



Fasting Strategies for Autoimmunity

Guest: Dr. Tiffany Caplan

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Dr. Jockers: Well, hello, everybody and welcome to the Fasting Transformation Summit, where we are uncovering the most ancient, inexpensive, and powerful healing strategy known to mankind. We're talking about fasting. Super excited about today's interview. You've probably listened to several interviews I've done. I'm your host, Dr. David Jockers. And fasting really can play a key role in helping our immune system and we're going to dive into that in detail. There's so many people out there that are suffering with chronic inflammatory conditions, as well as autoimmune conditions. And fasting can be a great tool in our tool belt.

And so the expert we have on is Dr. Tiffany Caplan. She's a certified functional medicine practitioner who has experienced firsthand how lifestyle medicine can save a person's life, and she's blessed to be able to educate and help people suffering with chronic illnesses. Dr. Caplan is the bestselling author of *The Lupus Solution* and founder of Caplan Health Institute, which is a virtual practice with educational resources, courses, and one on one coaching and consulting for people with chronic illness who have the goal of achieving long term remission. And you can check out her website, centerforintegrativehealth.com. So, Dr. Tiffany, thanks for joining us here on the Fasting Transformation Summit.

Dr. Tiffany: Thank you for having me. This is a really important topic and I'm glad to speak on it.

Dr. Jockers: Yeah, absolutely. And so I'd love to hear your story. I know you had a family member that had suffered with debilitating issues and I'd love to hear more about that and what you learned through that.

Dr. Tiffany: Yeah, I got introduced into functional medicine for my own personal health reasons. I was having severe depression, anxiety, the medical model was just kind of just throwing pills at me and wasn't helping me. Nobody was talking about diet or lifestyle, or these factors. So I found a functional medicine doctor and literally, it changed my whole perspective on health and it changed my life. And she got me just into this whole new realm of helping people in a different way. And so when I had a family member diagnosed with lupus; that was also a big changing point because I realized that again, people were being failed in the medical model. Not getting the help or the support, or the guidance that they need.

Because it's an autoimmune disease, which they're told there's going to be lifelong. They're going to be on these medications for the rest of their life. There's nothing they can do for it. But we found and we work with patients all the time to get into remission with autoimmunity; so it's possible. And so I wanted to get the information out there, that's why we wrote the book, *The Lupus Solution*, my husband and I, and hosted the Lupus and Autoimmunity Summit. We want to just get the information and the hope out to people that remission with autoimmunity is not only possible, but people can start doing that just today.

Dr. Jockers: Yeah, absolutely. And lupus is obviously a very, very serious disorder and it's a growing disorder; all autoimmune conditions are growing. And so let's talk about the immune system a little bit. What is the immune system? How does it work? And let's talk about how fasting can impact it.

Dr. Tiffany: So the immune system is naturally just our body's way of protecting us, right? It's a system that will find or encounter things that are foreign or potentially harmful, and help us fight them off so that we don't become sick or have injuries and problems like that. So our immune system is supposed to protect us. And when you have an autoimmune disease, what that means is that the immune system actually turns on our own tissues, on our own cells, our own body parts and mistakes them for being bad, harmful, or foreign and causes a destruction of them.

So, someone with like rheumatoid arthritis or lupus may have destruction of their joint tissue, so they get a lot of pain and inflammation, stiffness in their joints and that's how it kind of presents symptomatically but it's really like your immune system is driving that process. There's over a hundred different autoimmune diseases. So across the board, people are suffering all the time

with immune system issues and not really knowing that that's what's driving it. I mean, even things like eczema, psoriasis, Hashimoto's, like those are autoimmune and people kind of just write it off as, "It's just a skin issue," "It's just a thyroid problem," that type of thing.

But the way that fasting can help is we know that one, fasting is naturally anti-inflammatory, but it also can help reset the immune system. So, fasting basically forces your body into clean house mode, where you get rid of old damaged or weak cells. And so with the immune system, it basically forces your immune system to recycle all the old, damaged white blood cells and then return. You actually start to produce and regenerate new, healthier white blood cells and immune cells. And fasting can be effective in as little as three days, you can get a good reset of your immune system. There's even intermittent fasting, there's different types of fasting.

