

You Are What
You don't Eat

**HYUNG-KIS
WELT**

When I was six years old, one of the things that often made my life unbearable was itchiness. I don't mean just a little itch, but an itchiness that could end up being so painful that no amount of scratching or prescribed creams could calm it down.

Often it would be impossible for me to sleep.

For the sake of simplicity, I will call what I had, eczema. Eczema, also known as atopic dermatitis, is a type of skin condition, that is non-contagious, and makes your skin usually red and itchy. No doctor could ever find me a cure and while I had a fun childhood, the itchy part of my life and sitting for hours in different waiting rooms for different dermatologists over and over, was not so fun.

I think that after a few years of intense suffering, one doctor finally gave me an injection, as a last resort, and after that, there was some calm for a while. I can still remember that post-syringe relief. Who knows what cocktail was in that injection. Could it have been one of those horror performance enhancing Drugs used by the East German Stasi to boost their athletes without their knowledge or consent?

Nah – probably it was just a ridiculously heavy dose of cortisone.

Whatever it was, I was grateful for the temporary relief but alas, my sensitive skin saga did not end there and, to be truthful with you, as I write about this today, four decades later, I am still irritated by eczema. And believe me, every dermatologist I have seen over the years is entirely unequipped to deal with it; they just prescribe the same thing- cortisone or some other chemical concoction which will only serve pharmaceutical companies to get richer.

This is in fact one of the problems in western medicine; doctors never try to find the cause of a problem and only rush to prescribe a remedy, or some quick-fix solution. "Take some antibiotics", is their usual catchphrase. Don't get me wrong, there are many marvels in western medicine, and the technological advances that have been made since I was a child are astounding. If you ever need a heart transplant, (which I hope you reading this never will), then you can thank the stars for the miraculous ways western medicine has developed, being able to take out a heart and replace it with another from a donor, much like replacing batteries in some electronic gadget.

But I believe I have finally found the real reason behind what causes my skin to act in such a defiant way against me: Food.

Yes, it is mostly to do with what you eat. And in actual fact, also what you don't eat, or perhaps more precisely, what you shouldn't eat. The skin is the first tell-tale sign reflecting what is going wrong with your gut.

In the 70's when I grew up in England, some of the most successful food items were instant foods. Add a little boiling water and within minutes, one had a ready meal. Or another variety of instant gourmet cooking was to throw something deep-frozen into the microwave; after two minutes of electromagnetic radiation, dinner was served, and tin can foods ending up being not only dogs' favourite meals.

Today, although these processed instant foods still exist, you won't as easily find ad campaigns promoting them. I remember a very popular product called Smash in the UK, which was a brand of instant mashed potatoes. The ads that ran on TV were some Martian robots making fun of humans making mashed potatoes the real way, peeling and boiling potatoes, instead of using granules of dehydrated potato and simply adding hot water. Clearly food from outer space for space. Incidentally, those ads for Smash were voted as one of the best ad campaigns ever on British television and I still remember them fondly myself. I like all quality ads, as they can also be works of great creativity. In any case, these ads certainly boosted sales and popularity of the space mash spud.

My diet growing up in England was full of things like Smash, and I believe that my misguided nutrition- my parents were health conscious but were also naïve like everyone else with being seduced by the zeitgeist of instant food- directly increased the anxiety my skin was causing me back then. While I certainly avoid those kinds of packaged and processed foods

today, and my diet is much healthier than ever before, I still suffer from my eczema nemesis.

Recently, after years of searching for the right kind of help, I found someone who has "shown me the light". I would like to introduce her to you here:

Dr. Katja Schlemitz.

As nutrition can be a touchy subject for many, and knowing what a wide variety of theories and wisdoms there are today about how and what to eat, I thought I'd better ask a qualified person to share some insights into what I believe is possibly the most important thing in our lives - food.

And so, here's some food for thought: I sat down with Dr. Schlemitz to ask her a few questions, and for the sake of not turning this chapter into a medical journal, I have heavily redacted our conversation, leaving with you some illuminating things she shared with me, including her story about the why the poor panda bear is lost...

HK: How did you end up doing what you do?

Dr. Katja Schlemitz: Classical medicine doesn't look for root causes. And I was always looking for the why or how to solve it. So I started to study Chinese

medicine. Acupuncture was among one of the things I learnt. I then practised it a lot on all my friends and family. And when acupuncture was not enough, I was looking for the next thing. So I started learning about nutrition. However, this became boring. It was all about things like why vitamins are unnecessary, and basically, how all the guidelines of classical medicine are over 50 years old and never changed. Except for when looking to making new expensive medications.

HK: Do you mean new medications such as cholesterol absorption inhibitors?

