. You're in Florida. It gets super cold. A lot of stuff happens because it's not built for what you would build in Minnesota or New York. I went in the pool and thinking, "I'm probably going to get sick when I get out of here," because you are always told, "You're in the cold. You're going to get sick."

I got out, and I told my wife, "I feel great." A couple of weeks later, I was watching Bryant Gumbel's show. He's got Wim Hof on. Here's this guy, a couple of years older. He's climbing the mountain in his shorts to get a broadcast. He's got a parka on. The cameraman and those guys are freezing to death. He's in his shorts. The guy says, "How do you feel?" They're on top of some mountain over in Switzerland. "I feel great." I found out who Wim was and started to do a lot of reading on him and everything that he's done.

Also, there's a Danish scientist. I read a book on cold water swimming. If you think about it, that scientist, a Danish doctor, made a great point. Up until about 100 years ago, everybody was in cold water because there were no hot pipes. It didn't exist. It wasn't like you were going to take a hot shower. You couldn't take a hot shower. It didn't exist. What did our ancestors do when they came from Europe or wherever to America? They bathed in the water. Whatever the water supply was, it was like, "I need my weekly bath." They went in, male and female, including children. We went into cold water. All of a sudden, modern convenience made us weaker.

The cold is very therapeutic. It's great for inflammation. I'm a firm believer in it. Once again, don't rush into it. Wim talks about three minutes, which doesn't sound like a long time, but the first time you're in really cold water, three minutes is a long time. Go in your shower for 30 seconds. At the end of your shower, put it all the way to as cold as you can. Stay in there 30 seconds. If you've got a watch like I do and you can take it in the water, great. If not, count to yourself.

You're going to find that you're invigorated, better than a cup of coffee in the morning. It's going to wake you up. Incrementally, you can increase it from there in the shower. There are a million other things you can do. From Lowe's, I bought a hunter's freezer, like what hunters buy. That's my indoor cold water therapy. Indoor in the winter, I use my pool. There's a lot you can do at home. There are a lot of places that have opened up across the country. There are a lot of franchises with cold water therapy included in them. Check your local thing.

My one caveat is that if you have a heart problem, it is probably not something you want to do. If you don't, check with your doc. If your doc says, "Good idea," go ahead. Doctors are certainly becoming aware of all the science associated with it. On the flip side, this is crazy. I started a thing called [HOTWORX](#), which is a franchise here in Dallas. It's across the country. I started that because my schedule's crazy with all the podcasts and everything else that I do.

I don't want to join an organization that's got a class schedule at 8:00 in the morning or 2:00 in the afternoon, because I may not be able to make that. That particular place has videos that are running. You exercise in 125-degree saunas. They've got yoga. They've got Pilates. I've been doing a lot of cycling

there. I am enjoying the cycling classes. They've got stretch classes and all sorts of things. That's on the other side of it. I'm in the heat, and I'm in the cold.

You're getting that hormesis and those heat proteins, cleansing your body, cleansing out all the toxins, and then getting all the benefits of the cold as well. How often do you do each of those?

I'm doing that pretty much six days a week. I'm lifting. I'm going to head over to HOTWORX. I'm going to do a stretch class with stretch bands this afternoon and a little bit of cycling. That'll be my second workout of the day. I try to get in two workouts a day, minimum 45 minutes to an hour. You don't have to be at the gym for three hours, folks. 45 minutes to an hour once you get a decent shape is adequate, especially if you're over 50. You don't need to be there for hours. A lot of times, schedules dictate that you can't be. Get something in. If you can't get anything in, walking around the block is sufficient. You're moving your body.

Beyond Exercise: The Next Frontier in Longevity - Breathing

This is great. Thanks for sharing all of these amazing practical tips. It's fun to dissect all of this with you and then dive into all of it. I have one final question here. What's on the horizon for you? What are you most excited about as you look out into the future on the horizon? What's coming that excites you in this field of longevity and wellness?

I'm always reading and listening to science. I'm reading a book called [Breath](#) that I just started, which is on breathing, because one thing I don't do well is breathing. That may sound funny. We don't think about breathing, but there are ways to breathe. Wim Hof talks about this. Yoga people talk about this. The Indian cultures talked about this for thousands of years. One of the things that I'm focused on now is learning how to breathe better and deeper because that's not only good for my body, but it's certainly good for my brain as well. The other thing, too, is that there are associations with breathing with Alzheimer's, dementia, Parkinson's, and the other diseases of brain aging. Breathing is vital. That's something that I'm currently focused on.

That's the next thing you're going to add to that regimen.

I have one business that I've backed off on for the last couple of months, and we've backed off more on it. As I've got more time, I might find another sport I like. I always liked bowling, but I don't know how you get healthy bowling because you're in a place that has pizza, soda, and stuff. I'm not sure how you get healthy. I always liked it. I might try that and go on a bowling tournament or something. Who knows? You never know what I might do, but you can bet it's going to be something to be active. If you're blessed to be here a long time, like most of your readers and I have been, take full advantage of it. You worked hard your whole life.