And even with cancer patients, we know that intermittent fasting can be helpful, in terms of helping the immune system protect against the damaging effects of chemo. Again, by regenerating the immune cells. In MS patients, they're finding fasting can be helpful in regenerating the myelin that's been destroyed. So things like that. And so in an autoimmune disease, our goal is always to just get to the root of why that immune system is doing what it's doing, because it has to be triggered to have that aberrant response, and then be able to find ways to change that through diet and lifestyle, and the things that we do on a regular basis.

Dr. Jockers: Yeah, that's a great overview. And so what are some of the main root causes that you're seeing on a regular basis? I mean, I know you're running labs and working with a lot of clients one on one. What are some of the common root causes that you're seeing?

Dr. Tiffany: So I think the first thing we always look at is the gut because the gut houses like 80% of the immune system. So we're seeing leaky gut and food sensitivities, and microbiome disturbances and things like that are really creating a lot of inflammation. We know that stress is a big driver, we find that people are just so stressed out on a daily basis. And a lot of times they don't even realize that they're stressed out, or that there's other forms of stress in their bodies. So, it's not always just like mental, emotional stress.

It might be the physical chemical stresses that they're encountering. Whether it's like hormonal issues, insulin surges, again, microbiome problems, nutrient deficiencies, kind of across the board. We see, you know, even in sunny California, people are deficient in vitamin D all the time. So, just having those things missing. Yeah, I think diet and lifestyle play the biggest role in

actually being able to not only help support the immune system, but to get it into a remission state.

Dr. Jockers: Yeah, for sure. What are some of the big... you mentioned vitamin D, what are some of the other nutrient deficiencies that you're seeing on a regular basis?

Dr. Tiffany: I think the things that are really needed for the gut, a lot of people are just eating the standard American diets, we're missing out on nutrients that really should be in our food because we're not eating real food or it's been processed, or it's the soil is lacking the nutrients. So just across the board, the foundational things that we should be getting from our diet are missing. Also, things like people are not eating a lot of fiber, which is good for the microbiome and creating short chain fatty acids to help heal the gut lining. I think, yeah, just not digesting well. So people aren't getting the amino acids from their proteins that they're eating and eating too many pro-inflammatory fats from their diet, things like that.

Dr. Jockers: Yeah, yeah, absolutely. And so, you talked a little bit about fasting and how it helps the immune system. What kind of fasting strategies do you like to utilize with your clients that are dealing with autoimmunity?

Dr. Tiffany: So when dealing with somebody with autoimmunity, there's like that whole spectrum of, how stable are they? And so I find somebody coming in with something just, you know, a simple eczema versus somebody that comes in with five different autoimmune diseases and multiple sclerosis, and psoriasis, all these different things. So depending on how fragile the person is and at what state they're in, there's a bunch of different fasting strategies and they all have a little bit different impact on the immune system.

Sometimes I'll start as low as doing something we call the lemonade fast, where it's not a complete water fast because we have them add in some like lemon juice and some maple syrup into the water to help keep their blood sugar stable, so that they can go three days without crashing or having issues. So sometimes we'll start with that. Sometimes it's the fasting mimicking diet, like the one from ProLon. Or some people can do fasting, they can do a water fast for three days.

Dr. Jockers: Yeah, and so those partial fasting strategies, like you talked about there, fasting mimicking diet or lemon juice diet. Do you guys use a bone broth fast or something like that?

Dr. Tiffany: Yeah, you can do bone broth too and that's super healing for the gut and soothing.

Dr. Jockers: Yeah, and all those strategies are reduced calorie load, which over time, doing that for several days, that's going to induce that autophagy, like you're talking about, where the body starts to break down those older, less effective immune cells and those immune cells that are causing more havoc; they're causing more harm than good. And so it usually takes a few days when you're doing that. But how about intermittent fasting? How do you practice that or how do you teach that with your patients?

Dr. Tiffany: So if somebody is ready for it, then we start slowly, maybe like, "Try a day and see how you feel with it." And then try to incorporate it maybe a couple times a day. So, trying to get to the six to eight hour window of eating. And I've actually seen some people too, they switched it and they do better eating in the morning and then stopping in the afternoon and kind of going overnight. So wherever that window is, and we'll do that. And then maybe they'll do maybe a day here or there with a total water fast.

