

Rip Esselstyn:

Does anybody else find it challenging to live plant strong in a world that isn't? Our upcoming Plant Strong primer event will be live and online from October 23rd to the 24th. It's called Kitchen Rescue because it's dedicated to helping you haul out the pantry, makeover your menus, and discover the joy in plant strong cooking as we head into the holiday season. Whether you've been living this way for a while, or if you're brand spanking new to the lifestyle, this event is a great opportunity for our community to come together, take a break from the election headlines, and talk candidly about our favorite foods with you, our favorite friends. Let's hop in the kitchen and make it happen. I would encourage you to invite a family member, roll up your sleeves together and join in the fun. Visit primer.plantstrong.com to register today. And hey, if you can't watch it live, no sweat. Every ticket includes video access for a full year after the event.

Rip Esselstyn:

Hello, my cruciferous cousins. I hope you're doing well today. I'm finishing up a bowl of ripped big bowl of cereal with some frozen blueberries and a sliced banana with some oat milk. And I'm getting ready to light up the day here. But speaking of lighting it up, you know, these transformational Tuesday episodes, we try and feature people that are lighting it up, that are tearing it up and are great examples of what can happen when you really embrace the lifestyle. And so if any of these episodes really resonate with you, I would encourage you to share them with some friends and loved ones who maybe need to hear the message and be inspired by some of these, some of these people.

Rip Esselstyn:

This week, I'm going to share with you the story of Karen Drexler. She is a plant strong Engine 2 advocate now, and she started her journey over three years ago. And in the process she's lost over 85 pounds. She's on zero medications. She's successfully gotten her whole family on board, her husband and her kids. And she's now actually a moderator and a speaker on the Engine 2 Seven-Day Rescue group and doing terrific things there. So today this busy mom of three is going to share her seven tips for maintaining a plant strong life. And I'll give you a little spoiler alert here, it's one of her tips, and that is when you go in, go all in big time. Okay. Enjoy.

Rip Esselstyn:

All right. We got another Transformation Tuesday going on right now. I am here with Karen Drexler. And Karen, how long have you been following the Engine 2 plant strong Seven-Day Rescue protocol?

Karen Drexler:

So just over three years. I started in August of 2017 and I never looked back.

Rip Esselstyn:

Okay. And then what brought you to this lifestyle to begin with three years ago?

Karen Drexler:

Well, I had just really hit a low in my life. I was very overweight. I was discouraged. I just had some health issues going on and I reached out to a friend and asked her to go on a walk. And she had just heard about the seven day rescue and she told me about it. And as soon as I heard her start talking about it, I just knew that this was my answer.

Rip Esselstyn:

All right. So to you, it just made sense.

Karen Drexler:

Yes.

Rip Esselstyn:

Okay. And so you jumped in and was your family on board? You have a family, right? Husband and some kids?

Karen Drexler:

Yes. Husband and three kids. And they have been tremendous. My kids, especially my girls tell me all the time, "Mom, you're so cool." And they're so proud of me for how I have really changed my health. My husband is a pilot and a triathlete and a marathon runner, and he's started eating this way and he's really seen his performance improve in his races. And my son is very on board. He's just not quite as verbal about it.

Rip Esselstyn:

Yeah. Yeah. All right. So three years ago, you said you were just kind of, you needed to make a change, went for a walk with your friend. Three years later, what are some of the things that have changed in Karen?

Karen Drexler:

Oh my goodness. Well, I mean, clearly the weight loss and the way that I look. I lost overall about 85 pounds, 75 in the first year, and then 10 after I started the 10 X program. And just my self-confidence. Being able to go on adventures with my family. We moved to the lake just before I started eating this way. And the first summer, I didn't want to go out on the boat. I didn't want to wear a bathing suit or try kayaking or anything. And now I'm able to do all those things and just really enjoy time with my family.

Rip Esselstyn:

What about, were you on any prescription medications, any possibility for insulin resistance or diabetes or anything like that?

Karen Drexler:

I definitely had that in my family history and my father actually died of a heart attack at age 51. And so that is one of the huge motivators to me to make the change I had wanted. I didn't want that to be happening to me or to my family. And so I didn't have any issues yet, but of course they were looming, I knew.

