

Tony Federico:

Hey Paleo Nation. I'm Tony Federico and you're listening to Paleo Magazine Radio. The official podcast of the original Paleo lifestyle publication. [music 00:07] If you really want to know why the Paleo lifestyle works so well in combating chronic disease, reversing the aging process, and turning everyday people into fat burning beasts, you'll inevitably encounter a concept called Evolutionary Mismatch. An evolutionary mismatch occurs when our body, a collection of trillions of cells beautifully programmed by millions of years of evolution, encounters something completely unexpected and descends into chaos. In the past evolutionary mismatches arose from natural events, cataclysms like super volcanoes and asteroid impacts, as well as cyclical climate changes, but these mismatches ultimately spurred new evolutions and adaptations. Unfortunately for us modern humans, the radical technological and societal changes that we have initiated have transformed our world, and have changed so many things so quickly that our bodies just can't keep up, and evolutionary mismatches abound.

Eating processed food like substances instead of whole foods is a mismatch. Sitting down all day staring at a computer screen instead of experiencing dynamic movement within mother nature is a mismatch. Replacing our intimate tribal relationships of community and family with text messages is an evolutionary mismatch, and as the process of evolution and natural selection runs its course, millions of us suffer and die from chronic disease and millions more live in states of dis-health. But all hope is not lost Paleo Nation, as someone listening to this podcast and living the Paleo lifestyle, you are part of the solution, and now more than ever, there are resources at your disposal that can help you manage the evolutionary mismatches in your life.

There are books, blogs, podcasts, and even events dedicated to the practice of ancestral health. Today I'll be talking to two proponents to the ancestral health model. J. Brett Smith and Aaron Blaisdell. Both of these guys are so passionate about the subject that they've dedicated countless hours towards organizing one of the premier Paleo events of the year. The Ancestral Health Symposium. In our conversation we discussed what inspired Aaron to create the Ancestral Health Symposium. How J. Brett Smith went from becoming a A.H.S. attendee to becoming their program chair. Favorite moments from past years events. The unforeseen consequences that caused the cancellation of A.H.S. fifteen. Their thoughts about the mainstreaming of Paleo. The role of A.H.S. and other events in the evolution of ancestral health and what we could look forward to at this year's event which will be taking place at the University of Colorado, Boulder Campus, August 11-13 of this year.

I didn't know when we were originally recording but I recently found out that my presentation proposal titled, Get Up Stand Up, A Brief History on Sedentarism and Why Movement Is Good Medicine, was accepted by the A.H.S. program committee. So if you go to A.H.S. this year, be sure to check out my presentation. I'll be tackling the problem of too much sitting, the surprising history of chairs, and how you can get up, stand up and discover better health. All right everyone it's time to manage our mismatches. Paleo Magazine radio starts now. [music 03:14]

Hey everybody, welcome back to Paleo Magazine Radio. I'm here with Aaron Blaisdell and J. Brett Smith. They're both from the Ancestral

Health Society. Guys welcome back to the show.

Aaron Blaisdell: [crosstalk 03:56] Thank you.

J. Brett Smith: Well thanks Tony!

Aaron Blaisdell: You both have been on Paleo Magazine Radio before, but, just in case somebody is new to the program and hasn't gone back and listened to every single episode. I can't imagine why somebody wouldn't have done that, but if somebody hasn't done that, if you could give up a quick bio a little breakdown on who you are and how you got involved in Ancestral Health Society. Let's go ahead and start with you, J. Brett Smith.

J. Brett Smith: I was trained in human biology and philosophy. I've just been working as a field biologist, like an aquatic biologist actually. Doing fishery science for about ten years, going all over the state of Alabama. I spent a lot of time out in nature, it was pretty awesome, but then a couple of years ago I started noticing the Paleo scene and thought it was interesting because I would always really spend a lot of time reading about evolutionary medicine and sort of ... evolutionary psychology fields like that but then it became obviously clear, that wow, A.H.S. is actually trying to address some of these evolutionary mismatches. Then I went Paleo in 2012 and didn't realize I was even getting sick until after I went on the Paleo diet, and then wow, I must be a part of this. I have to be a part of this somehow, somehow and so I went to my first A.H.S. in Atlanta in 2013 and just fell in love with it. It's just been an adventure.