Dr. Jockers: So are you trying to figure it out via trial and error or is there anything that you're seeing on a lab or maybe patient history that would let you know what kind of fasting strategy would work better for somebody?

Dr. Tiffany: A lot of it just comes from talking to the patient with the health history and figuring out, how do they feel when they do something like that or looking for signs of reactive hypoglycemia per se, on like the blood work. Things that kind of show maybe they're having issues with regulating their cortisol. Maybe one of their biggest issues is insomnia and they're waking up every few hours because their blood sugar is crashing or something like that. So, a lot of times just talking to the patient, like, "How do you feel with that or have tried it?" So it's a lot of trial and error.

Dr. Jockers: Yeah, exactly. I found that patients that exhibit more issues with insulin resistance tend to do better with fasting off the bat. And those with more of that reactive hypoglycemia, like you were talking about, they need to really take it easy. And sometimes I'll start them with like, you know, just simple fasting, 12 hours overnight. And then crescendo fasting where they're just doing a 16 hour fast, twice a week, non-consecutive days; kind of like exercise, they only exercise twice a week. And there's a little bit of stress, but they have time to recover. I've seen that work. So, how are you introducing fasting? Like, let's talk about your initial consults. And how do you bring that up to them?

Dr. Tiffany: I was just going to talk about the health benefits of it. So all the positive things that it can do for the immune system. Like, again, one of the most common things we find is people are reacting to the food they're eating.

So, simply by giving your gut a break, we're helping the immune system kind of reset or the gut reset. And if they have a lot of... like, we do stool testing, and if they have a lot of issues going on in the gut with the microbiome or leaky gut, and we need to give the gut a break, because we know the gut cells repair themselves every three to five days or kind of replace themselves. So that's just having them understand, "Okay, this is why we're doing it. We're not trying to just starve you. There's reasons for it." And then try out the different or talk about the different types of strategies that we can do with the fasting.

Dr. Jockers: Yeah, absolutely. That makes sense. And let's say somebody has had experience with fasting in the past, like, say they had mixed results, what would be some things that you might do? Like, let's say they had a bad experience with it, what are some things that you found that can help them out that might help them have a better experience in the future?

Dr. Tiffany: Yeah, if they had tried just like water fasting, then maybe we would try something else, more like the lemonade thing that we do or the fasting mimicking, or do a shorter period of time and do more of the intermittent fasting. You can also do just more caloric restriction. They've shown too that if you cut your calories in half, like by 50%; that also has positive impacts on the T cells and everything. So that could be another strategy.

Dr. Jockers: Which is kind of like the fasting mimicking. That's kind of like the fast mimicking diet. Do you want to explain more about that since you've been using that in the clinic?

Dr. Tiffany: Yeah, it's just keeping very low calories. So it kind of, again, forces the body into using up the glycogen stores, which is what is affected with fasting and kind of gets the autophagy going. So it's not a complete fast. So, for people that are kind of against doing a water fast or something, it's an easier way because they're still drinking and eating these little things throughout the day. And I think fasting, for most people is more of a mental challenge than anything. So I think that's what's helpful with the fasting mimicking diet, is it's not as challenging mentally.

Dr. Jockers: Yeah, and it's like a low protein, plant based, ketogenic diet. That's low calorie as well. It's mostly like nuts and olives, and stuff like that; seeds. And yeah, I think like the first day you're consuming about 1,200 calories. So, an average person is going to need typically 2,000, 2,500 calories or so. So you're cutting it down to roughly 50%. And then I think the other days, the other four days are around 800 calories. So you're getting into that.

The research shows that like, when you cut it down to about 40% of your calories for three to five days, you're going to start ramping up autophagy and stem cells. So that's what I've seen. And then, like you were talking about with those liquid diets, like the master cleanse, lemonade diet, that's probably like, I don't know, 400 calories or so. So it's even more calorie restricted. You're just kind of sipping it, keeping your blood sugar stable, basically. That's your goal, at least the whole time in staying hydrated with it.