Rip Esselstyn:

You are one of the moderators right now as the part of the Engine 2 Seven-Day Rescue group. You've been doing that for a long time. What has that experience been like for you?

Karen Drexler:

It's really neat. It's neat to see the people that are making the changes and to be able to cheer them on, to be able to help them. I was just helped so much and I love that I'm able to be that person now. And also it really helps me to stay immersed in it. Every day I'm in the group there's ... I think it really lessens my chance of kind of backsliding because I'm just in it all the time.

Rip Esselstyn:

And how many people are part of that group now?

Karen Drexler:

I think it's just over 35,000.

Rip Esselstyn:

Right. I mean, it's funny. We started this just as a little Facebook support group when I launched seven day rescue in January of 2017, and it's really phenomenal how it's blossomed and turned it into this. I think probably one of the most supportive, wonderful, encouraging, optimistic non-judgemental groups on Facebook for people that are trying to lose weight, regain their health, all those things. And I want to thank you for being such an instrumental part of helping people like on their day-to-day journey to kind of capture the essence of what this is all about.

Karen Drexler:

My pleasure. It's an awesome thing to be a part of. I'm so thankful.

Rip Esselstyn:

What do you see as being some of the biggest hurdles and challenges for people that are coming into the group?

Karen Drexler:

I think that a lot of people try to just kind of dip their toe and try to do it gradually. And I feel like the people that just jump in the deep end and go for it are really the ones who have the most success the quickest. The people who kind of go on and off, I've seen some of them do that and then finally, when they do jump in, they do have great success. So I think that's a really big thing.

Rip Esselstyn:

I couldn't agree with you more. I write about that in every one of my books, how important it is to really not ... I mean, listen, everybody's got a different personality and I want to respect that. And that's why in the first book, The Engine 2 Diet, I had two programs. We had the Fire Cadet and the Firefighter. The Fire Cadet. You got to kind of dip your toe in the water and move in a little bit more gradually, but within two weeks you were all in, for the last two weeks. Seven-Day Rescue, as you know, this is the varsity program. We're not holding back. We're not holding back any punches. From day one, you're not only ... You're in it to win it. And we have some very rigorous guidelines around that that are much more rigorous than Engine 2.

Rip Esselstyn:

But again, that's because people have been playing with fire for however long, right. 10, 20, 30 years. And it's time to get real. And again, it is a program that we know works. We've been doing it for almost a

decade with very, very unhealthy people. I want to ask you this, I know you've got about like seven different tips that you've developed over the years, but they're very helpful. And so what I'd love to do is ask you about those seven tips. Should we start right at the top?

Karen Drexler:

Sure.

Rip Esselstyn:

All right. So what is tip number one?

Karen Drexler:

So tip number one is just not feeling like you need to apologize to anybody for the changes that you're making and just not to let people kind of get in your head and try to talk you out of it. It's just kind of a matter of fact thing that, "Hey, I'm doing this for my health right now." And just kind of move on and take that conversation off the table.

Rip Esselstyn:

So can you give me an example of something that somebody might say to you in regards to that?

Karen Drexler:

Sure. They might say, "Oh, well, we can't even go out to eat with you anymore because you can't eat anything that we don't like." And they just, it's kind of like, they can feel that you're just this totally different person, when all you're doing is just eating plants. You're still the same person.

Rip Esselstyn:

Yeah, yeah, yeah. Well, it is surprising how many people will decide that, "You know what, Karen, if you're not going to eat the way you used to eat and the way I eat, I just don't know if we can still be friends." I mean, it's crazy, but you really find out who your true friends are when you go through this transition. And what I have found is with certain people, and it's about the right conversation with them saying, "Hey, instead of sabotaging me in my efforts here, I would really prefer it if you'd support me." And then you could, you use the Doug Lyle strategy where, "Hey, this is, it's an experiment. I'm doing it for a month. We'll see what happens."

Karen Drexler:

Right.

Rip Esselstyn:

Yeah, yeah.

Karen Drexler:

For sure.

Rip Esselstyn:

What's tip number two?