Tony Federico: Now have you had any contact with the organizers of the event? Such as Aaron at that point, or did you just show up as a fan? Somebody wanting to learn more?

J. Brett Smith: I had noticed, there were the videos trickling out after A.H.S. eleven, after the first one, and that was clear to me at that time I was like wow, I knew about what evolutionary mismatches were, I knew about evolutionary medicine. I've read ... I've actually read the Paleo Diet way back in 2005, but I found it interesting that people were actually trying to apply this stuff at the clinical and the practical level, but then I went Paleo in 2012, and a number of health issues reversed themselves just within weeks. That's when it really took off on me, but to answer your question. No, I just started seeing the videos in 2011-12.

Tony Federico: So how did you actually get involved with the organization of the event? How did you cross over to the other side so to speak?

J. Brett Smith: Well, I went to A.H.S thirteen and I guess the first person I talked to was Katherine Morrison who is the Executive Director and she called me back and we had a nice chat and she said, "Oh yeah, you're welcome to come and we'll be looking forward to you in Atlanta." I live in Alabama so it's just a short trip over to Atlanta. I met Aaron, Aaron was actually the first person I introduced myself to in Atlanta. At the event, and I just found out that my academic background would I guess serve them in some way, so they just kept inviting me in. I was on the programming team for A.H.S. fourteen and now I'm the Program Chair of the Symposium this year.

Tony Federico: And just for clarification, what does that actually entail? What does being

The-Ancestral-Health-Symposium-Past-and-Present-with-J.Brett-Smith-and...

on the Program Team or the Program Chair actually involve? What are your responsibilities and how are you applying your skills to support the organization and the event?

J. Brett Smith: Lot of e-mails, a lot of time spent in front of the computer unfortunately. It's mostly a volunteer run organization and you know people who are making it happen are all volunteers. So people are obviously passionate about it, and so it's just fun to work with him. I guess ... I'm not an expert in nutrition or strength and conditioning but I was trying in evolutionary biology ... I have a masters in like that so I've spent a lot of time reading about evolutionary theory. I guess ... I'm coming at it from like a general framework standpoint.

Tony Federico: Right, and in terms of the Ancestral Health Symposium and the quality of the speakers and the quality of the information, you know certainly, having a strong foundation, a good rooting in evolutionary biology is certainly important. Now, let's go ahead and kick things over to you Aaron and get the inside scoop, if you will, on your story and your involvement in the Ancestral Health Symposium.

Aaron Blaisdell: Thanks for having me again on the show.

Tony Federico: Oh of course.

Aaron Blaisdell: I think I'm kind of like a kindred spirit with Brett. So well, when Brett came up and introduced me, I remember him coming up to me and introducing himself to me at the A.H.S. thirteen event in Atlanta and right off, right off we hit it off. So I like him, I had a background in biology. It was actually in physical anthropology but I took a lot of biology courses, evolution, zoology courses, but then I kind of shifted over to psychology and now I'm a faculty of Psychology at UCLA, and my area of expertise is Comparative Cognition and Animal Psychology. But all the time I kind of kept my roots in biology and evolutionary biology and it was through my collaboration with the late Seth Roberts who was a professor at UC Berkeley.

A psychology professor where I had discovered his side interest in this whole kind of evolution and diet and kind of mismatch that he had acquired. And so he is the one who sort of brought me into that, into that world and that's how I met Brent Pottenger, and that's when Brent and I were kind of sitting around at a symposium at UCLA on physiology and it was called New Directions in Physiology. And we were sitting there looking at these new directions. It's like, kind of cutting edge physiology and clinical application work and at the end of every talk it was like and now we have another target that we could pharmaceutically go after.

Tony Federico: Nice.

Aaron Blaisdell: Right the standard medical model [crosstalk 10:06]

Tony Federico: More of the same.