Dr. KS: That's a good example of something which causes more damage than good. It makes no sense to reduce cholesterol because the lower the cholesterol, the worse your brain gets. Your brain consists of fatty acids, and cholesterol is the most important stuff in the human being because every cell has a lipid membrane which is used for getting toxins out and putting supplements and vitamins in.

Dr. KS: Every hormone, every sex hormone, every stress hormone, is packed with cholesterol. The more you lower your cholesterol, the less it is possible to function right. And the lower your cholesterol gets, the faster you die.

HK: So you're saying that all this fear about high cholesterol levels being bad for you is a myth?

Dr. KS: All the misconception about cholesterol being bad for you started after a study in the 1960's, where they started measuring cholesterol levels in hormones in about 20 countries and matched up the results with the statistics of heart attacks. They found that Finland had the highest level of cholesterol along with the highest level of heart attacks. The Finns claimed it had to do with lack of sunlight. But results showed that the levels of cholesterol in France were even higher than Finland but France had the lowest rate of heart attacks.

Dr. KS: So, they simply took the findings from France out of the statistics and therefore the conclusion was that the higher the cholesterol, the higher the rate of heart attacks. Based on this study, everyone was misled to deduce that cholesterol is bad for you.

HK: And not only is that not true, but when people take medication to reduce cholesterol level, they also suffer from the side effects of the medication?

Dr. KS: Yes, unfortunately. When you look at studies which are not financed by pharmaceutical companies, only 10% of people who take cholesterol inhibitors profit positively. This means that from every 1,000 people taking that medication, 900 of them will not need it, suffer from the side effects and they are the ones who end up with all kinds of illnesses such as early dementia.

HK: I remember when eating butter was considered a bad thing.

Dr. KS: Yes, they said we should stop eating butter because it's an animal fat which is full of cholesterol. So, in order to replace butter, they came up with all these plant oils like canola oil, sunflower oil, corn, wheat, soybean oil. The sad irony is that since we started using all these oils, heart attack rates have gone up. Not only that, the rate of diabetes and strokes have also risen. None of those plant oils I just mentioned actually have any oil in them. Take corn oil, for example. Corn doesn't have any oil. It's put in an oven, and then with the help of petrochemicals, you squeeze the oily part out. And when you heat up plant oils, it produces trans-fatty acids and consuming a lot of those acids lead to atherosclerosis- a hardening of the arteries. Normally, your blood vessels contain a lot of muscle tissue which is very flexible but when you have some calcification (the accumulation of calcium salts in body tissue), your blood vessels become worse as they are less flexible and the diameter reduces.

Dr. KS: When the diameter is closed, the blood vessels become worse and you could have a heart attack because the heart doesn't get enough oxygen. This is correlated with the use of plant oil. One of the only really good plant oils is olive oil.

Because when you squeeze an olive, you can actually see the oil!.

HK: Why is food so important for us as humans?

Dr. KS.: Food gives us energy. And when we don't have energy, we are not good with work, with concentration, with sleep, with creativity.

I always say that food should give you power. So, if after I eat something, I'm looking for a couch to fall asleep, there is something wrong with the food. Nothing you eat should make you need a nap for two hours, because then there must be something wrong, as life is not about sleeping.

I think back to the Stone Age; when if you ate something that made you tired, you'd have ended up being eaten or killed.

HK: Another thing that helped us evolve as a human race and avoid being eaten or killed was our sense of hearing. The advantage that hearing has over vision is that hearing is peripheral and it covers a greater distance. That advantage we gained was often the deciding factor between staying alive or ending up with our bits caught up in a hungry lion's teeth.

Dr. KS.: Let me tell you a story about my favourite animal; the panda bear. The panda is the bear that got lost somewhere in the jungles of China. All the other bears- the polar bear, brown bear, black bear eat more or less everything, though mainly meat and fish. The panda bear, however, loses its way and the only thing it finds for food is bamboo. But the panda bear is not a ruminant like a cow. A cow can digest grass and other greens. Some animals eat grass because their digestive system digests everything and is able to produce fat or protein from it.

Dr. KS: If you do eat meat, and it has to be good meat made from cows that are grass-fed without antibiotics, you get all the good stuff from the grass, made into the best way for the human being to absorb it. The panda bear is by its nature, a bear, so it is not a good idea for a bear to eat grass. In nature, when you look at brown bears, they usually have at least two young ones by their side. But the panda is not that fertile anymore, and that is because it eats only bamboo shoots. The panda is an endangered species because it eats the wrong thing. This is why it is so hard for pandas to create offspring, even though carers try very hard under the best circumstances to provide them with fertility treatment. What they really need is a change of diet.

HK: They say you are what you eat, but actually you are what you *don't* eat.

Dr. KS.: It's important to know what foods you are intolerant of, and to find out what foods you are allergic to.

HK: Wow, so I guess a bear could even be allergic to honey and he doesn't know it.
Are we as humans eating the right things?