Karen Drexler:

Tip number two we already talked about, but going all in 100%.

Rip Esselstyn:

Gotcha. And right. So we don't want people to dabble and put their toe in the water. We want them to go in. What are you finding are some of the benefits of going all in? And if you want, I can help you out a little bit, but you tell me what you found.

Karen Drexler:

Well, for me, for sure, I would be one of those people if I said I'm only going to do at 90%, that my 100% focus would be on the 10% I wasn't doing. And well, when am I going to eat this thing off plan or that thing off plan, but when I'm in 100% I don't even think about it. It's just not an option.

Rip Esselstyn:

Yeah, yeah. That's nice. Yeah. I've heard people say the analogy of it's like, if there's something in the cupboard that they know, like, let's just say a box of cookies or something, it's kind of like a moth to flame. And eventually you'll be drawn to it. And so we want to make this not about willpower and if it's not in the house, it's not on your mind.

Karen Drexler:

That's right.

Rip Esselstyn:

What about tip number three?

Karen Drexler:

Don't make excuses and don't look for loopholes. And that's a big tip for me because that is definitely something that I would be prone to do. And I see that happening all the time with-

Rip Esselstyn:

What's a typical excuse or loophole that you hear?

Karen Drexler:

Oh, it's Susie's birthday and she'd feel really bad if I didn't eat this piece of cake. And it's just one time, or I don't understand why the plan says I can't eat almonds instead of walnuts, because they're all nuts and they're healthy for you. And just little things like that.

Rip Esselstyn:

And all those little things add up.

Karen Drexler:

For sure.

Rip Esselstyn:

Especially when you're finding an excuse or loophole every day, seven days a week. And that adds up, especially over the course of a month or two.

Karen Drexler:

Yes.

Rip Esselstyn:

What about tip number four?

Karen Drexler:

Trust the process. That's kind of my, I don't know. I'm sure it didn't originate with me, but I'm constantly saying that to people. Trust the process because people want to do this for three days and lose 75 pounds. And you have to realize it took a long time for this to happen, and it's going to take a while to heal your body and results happen differently with different people. But if you just trust the process and stick with it, then the results come.

Rip Esselstyn:

Yeah. I find that ... That's a really good tip. And I find that when people work the program, the program always works. And when it doesn't work is when you get impatient or you just decide that you just can't handle it anymore. And the irony is they were so close to just making it through that difficult spot to the other side. So yes, trust the process. I love that one a lot. What about tip number five, Karen?

Karen Drexler:

Tip number five is that there's always a way to make this work. I hear lots of things like I traveled too much, or I have food allergies or my significant other doesn't want to eat this way. I work night shift. All the excuses in the world, but there's always a way to make it happen.

Rip Esselstyn:

Well, and that's interesting because I think that every one of us feels like the reason why we can't do this or our excuse is better than anybody else's. And the reality is if you want it bad enough, you'll figure out a way to make it work. So speaking of which, your husband, you said as a pilot, right?

Karen Drexler:

Yes, yes.

Rip Esselstyn:

And so how does he do this? If he's a pilot and flying all the time?

Karen Drexler:

He's amazing. So I have posts in the Seven-Day Rescue group that people join and they search for me. He gets his food together every week. He takes bags of kale. He takes frozen broccoli during the week when I'm making entrees, I put it in old peanut butter jars for him and freeze it. And then he just grabs something from the freezer. So he takes everything with him. He takes oats for the morning. And so he's a great example to the people that he works with. They always know Drexler's going to be eating his

vegetables and he's not too proud to be doing that. So they've seen the changes in him. And we went to Amsterdam last year, we stayed 100% on plan. I mean, there's nowhere that you can't do this.

Rip Esselstyn:

Help me out here. You said you take leftover entrees and you put them in peanut butter jars.

Karen Drexler:

Uh-huh (affirmative), yes.

Rip Esselstyn:

And then you put them in the freezer and wow. So that's pretty good size jar. I'm hoping. And then he takes that glass and he takes it where he's going. And what does he do? Heat it up in a microwave then or something?

Karen Drexler:

Yeah. He'll heat it up in a microwave. Or if he doesn't have one, he can eat it at room temperature. We always say that it's not a gourmet meal you're looking for. It's just to fuel your body. And so then when he's home, I try to make him nicer things.