Aaron Blaisdell: It's a great business model but it's not a really great health promoting model, so we kept saying to each other, you know we should just have our own symposium where we bring the people who know about lifestyle implementation and practical take aways that you could do you to

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actually take control of your own health. You know Paleo Diet and all of the other things related to that, that have to do with evolutionary mismatch and so that's why we kind of organized the first Ancestral Health Symposium at UCLA and it was such a success that we just kept going.

Tony Federico: Awesome and before we get into what's coming up. What's coming up with the Ancestral Health Symposium 2016, let's kind of take a look back and just give you guys an opportunity to maybe talk about some of your favorite moments, some of the biggest talks that you listened to, or some of the most impactful events. You know a lot of the times the things that I really take away from these types of events happen behind the scenes. You know some of the conversations outside of the main event, so it doesn't necessarily have to be marquee talks so to speak. Now let's go ahead and pass the mic back to you J. Brett and see what are your top moments from A.H.S. from years past?

J. Brett Smith: Well I was almost like a giddy schoolgirl when I first showed up to Atlanta and there were all these sort of like celebrities there and I started recognizing faces and ... these people whose blogs I've read or some people whose books I've read and I was like wow, here they are in person. I didn't know a single soul that year in Atlanta, except for Mel Connor. I had met him ... That was sort of a treat to get to talk to him again. You know, he was one of the early thinkers in this space back in the eighties I guess. So I guess what impressed me though was when A.H.S. 2012 at Harvard, I was really glad to see that talk on Dentistry by Michael Mew.

Tony Federico: Yeah. I remember that one.

J. Brett Smith: A lot of people have commented on that in the blogs, that's what sort of pointed toward this concept of mismatch in the general sense, it's different than just being ... The Paleo Diet is an ancestral diets, and species appropriate ways of eating will always be the bread and butter, pardon the pun, of the event. In many ways, because diet is such an important thing that any organism does, but to show that these mismatches fakes can occur outside of just this like metabolic syndrome and the dietary realm, you know these mismatches can affect and they do affect you know the shape of our jaw and things like dental misalignment. Where we could have mismatches in vision causing early myopia. Psychiatric disorders too, that's ... The talks were wider, there were a broader sort of array of topics in Atlanta the next in thirteen, and that's what impressed me and I was relieved to see that the Ancestral Health Community was broadening the focus.

Tony Federico: Kind of just getting beyond just the diet which like you said was obviously important, but it's not the only factor and it's not the only thing that we're trying to adjust when getting ourselves back into an alignment with a more ancestral way of living. Now, maybe recap Dr. Mew's presentation because I was there and I remember that was certainly one of the talks that I thought was perhaps most interesting or more interesting and I think it was for the reason that you mentioned which is that it kind of took this concept of mismatch and really just blew it in a direction that I had never even seen before. Can you give us maybe a recap of his presentation just from what you could remember and obviously we're not going to hold you to, you know, perfect accuracy

here given that this was a couple of years ago.

J. Brett Smith: Yeah sure, I mean, people grow up you know, they have, maybe they have dental misalignment and they need braces so they spend \$2000 on orthodontics. You know, the majority of us have to have our wisdom teeth removed and people might wonder why ... It's so common, these procedures are just so common, that we almost take it for granted that well that's just how our bodies are designed and most people don't even think about it, but those are mismatch effects. There is this whole industry out there and there are whole industries in medicine and sort of a lot health or whatever that have propped up to deal with these. Michael Mew said there was basically, in a sense, a lack of chewing during sort of key developmental windows when a child or an adolescents face is starting to develop into an adult form. A lack of chewing does not give the sort of proper environmental signals to the developing jaw and so dental misalignment can result from that.

I've since learned that some people out there think that lack of Vitamin K might be a factor, and then also another person. A doctor named Kevin Boyd who is a dentist. He says this, it's starts earlier than that. That the lack of chewing is a factor but then breast feeding, not breast feeding either at all or not breast feeding for a sufficient duration, doesn't give the developing sort of phenotype of the baby. Their proper signals, so it can start there. These are all just hypotheses but I mean they claim to have all of the evidence for it and it looks like ... It's at least a promising area.

Tony Federico: Right.

J. Brett Smith: If you want to get to the root cause of what's causing something is [inaudible 16:13] is dental misalignment and wisdom teeth impacted.