Dr. Tiffany: Right and then people also kind of feel... they don't feel like they're fasting as much because they're getting that little energy and they're sipping—

Dr. Jockers: The sweet flavor. Yeah, exactly. Which helps because that helps... even if it's like stevia, even if it's not calories, it'll still boost your serotonin and your dopamine, which helps you feel better because that's a big issue. A lot of people, when they fast, their neurotransmitters go down because they're so used to hitting those neurotransmitters every time we eat, and then they feel depressed, a little bit emotionally down. And so having something sweet like that can really help boost that. So if it's an emotional issue that can be a great fasting strategy.

Dr. Tiffany: Yes, exactly.

Dr. Jockers: So let's talk a little bit more about autoimmunity. And what kind of labs are you typically running when it comes to autoimmunity? And what are some other strategies that you'd like to utilize to help people get to the root cause and correct it?

Dr. Tiffany: So, some of the more across the board labs that we use, we use a lot of blood testing to kind of just check some of the foundational things. Like for nutrient deficiencies, for insulin problems, for thyroid issues, anemia, that type of thing, or just also inflammatory markers. A lot of patients already have... when they're coming to us, they already have a team of doctors running all the big specialty tests and antibodies and all that stuff. So we watch those things too but we're just more interested in the function of the body when it's not optimal.

So we look for things that maybe aren't normally checked on bloodwork. We'll do stool testings, and we look at the microbiome in different ways. See how well the person is digesting, if they're making enough enzymes. If they're absorbing. If there's signs that their secretory IgA, their immune markers in their gut, are too high or too low. They're having maybe low short chain fatty acids, so they can't repair. Also things like beta-glucuronidase in the stool, we check for to see if that's causing maybe hormonal imbalances with estrogen

dominance and things like that. We will do sometimes more saliva testing too for adrenal function and cortisol.

Cortisol is huge. I find that most people with autoimmune disease have problems with their adrenals to some degree. Whether it's just acutely or more of a chronic adrenal fatigue type situation going on. And so one of the biggest things that we work on with people is in the lifestyle realm, is working on stress management. Identifying where their stressors are coming from, helping them kind of get some good habits in their day, whether it's exercise or meditation or breathing, or journaling, to help them be able to handle and get through stress easier.

So it doesn't have that like longer lasting, negative impact, because just like inflammation, like acute inflammation is helpful, chronic inflammation is harmful; acute stress is helpful, chronic stress is not. So we see that that's a big perpetuator of the autoimmune process. So we just kind of look at all those different aspects and all those different things in what the person is doing and they're exposed to on a daily basis and kind of help fill in the gaps through diet changes, lifestyle changes, and supplements with different nutrients.

Dr. Jockers: Are you seeing people that you're working with tend to have higher cortisol or lower cortisol? Let's say in the mornings, morning, you're supposed to have high cortisol. What are you often seeing there? In the evening, of course, you should have low cortisol. What kind of patterns? Are you seeing anything that jumps out more often than, than others?

Dr. Tiffany: More often than not, people are having low cortisol in the morning. It's that opposite pattern, where they're not getting the cortisol awakening response, because one of the biggest complaints across the board with all autoimmune diseases tends to be low energy. And so people are just waking up with lower cortisol than they should and then they don't have nearly as much going throughout the day. Or sometimes they'll also get that reverse curve where they have too much cortisol at night, and then they're having problems sleeping, falling asleep is difficult. So we also test the cortisol awakening response, we'll do that. Have them do like a sample when they first wake up and another sample 30 minutes and kind of see how it increases, if it does or not. So that's more common than not, as people are not having...

Dr. Jockers: Yeah because you should get a big rise and that gives you that wakefulness in the morning.

Dr. Tiffany: Yeah. And most people aren't getting that.

Dr. Jockers: Right. Yeah. So they're not getting that. So let's talk a little bit more about what cortisol does for the body, how important that is, because that does play a big role with fasting because when we fast, typically our cortisol goes up.