Don't just sit in the chair and wait to die. That is not what you need to do. There's a lot of living to be done past certain ages that maybe our grandparents didn't think about. We live in a different time between modern medicine, modern science, modern exercise, physiology, and modern nutrition science. All of these things that are out there, be an open book to them. Between AI and Google, Facebook groups that you can join, and what you guys are doing, spread the word, for example, on health and longevity for older people. All of these things are out there that our parents or grandparents didn't have the benefit of. Take full advantage of the time that we're living in to build your knowledge base and try some new things. You might make some new friends. You never know.

Tweet: There's a lot of living to be done past the ages our grandparents thought were limits.

Connect with John Solleder: Wisdom & Inspiration for a Fully Alive Life

John, thanks so much for sharing your wisdom, experience, and expertise with us. Where can people connect with you? Where can they get started with you? What are the ways to contact you or get in touch?

Probably, the best bet is JohnSolleder.com. If you want to hear our podcast, it's [@John Solleder](https://www.youtube.com/@JohnSolleder) on YouTube. [Leave Nothing To Chance](#) is how we started that show. There's a long story there. Can I tell a story under one minute?

Of course.

As we get older, pivoting and agility are important. I started my podcast during COVID in 2020 because I had two books that came out almost simultaneously. [Moving Up: 2020 and Beyond](#) came out in December 2019. This one came out in February. Here's the problem. I was supposed to be in 60 cities in 2020 with my business. On the backend, "My new book is out. Bring a hundred with you. Sign them, and everybody else, go to Amazon." I couldn't do that. That was the pivot. The pivot was to podcasting, which we've continued to do.

The agility has come in the last several months. I've learned how to use AI well to reach not only other podcasters, but also other people in business. We're doing different things with AI. I never saw myself doing that in my 60s, but we live in this fabulous age. I'll share this with you because it's good wisdom for your people, too. I interview a lot of doctors. I was interviewing a doctor, a dentist from California, and a very smart guy. I asked him, "How do you use AI in your practice?" He said, "Let me give you an example. Let's say I had a guy who's been a smoker and he's 60. Rather than me being the bad guy and saying, 'Based on all of this information, you got four or five years to clean up,' what I do instead is I use the AI engine to show what AI says."

What he's doing is he's using the AI. It's the actuary to say, "Here's what happened to other people who've smoked for 40 years. Maybe you ought to consider quitting now." That could also be being way overweight. That could be drinking too much. That could be fill in the blank. That's how the medical profession is using AI as an educational tool to say to people, "You don't believe me. Here's the actuarial numbers on people who've done what you've done for a long time. Maybe you want to consider changing it." I see the world in a way that there's so much opportunity and so many great things that are happening. Don't let that number on the license dictate what you don't do. Ignore it and do what you want to do.

I love that. Thank you so much for taking the time to share with us. I'm excited for our readers to know this and to learn from you. I wish you the best. We'll have to have you back again, maybe a year from now, and see how things are going.

Thank you so much, Zach. Continue good health to yourself. I appreciate the invitation.

Thanks, John.

What a fun, encouraging, and inspiring conversation with John Solleder. I hope that you are walking away as encouraged and inspired as I am. Even trying one small thing and making an incremental adjustment or incremental change can lead us to the next incremental step. It's these small steps,

baby steps, that we can all take. I loved a couple of quotes that came out of our conversation. “The number on your driver's license is irrelevant.”

**Try one small thing—
an incremental change
can lead to the next.**



John brings a passion to life and a passion to fitness and wellness. It's about doing things that we love, finding something that we enjoy, doing more of that, and continuing to think as athletes, training ourselves for whatever that sport is. Maybe it's pickleball, a masters track meet, or a masters swimming meet. There are so many things that we can continue to do so that we can continue to thrive as we go through life here.

I also loved, “Nutrition is king. Exercise is queen. Together, we can build a kingdom of those.” He's taken it to the extreme as a raw vegan and made significant increases in his blood biomarkers and his aging as well. We can look at our nutrition and maybe make some adjustments and changes there. We probably don't have to go raw vegan. You can if you want, but at least maybe incremental changes in the right direction can be helpful to all of us, too. Check out John Solleder. His website is JohnSolleder.com. Check him out there. You can see his books, his podcast, and links to his podcast, [Leave Nothing To Chance](#), are there as well. Continue to engage with him and the conversation. Thanks so much for tuning in. Until next time, continue to stay fully alive. We'll see you soon.

Important Links

- [John Solleder's Website](#)
- [HOTWORX](#)
- [John Solleder on YouTube](#)
- [Leave Nothing To Chance](#)
- [Moving Up: 2020 and Beyond](#)
- [Leave Nothing To Chance Podcast](#)
- [Breath](#)
- [National Senior Games Association](#)