Tony Federico: And that really kind of sums up this whole idea of a mismatch, that our body in some ways are primed to receive these signals whether that's chewing, or gnawing, or breast feeding and it's through those signals, just like a muscle getting worked with, exercise that it develops and sort of forms in it's proper way, but when we take those out, you know we get dysfunction and we get disease and I think that is one of the things that is so key about the Ancestral Health Symposium. Is keeping that idea of mismatch right at the top of the list and really making sure that that is the focus of the event, to keep people aware that, hey we're looking at all these different aspects of our lives, going beyond the plate. Maybe looking at the fork and are we cutting the food up too small. Do we need to be gnawing the flesh off the bone a little bit more? Especially in those key developmental stages. Now Aaron, what about you? What were some of your top moments, top kind of key experiences just on this journey on being involved with the Ancestral Health Symposium?

Aaron Blaisdell: Gosh, so many to choose from. You guys have already touched on some of them. Including Michael Mew's talk which I attended as well and had a lot of discussion with him afterward. Just to reiterate, just to start by touching back on the theme you were just talking about. This has become a passionate area of my own, not my direct research but an interest of mine in academic research. The role of signals in guiding development and how if you have improper signals or you have the absence of expected signals that would have been there in the ancestral

environment. So they are missing now in our modern environment. That can deregulate the trajectory of developmental processes and so during development we can be very susceptible to these kind of mismatches and they could be really hard to maybe impossible to completely recover from once you discover that's happened as an adult. So reversing disease through Paleo Diet is a great goal but recognizing the limits based on what might have happened during your ontogeny or your development and that that's another thing that we really have to drum in.

To the public and to the scientific and medical community, is how important it is to understand these developmental processes, the expectations that the development system has during development and to provide it with everything it needs to foster a natural correct development. I've taken that just as an aside, I've taken that to the field area of play and cognition and intellectual and social intelligence development.

Tony Federico: And obviously as a parent I would imagine this is something that is paramount?

Aaron Blaisdell: Oh yeah. This is really also what motivates me all the time to think about ancestral health and mismatch is watching the world that my children are growing up in now and trying to make it as ideal as I can for them given all the constraints that society throws at us.

Tony Federico: And what are some ways and obviously we're not going to go down this wormhole because I'm sure we could spend hours and hours here. But what are some of the quick kind of top of the mind ways you kind of try to counteract the inertia of modern life if you will and imbue your kids with the right signals for proper development.

Aaron Blaisdell: That's a good question. That's one I struggle with all the time. To not go down that wormhole and it is a deep wormhole. I'll just say that, one, I model good behavior. Like I put into practice what I preach and what I believe, so that they could see me living the lifestyle that I think is important. I talk to them, may explain things to them, and I give them, I try to give them as much leeway as possible without letting it interfere or letting them fall behind in a system that where they have to kind of ... Like I'm think now, like school standards and stuff. Allowing them as much playtime and freedom and choice while also recognizing that I also have to keep them going along to play the game that they are all apart of. [crosstalk 20:31]

Tony Federico: Right.

Aaron Blaisdell: Right. So that's basically ... Do what I can ... And deep breaths, lots of deep breaths, meditation.

Tony Federico: Yeah try to keep that Parasympathetic System primed.

Aaron Blaisdell: Exactly.

Tony Federico: All right so A.H.S. in the past, really bringing in some key people, some key concepts. We had a little bit of a hiccup though. Do you mind maybe giving people a little bit of a run down on what happened at A.H.S. fifteen?

Aaron Blaisdell: Yeah I could take that one. Really briefly, it's so simple. Basically the dates that we had booked, that we had been planning with the University of Colorado in Boulder for many many months, and looked like that was a great dates and we kind of got locked into those dates. Once that had happened and we were locked in and we were kind of planning, and planning, and planning all of a sudden, we discovered that they had also, the University had also booked a big event of some kind and that there was no way that we would be able to share the space.