Dr. Tiffany: Yeah, so again, not all stress is a bad thing. So when we're talking about, "Oh, fasting makes your cortisol go up," that's not necessarily a bad thing. People freak out with high cortisol. But cortisol is just basically the hormone that helps our body deal with stress, chemical, physical, mental, emotional. It helps... like, let's say your blood sugar is dropping, it tells the liver to shunt out some extra sugar so you don't go hypoglycemic. It helps keep us asleep at night or helps us maintain our energy throughout the day. It helps stimulate different healing mechanisms in the body. So cortisol is not a bad thing. But like you said, it is impacted with fasting in a positive way. So we get like a positive surge of cortisol when we do that.

Dr. Jockers: Yeah, and oftentimes a lot of people feel almost like they get a natural high when they're fasting, and they're more productive and energetic, and things like that. Part of that is because of the cortisol. However, for somebody that has some sort of a cortisol dysrhythm, just an abnormal rhythm, sometimes it can trigger more insomnia, trouble sleeping at night, things like that. So that can be an issue too. What kinds of things are you noticing? Like, let's talk about like some herbs that can help or just nutrients and minerals that can help with keeping cortisol more balanced in the body.

Dr. Tiffany: There's a lot of adaptogenic herbs that help kind of regulate. So one of the most common people know about is like ashwagandha, a lot of people use that. I've been actually using a combination of the different adaptogens, it works better than just using one single thing. But we also know, even like B vitamins are important too for adrenal function. So it really depends too on the person, if they tend to have no cortisol or if they tend to have too much cortisol, yeah, if it's like spiking or falling. So adaptogens kind of help keep that more consistent, but there's also some more things like licorice that can be more stimulating for cortisol. So we use a different variety for whatever is going on with that person.

Dr. Jockers: Yeah, I know magnesium is a big one too. Magnesium is a good kind of modulator or balancer with cortisol. I found rhodiola and eleuthero tend to be a little bit more stimulating. They're obviously adaptogenic. So adaptogens kind of, it's almost like a temperature regulator, right? So if you've got it set for 67 and it's 69, it's going to bring it down to 67. But if it was lower than 67, it would bring it up. But there are some that I found that tend to be a little bit more stimulating, like ashwagandha tends to be a little bit more relaxing and calming. So, have you found any other ones that you've noticed?

Let's say like, I don't know, ones that help people get better quality sleep, especially when they're fasting. I think that's a big complaint that I hear from people, is they enjoy how they feel when they're fasting and the results but they don't sleep as well.

Dr. Tiffany: Well, I think the magnesium, like you said, it'd be a really good one for sleep. I'm trying to remember, there's a blend that we use topically, it's called AdrenaCalm, and it has a bunch of different herbs that help. And I think there's things even like passionflower and lemon balm and things like that that are really calming and soothing. So you can use that before bed and it helps take it down a notch and helps people stay asleep throughout the night.

Dr. Jockers: Yeah, I found those ones, passionflower and lemon balm... valerian is another good one. Skullcap is another good one for like calming and relaxing. And ginseng tends to be a little bit more stimulating, I found. There was one other one that I was thinking of, it's slipping my mind, it'll come back.

Dr. Tiffany: I know there's a few different forms of ginseng too, they can all be a little different. I can't remember off the top of my head which one we use more often. But it's usually the blends that we're using too, so they're synergistically like made to work on a certain way or a certain way.

Dr. Jockers: Oh, the one I was thinking of is theanine, L-theanine. That's also very good, very calming, relaxing, you know, it's helpful. How about GABA, have you ever used GABA to help people?

Dr. Tiffany: We have not used GABA. One of the concerns with GABA is that literally taking GABA, it's such a big molecule that if people are noticing effects that they were concerned with blood brain barrier dysfunction, and so we'll use like the precursors to GABA but not necessarily GABA itself.

Dr. Jockers: So precursors like theanine actually helps GABA agonists. In fact, most of those herbs I just talked about are all GABA agonists too, meaning that they help promote it. And then you've got different amino acids that are part of that as well.

Dr. Tiffany: So even things where you could use like, 5-HTP to kind of be the precursor for serotonin to make melatonin.