Dr. KS: Real food is something you can grab, taste and smell.

It may not even be perfect. I think that when you look at food you should have a clue what is inside it. A lot of food today, you need to look at what is really inside because you would never be able to tell from looking at the cover. And most things taste more or less the same. But food is also about taking the time to eat, and sharing that time with family or friends. When I look at old paintings, you never see anyone eating alone. You always see a big table with twenty people eating all kinds of stuff that they found in the woods or something that someone caught. This time spent eating with others is important and one needs to take some time for it. Life has started to get so fast. I don't think that people have less time. I think they don't want to take time for things like that.

Dr. KS: I think society has changed. It is easier to look at Facebook and grab a quick pizza than sitting together and discussing what we would like to cook, everyone helping a little to prepare the meal. In the end, it is about what you want to do with your life.



HK: I heard an interview with a World Champion bread maker who said that the problem with bread today is that there is not enough time for all the ingredients to mix and infuse with each other as there too much demand for vast quantity of bread to be ready in a short time. The lady champion said that once the bread comes out of the oven, one should let it rest for 4-5 hours in which time the ingredients have a chance to weld. She claimed that not allowing for this time was one of the reasons so many allergies exist today.

Dr. KS: And also because of the grain as the wheat is modified.

We make wheat which needs to grow fast, regardless of the weather, regardless of the types of parasites, or whether there are herbicides.

All wheat has to grow as fast and as similarly to each other as possible. Man really evolved into Man as we know it, when we left the trees and became meat-eaters.

Dr. KS: This is why we are not equipped to digest grain. When you look at monkeys, their pelvic areas are very open because the stomach or intestinal system is very wide. This is because the monkey is bloated from eating all those fruits. There are also some monkeys that eat grass. When Man started to eat animals, something happened in the development of the pelvis. It started getting narrower and straight which is why Man was able to start walking upright. What changed was the food. The homo sapiens, us humans, were not bloated anymore, and as the pelvic bone no longer needed the whole bowel system, we were able to walk. That is why all the other monkeys cannot really walk as we do.

“The sound of a good piano is when the piano sound has been implemented with time”

– Stefan Knüpfer

Stefan Knüpfer is a Piano Technician who is an inventor of genius whom we affectionately call “Q”. He has helped us with building so many ideas that are in our shows, such as the “Big Hands” used in Rachmaninov Had Big Hands, and the Lid Prop Stick which becomes an electric violin, used in Do You Believe in Gravity.

CHECK THIS OUT ON YOUTUBE:

Rachmaninov had Big Hands

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ifKKlhYF53w>

Do You Believe in Gravity

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ov_qBR79e08

HK: How does eating right help one be more creative?

Dr. KS.: The more fatty acids- the Omega-3 fatty acids, you have inside of you, the better and the faster the learning process becomes.

This means you can use the brain’s potential more. Same with Vitamin D, a vital fuel for our creative resources. When you eat food which is high in inflammatory substance, you get more inflammation in the whole system.

Dr. KS: This means you always get inflammation in the brain because it crosses the blood-brain barrier, affecting your mood. You stop feeling good and are less inspired to do anything. The digestive system is the biggest immune system you have. So the moment you start eating food which is good for you, your immune functions improve, and inflammation is reduced in your whole system.

The digestive system is the biggest immune system you have

HK: So are you saying that if we don't give the brain the right food, or we give it too much of the wrong food, it doesn't have the space to function? It gets inflamed and creativity is impeded?

Dr. KS: Yes, since it slows everything down. Your brain feels like it is in some sort of fog. It is always about food, because I think when you just have water to live on, it can actually work and be nice, but at some point you also run out of energy.

HK: There are people who've fasted for weeks, where they only Drink water...

Dr. KS: ...which can be really good, but there is also something else that happens after you start fasting for some time. The body begins producing something called Ketone bodies and the brain can use about 75 percent of this for functioning. And when the brain starts burning those ketone bodies, it creates a kind of rush in the brain, which people become addicted to, similar to a Drug.

HK: I have heard of many creative and successful people that go on a ketogenic diet. Many have claimed that it cured them of Lyme Disease, or helped to beat cancer.

Dr. KS.: That is another reason people take to fasting. But we should also talk about the importance of exercise, as it's not just about food.

When I'm looking at brain function, I realise it's about oxygen, about breathing. Studies have shown that if you compare taking antidepressants versus placebo, the placebo is always better than an antidepressant.

It doesn't matter which medication you take, the placebo always works. And furthermore, when you compare a placebo with exercise, exercise wins.

LX: If I may butt in to this illuminating conversation: I actually went through a hard time mentally for a short period in my life many years ago. When I went to a doctor he listed a whole set of different options and pills. Then he mentioned exercise.