So we were the small fish and there was another really big fish and so we kind of got lost out on that. So there were no ways to change dates at that time. They said, well these other dates are available but at that time there was no way we could of adjusted the dates and we said it's just we can't, you know we came to an impasse. Basically and said, let's just put the same energies into planning even further and make it the next year and so that's what we did. So it was not anything internal to A.H.S. or anything. We did the best we could with what we had and made a call.

Tony Federico: Absolutely and I'm sure it wasn't an easy call and I'm know lots of people were looking forward to that event but like you said you were able to invest that energy into this year coming up. So let's go ahead and start talking about A.H.S. sixteen.

J. Brett Smith: You know we are going ahead August the 11-13th this year in Boulder, Colorado. At the University of Colorado at Boulder. We will have, we should have the speaker line up announced in early April which will also be about the time that this podcast gets out and which also be about the time when any interested in attending should be able to lock in some kind of early bird registration.

Tony Federico: Now tell us a little bit about the venue because I think that's one of the things that's been notable about the Ancestral Health Symposium in the past, obviously being held at Harvard and UCLA during the first symposium. Tell us a little bit about the 2016 venue and maybe some of the features and maybe some of the amenities that the venue itself might offer attendees.

J. Brett Smith: It will be back at the University Campus and that will be good, and we're going to have like lectures, poster sessions, movement sessions and then workshops, so those are the four formats. Boulder I have never been there. Aaron do you know anything about the University?  
[crosstalk 23:34]

Aaron Blaisdell: Actually, I have not been there either. It was Tess McNulty who was a [inaudible 23:39] I believe there and that's why she had proposed that place. She had looked through the venues and selected two spaces on campus for giving lectures so like kind of in the past. We will have two parallel stream of lectures going on and the rooms are supposed to be real nice classroom style auditorium and we should have video the same as in the past that we will be making and make available for free. I don't know much else about the venue except that I believe that what we are going to try and do this year is give a little bit more time. Especially at the lunch hour for people to go around on campus right off campus there's lots of options to go find there own fare for eating.

Instead of trying to host a big lunch thing in a room there because that was a very difficult to pull off in the past.

Tony Federico: Basically catering as well as hosting an [crosstalk 24:43] event.

Aaron Blaisdell: Yeah, the catering part was actually where most of the issues came up on it last year and the year before, oh two years, you know the last few events that we've had.

Tony Federico: Well Boulder is definitely an interesting city. I had the opportunity to go there for a personal training tactical strength and conditioning several years ago and I recall it being a clean, mountain altitude experience and certainly I think if you guys are going to be having movement session back in the mix, there might be some acclimatization that goes on with people just getting used to being at perhaps a little higher altitude than normal. I know for me, coming up from Florida all the way up to however many thousands of feet Boulder is situated. I might have to take it easy at least for the first couple of days, you know certainly a beautiful city and I think it's going to be a great venue for A.H.S.

Now, in terms of your intentions, what are the types of things that you are hoping that this year's events can accomplish in progressing the Paleo movement because I think that we've seen big changes in Paleo and we've seen perhaps some glimmers, perhaps of mainstreaming of Paleo. Or mainstream acceptance is starting to take place, I mean, Dave Asprey's buttered coffee is the new hot drink amongst celebrities. Abel James was on ABC reality TV show recently. Or earlier this year and these are signs that there maybe some growing acceptance of aspects of Paleo if not Paleo in it's whole cloth by the public at large. What do you think the A.H.S. event has to do with the Paleo movement itself from a kind of 10,000 foot perspective?

J. Brett Smith: Do you want me to take that Aaron?

Aaron Blaisdell: Uh, sure.

J. Brett Smith: I think the ... If we could accomplish a couple of things it would really I think be historic. If you imagine like a hundred and thirty years ago, there were no departments of microbiology. Doctors were still largely treating infectious diseases as separate, more or less, as separate phenomenon, that they thought were caused by bad air, or what they called the miasma theory. We're not talking about ancient Greece, we're talking about ... That's in 05', even ... The germ theory of disease was not established. If you imagine the germ theory sort of provided sort of theoretical identification of what were before that considered separate disease processes.