Rip Esselstyn:

Yeah. And in Amsterdam, how so, how did you guys make it work in Amsterdam? Did you guys find places with kitchenettes or what was the, yeah?

Karen Drexler:

Yeah. We stayed in a hotel. There was no kitchenette. There was this tiny little, the tiniest little refrigerator I've ever seen that had like the wine and the drinks and the mini bar in it. We had them clear that out and we just went to the local grocery store every single day and got our veggies. And I brought some oats with us and we just had an adventure making it work over there.

Rip Esselstyn:

Give me tip number six.

Karen Drexler:

Tip number six is to keep it simple. That is where I see people having the most success, particularly when you're first starting out.

Rip Esselstyn:

Okay. Can you give me some examples of what you mean by that.

Karen Drexler:

So don't try to cook a bunch of complicated recipes. The Seven-Day Rescue program is so much about building bowls and it's so easy to do that. Just if you take some frozen broccoli and a big potato and a can of beans, you can flavor it up a hundred different ways using different sparks and sauces and seasonings and you haven't spent any time in the kitchen at all.

Rip Esselstyn:

We got one more tip to go, what's tip number seven?

Karen Drexler:

Okay. Tip number seven is to join the 10 X program. It's just incredible. It doesn't matter if you're just starting out or I started it when I was about a year and a half in and I thought, "Oh, I'm doing well, do I really need to do this? But all the cool people are doing it. And it sounds like fun. So I'll try it." And I mean, it's just next level.

Rip Esselstyn:

So for people that have no idea what 10 X is, what exactly is the 10 X program?

Karen Drexler:

Sure. It is the habit building program that Engine 2 has. It follows the Seven- Day Rescue program for 10 weeks, but each 10 weeks, you're focusing on different lessons and all throughout you're learning how to build habits that just are lasting and life changing. And it can be anything. I've worked on exercise. I've worked on sleep, drinking water, so it doesn't have to be just food. You can take it anywhere you want it in your life.

Rip Esselstyn:

Right, no, that's a really good point. Yeah. There's a great spillover and crossover into other aspects. And we want it, we truly want you eating this way to be as automatic as, and I'll use the analogy of brushing your teeth, of putting on your seat belt, putting on your bicycle helmet, where it's just an extension of who you are now, and it's not difficult. And you've been doing this three years and you're such an amazing example of it. You and your family. Wow. So before I say goodbye, is there anything that you want to say as we head out here?

Karen Drexler:

Yeah. I just would encourage anybody, what do you have to lose? Just give this a try. Give it seven days, see how different you feel. And lots of us do it seven days, times the rest of our lives. And that's what I wish for everybody because it's just incredible the difference that eating this way makes.

Rip Esselstyn:

Yeah. Well, thank you Karen so much. It's great to see you again after several years. Was it Plant Stock, was it two years ago that we met?

Karen Drexler:

I think it was 2019. Yeah. 2019.

Rip Esselstyn:

Yeah. Awesome. In Black Mountain.

Karen Drexler:

Yes.

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Rip Esselstyn:

All right. Well, should we do our traditional sign-off? Where we go peace.

Karen Drexler:

Peace.

Rip Esselstyn:

Engine 2.

Karen Drexler:

Engine 2.

Rip Esselstyn:

Keep it plant strong.

Karen Drexler:

Plant strong.

Rip Esselstyn:

I am so happy to know Karen, and you will be too, especially if you follow her tip number seven and join us for this week's Kitchen Rescue event and our upcoming Rescue 10 X coaching program to learn more simply visit plantstrong.com and then click on either events or Rescue 10 X program. Thanks so much for listening and remember, peace, Engine 2, keep it plant strong. The Plant Strong podcast team includes Laurie Kortowich, Ami Mackey, Patrick Gavin, Wade Clark, and Carrie Barrett. I want to thank my parents, Dr. Caldwell B. Esselstyn, Jr. and Ann Crile Esselstyn for creating a legacy that will be carried on for generations and being willing to go against the current and trudge upstream to the causation. We are all better for it.