Dr. Jockers: Yeah, that's important there too. Well, great. And obviously, you've helped a lot of people with autoimmune disease. So a lot of people think that if you have an autoimmune disease, you're basically living with that for

the rest of your life. And you may get some hope with suppressing some of the symptoms but more or less that it's kind of your lot in life. And so what have you found with that working with people?

Dr. Tiffany: And that's not the case for most people, a lot of people say, "Well, it's just genetics or something." But really what we find is it is a lifestyle disease, just like a lot of things that people are suffering with, like diabetes or cardiovascular disease. Not only is autoimmunity preventable, but it's also reversible. Like, you can get it into a remission state. And remission doesn't mean it's cured because once your immune system recognizes parts of your own body as being bad or foreign, it creates these memory cells; it's going to remember that. So you can always have the chances of it flaring up later.

And our goal is to stay in what we call a remission state, where it's non active, it's not creating complications or destruction. And then it's also not symptomatic in that state too. So figuring out for the person what the root causes are that are driving that immune response in the first place, helping them learn the dietary lifestyle factors. That they need to continue moving forward to not only support their immune system, but just to support more optimal health in their body, makes it so that they're not only fixing the problem and getting rid of their symptoms, but then it's more of a lifelong, healthier way to maintain that too.

So they're avoiding the flare ups and they're avoiding the complications, and they're avoiding too developing another autoimmune disease, because when you have one autoimmune disease, the chance of developing another one is much higher. And so, just kind of getting into the state of more optimal health as a whole is really important. I think educating patients is a big part of what we do. Just kind of helping them figure out an owner's manual for their body of, what does it need to function and why does it do things that it's not supposed to? So they can have those tools and that knowledge to keep going.

Dr. Jockers: Yeah, I think that's great. And I always tell clients, it's kind of like, in a sense, almost like getting a master's degree in your own health. So it's going to be a process that takes time. You wouldn't take the final exam of a class, the first day you went in, there's a learning process, a learning curve. And your body's got to adapt and learn too and that can take time as well. So it's really important to be patient with the process. And look at it as an investment, you know, an investment of your time, your money, and energy and getting healthy. That's something you can carry with you for the rest of your life. Kind of like if you got some sort of a degree or certification that you use for your career, you know, this is really your health, which allows you to do everything that you want to do for the rest of your life and your future. So yeah.

Dr. Tiffany: And everybody is different too. So, you know, taking time to learn your body and not losing hope if the first thing you try doesn't fix everything. That's important too.

Dr. Jockers: Yeah, absolutely. Not losing hope, that's very important. And trying different strategies because there are a lot of different things that can work and everybody's different, unique, and so you've got to kind of find your own custom template for it. And I know, Dr. Tiffany, that's what you do for people. You do consults, work with people one on one. And so tell us more about how people can get a hold of you and find out more information about you.

Dr. Tiffany: Yeah, we work with clients around the world, like you don't have to be in where I have a brick and mortar practice in California. But you can find out more on our site, caplanhealthinstitute.com. That also is the place where you can find some more resources and more about what we do. And you can sign up too for, like we do a free 15 minute discovery call where we kind of just talk to you about what we do and see what you have going on, and see if it's a good fit for working with us. So that's something we offer and you can find out more just at caplanhealthinstitute.com.

Dr. Jockers: Well, fantastic. Well guys, definitely reach out to Dr. Tiffany, especially if you're out there and you've been suffering with some sort of chronic issue. You've tried different lifestyle strategies and you're just not getting the results that you want, then it's really important that you work with some sort of professional, somebody who can coach and guide you. It's just so important. Don't think you can do all of this on your own or you have to do all of it on your own. Obviously, you're going to learn a lot in this Fasting Summit, strategies that you can apply that may get you phenomenal results. And I've seen that time and again.

But if you've been suffering for a long time, it's really important to work with a coach. And so, Dr. Tiffany is one of the best out there. So definitely check her out. And for all the listeners, I want to leave you with this one last thought; fasting has the ability to unlock the dormant healing potential within you. It's powerful, it's safe, and it just might transform your life. So try it out. And I know you're going to get a ton of value out of the other interviews in this summit. And I would love to hear your questions, your comments, so check those out as well. Thanks again, Dr. Tiffany, and we'll see everybody on a future interview.