They all were then later understood to be in some sense united by this central theoretical framework of germs. I guess I'm a little optimistic of what the long term like possible benefits to medical science will be of this part of evolutionary medicine. We understand the mismatch in the same way that the germ theory established that number one, that germs exist. Number two, that they sometimes cause diseases and number three, importantly we could take measures against them. If we just substitute the word mismatch like mismatches do exist, they sometimes cause disease processes or malfunction of the you know phenotype and

then importantly we could take measures against them and others in evolutionary medicine. Like in evolutionary medicine in like major academic centers there are doing evolutionary of medicine are well aware of mismatches. What makes A.H.S. unique and what makes it so exciting for me is that we're actually not going further than saying, yeah, here is what some of the likely ones are. You know, here are some hypotheses about what we think we might do to combat them.

Like mismatches exist, they sometimes cause diseases and we could take measures against them and here are some positive ways of doing that. I mean we are the only people in the world doing this in a serious way and I think that would be the greatest thing that I could see us doing. It gets it's message across.

Tony Federico: And obviously it would be something truly revolutionary. Not like what Aaron mentioned at the beginning of our conversation, kind of more of the same approach which is you know more targeted chemicals and perhaps therapies for specific symptoms. We're looking at, as with germ theory a broader unifying theory of disease and some disease processes. What about you Aaron, what are your hopes? What are you dreams for A.H.S. this year and then maybe beyond as well?

Aaron Blaisdell: Well Brett said exactly what we're about, so and the good thing, the great thing in my mind is that every year when we get submissions ... You know we'll reach out and try and bring some people to come and invite them to come and talk at A.H.S. we think there voice should be heard, they have something to contribute. Now, often times we're able to bring those kind of people in, but in addition to that we look at the plethora of submissions that people self submit without us reaching out to them. They are all across the board in terms of what kind of mismatch they address. Whether it's psychology, we've had Autism researchers come in and talk. We've had of course nutrition and physical movement kinds of things. We've had sociologists of food security and it's really all the way across the board.

I think as long as we keep providing this forum, this venue for this conversation and we're open to all these approaches ... To all these ... Applying this unique framework to all these different aspects, I think that we'll keep growing and keep kind of ... That's my hope is that it keeps growing in the sense of being more and more inclusive. Bringing people in from all over to understand this and trying kind of gain traction in mainstream. In thinking about mismatch.

Tony Federico: Awesome.

Aaron Blaisdell: That would be where I like to see it go.

Tony Federico: Well I think that this event is certainly shaping up to be one that I'm excited about. I think the catch phrase is The Boldest Yet. A nice little pun on the venue of Boulder, Colorado. Just once again, A.H.S. 2016, Ancestral Health Symposium is going to be in Boulder, Colorado August 11-13th. I'll be there. Aaron and J. Brett are going to be there and I hope you'll be there as well. Thank you guys for coming on this show.

Aaron Blaisdell: You're welcome Tony.

J. Brett Smith: Thank you Tony.

Tony Federico: That was J. Brett Smith and Aaron Blaisdell of the Ancestral Health Symposium. You could register for the event. Check out the speaker line up and access the Ancestor Health Society scientific publication, The Journal of Evolution and Health, by going to their website [Ancestralhealth.org](http://Ancestralhealth.org). On next week's show I'm joined by Greg Vetter. Founder of Tessemae's All Natural salad dressing and condiments. Here is a preview.

Speaker 4: I'm like, "Dude what are you doing?" He's like, "I just woke up this morning jonesin' for your mom's dressing and I knew the code for your house and I came in and took it and I'm over just eating salad right now."

Tony Federico: Totally unashamed.

Speaker 4: He was like, "Hey man, let's have lunch together."

Tony Federico: To learn more about how Greg turned his mom's Paleo salad dressing recipe into a multi-million dollar business you'll have to tune in to next week's show. Until then you could check out our full archive of Paleo Magazine Radio episodes by clicking the radio tab on [Paleomagonline.com](http://Paleomagonline.com). We have over one hundred episodes in our catalog and feature guests like Rob Wolf, Mark Sisson, Sarah Valentine, Diane Sanfillippo and many, many more. From both inside and outside the Paleo sphere. We make an effort to feature a diversity of voices on this program and want to expand the conversation around Paleo.

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