I was surprised and asked: "So, I could either take a whole lot of pills that are potentially going to make me addicted and are bad for my health or I could do exercise which has the same effect and is good for my health?" Seemingly feeling slightly embarrassed by the very straight-forward question, the doctor hesitantly simply said: "Yes."

Dr. KS.: Great exercise is when you do some endurance or cardio routines, like jogging, fast walking, or biking. Something where your heart increases its intensity. It improves your immune system and helps your metabolism to work faster. You sweat and get toxins out via the skin, and in some ways you produce transmitters going to the endocrines.

That is why you feel happier after running or even walking.

It works as an antidepressant.

Dr. KS: It's quite amazing when you look at studies of patients with breast cancer. When you give them a high dosage of Vitamin D, and they do 45 minutes of exercise every day, they live longer than all the others. It doesn't matter which kind of therapy they are undergoing because Vitamin D improves the immune system. There are "natural killer cells" which attack or find tumour cells. Exercise makes the natural killer cells work better. And the other thing is that when you exercise, you breathe. And breathing also means muscle relaxation in some way. I think that yoga works well because you are breathing properly. You are moving your diaphragm, which means you're relaxing all the muscles in your body.

HK: What is the best way for us to find a way to take better care of ourselves and to eat better?

Dr. KS: Go back to basics. It's just like when you start playing piano, you start with "twinkle-twinkle little star", you don't start with Tchaikovsky Piano Concerto.

HK: But what about someone with depression, for example. You told me that depression was an inflammation of the brain. But how does someone who suffers from depression find the spark to say: "maybe I should eat better?"

Dr. KS: I think the first thing is to focus on is "change". None of us want to lose or get out of our comfort zone. So when you have a situation which is not comfortable, you have to change something.

And change always makes people afraid, simply because they don't know what will happen next. The first thing when you are going to do something for yourself is to be ready to change.

Very often I talk to people and the conversations are a bit like:

"Try this", "I can't", "Try this", "I can't".

They are basically saying:

"I don't want to get out of my comfort zone". But this is the first step to take because the system you're living in is not okay.

Dr. KS: If you have an apartment with no water, for example. And you want to have water. Of course you can go to some supermarket and buy six bottles. But perhaps in the long run it is easier to look for another apartment.

So it's about change.

If you want to run a marathon, you can't simply say:

“Next year I'm going to run the London Marathon”, and one day before the marathon buy a pair of shoes and run it. You need to be more like: “OK, I need a plan. How many weeks do I have? What kind of goals do I have in between? So I'm going to start with 5kms, then 10kms, then maybe a half marathon.”

When one walks from hell to heaven, there are many steps to take. You just have to go one step at a time. I think you always need someone to guide you, it doesn't matter whether it's a YouTube channel, a person or a book.

WARMING UP TO THE COLD

For quite a while now, I've been training to embrace the cold. I've always been someone who prefers the heat, and the cold has never been my best friend.

But we are now becoming steadfast friends, and the cold is teaching me a lot about life and myself. It's also damn good for you, when approached in the right way.

Many years ago, I came across a documentary about a man who could walk barefoot on ice. During an experiment after miles of walking in arctic conditions, Dressed in nothing but a pair of shorts, he couldn't feel his legs anymore.

The doctors observing and following him told him that he had to stop this trek if he wanted to keep his legs, as he was now on the verge of needing amputation.

He asked them to give him a little time, and after some minutes, he managed to actually heat himself up from within and keep his legs intact.

I remember thinking this man is not normal and that he must be some kind of extra-terrestrial. Many years later, I was sitting with a friend of mine- the fantastic trumpeter, Roman Rindberger, who is a member of one of the most brilliant and creative music-making theatrical comedy groups out there today called, Mnozil Brass- (if you don't know them, just go and YouTube them). He told me about how he was doing ice-training.

I mentioned this documentary to him, and he said, “Yes, I know him. His name is Wim Hof, and he is the man behind the method I’m now learning”.

What Wim Hof has proven to scientists is that not only he, but anyone with the right training, can control one’s own immune system by voluntarily activating the autonomous nervous system and immune responses to fight off any threat to the body.



Ever since then, I have been taking cold showers every day, researching more about breathing and doing special breathing exercises, and ice training. I can now manage to stay in an ice bath or very cold waters, for at least two minutes. I’m sharing this with you, not to let you know that I’ve gone mad, but because I believe there are many health benefits to this. For almost two years, I have not fallen ill and feel stronger in mind and spirit too. Try it yourself and see where it takes you. You may end up surprising yourself...

How you eat, how you chew, what you eat, what you don’t eat, how you breathe, how you shower, is all in your hands- take your good health seriously, without it, life is much harder.

“Creativity is the power to act”

– Ai Weiwei

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DRAWING “I MUST BE ALLERGIC TO HONEY”
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