

Shocking Truth: How Menopause Diet Can Save Your Brain! | Dr. Lisa Mosconi x Marie Forleo

Intro

Lisa Mosconi

00:00:00 — Half-lashes, night sweats, insomnia, depression, anxiety, brain fog, memory lapses. Your brain is having a party there. But then everything crashes down. Women's brains are not the same as men's brains. There's this misconception in medicine that sex does not matter and that women are considered like smaller, more emotional men. And that is just absolutely not true.

Marie Forleo

00:00:26 — Are you losing your mind? No, you're getting a brand new one. Dr. Lisa Mosconi is, quite frankly, a scientific badass. She holds a PhD degree in neuroscience and nuclear medicine from the University of Florence in Italy. She ranks in the top 1% of scientists of the past 20 years by official metrics. The Times names her one of the 17 most influential living female scientists, and get this, she's even been called the Mona Lisa of neuroscience.

The revolutionary “brain diet” that reverses dementia

Marie Forleo

00:00:53 — Lisa, I am so excited to talk to you. I have to say, I've been up in your world, and we're going to talk about all the books, but brain food, the menopause brain, the XX brain, I am like, oh my goodness, I get to have a conversation with one of the most amazing neuroscientists ever. And you're here.

Lisa Mosconi

Thank you.

Marie Forleo

So I have to tell you, brain food, your first book, was the one that really got me in first, And it's because of the subtitle, **The Surprising Science of Eating for Cognitive Power**.

00:01:28 — And like every cell in my body was like, yes, please. And P.S. I think that this cover is super dope. Do you have something you want me to tell the people about this particular cover?

Lisa Mosconi

00:01:39 — I art, I actually, I art directed every single one of my book covers.

Marie Forleo

I can't even.

Lisa Mosconi

And it was really interesting. It was actually with my husband, who is a designer by training, although he now works in science and he's just his own breed of person professionally and he said he didn't like any of the options that we were offered. And then I thought, you know what would be really cute is to really show food as an experiment because this book is so much about the science behind neuronutrition or brain nutrition and.

00:02:15 — And I wanted it to look science-y, but not like a pop science cover, something delicate, I would say, a little feminine, which is kind of me. And so I came up with this idea.

Marie Forleo

00:02:29 — I love this. Everybody loved it. Yeah. It's so beautiful. And just as an aside, we're going to dive into everything brain-related, neuroscience-related, all of your incredible research and work. But we have so many authors in our audience, myself included, and a lot of people who are either existing authors or aspiring to write. And the one thing we always talk about is covers. And I love my publisher so much. They are amazing. But my similar experience was when I saw some of the first options that were presented, I was like, oh, hell no. I was like, not on my watch. It just didn't feel...

00:03:00 — You know what I mean? And they're amazing people. But I think for me, I'll speak for myself, artistic expression and visual representation, it's so personal and it's so subjective. And it is so challenging to have folks who you've never worked with before, who you haven't done a mind meld with, come up with things that are going to be aligned with what your internal vision is. So it's like never a crack on the other folks, but it's like sometimes we as authors have to feel and take that power back and know, no, I actually know how I want this thing to be represented.

00:03:31 — Because frankly, we do judge books by their cover if we're in the world of like brick and mortar.

Lisa Mosconi

00:03:36 — Yeah. And I really wanted my books to be kind of like me, in a way to be an expression of who I am, what I bring to the table. Like for the menopause brain, the idea of the little light bulb made of flowers was my publisher's idea, but they sent it to me with, like, tulips and daisies. And I was like, "Uh-uh, roses with the thorns." And they were like, "Oh yeah, of course." I was like, "You know, this is not a picnic."

Lisa Mosconi

00:04:03 — Menopause is not a picnic. We want to say that it's not scary, that there's beauty in it. But you can't, you know, there's challenges as well, so a rose with a thorn is more of an expression. They were like, absolutely. Absolutely love it. And so it's been really wonderful to work with Penguin Random House and Avery, in part because they give me a lot of freedom, like also creative freedom and there's a lot of back and forth.

Marie Forleo

00:04:28 — Yes. That collaboration.

Lisa Mosconi

00:04:29 — I appreciate that.

Marie Forleo

00:04:29 — Yeah. Yeah. Me too. I really did too. I remember when I, because I have no poker face and I have, like, no filter. You know what I mean? Like, I am so terrible. I'm like, "Nope." And I'm like, "I love you." And they know how much I love and respect not only them, their people, but the creative process. But it is. It's really nice to work with folks. Because, same thing, portfolio with us. They were like, "Okay, what do you want?" And I was like, "Okay. Now it's on. Now we get to, like, dig in. So let's start with neuronutrition."

00:04:55 — So in your book was the first time I even saw that phrase. And why our brain has its own unique diet, which is different and separate from the rest of the body. Like, why is this so important to understand? Obviously, if we want to have cognitive power now, but also if we want to really strengthen that ability as we advance in age.

Lisa Mosconi

00:05:13 — Yes. It's such a fascinating topic, isn't it? And so I'm a neuroscientist by training, and my favorite subject was neurochemistry forever. I was so fascinated with neurochemistry, and I was learning all about these different molecules and how

they shape brain function, and how they feed brain structure, and how the different neurotransmitters communicate with each other.

00:05:39 — And then I realized sodium, potassium, glucose, tryptophan, protein, fat was like, this is food. Effectively, neurochemistry is neuronutrition, is the study of how these different chemicals and different substances effectively become the very fabric of our brains, we just don't think about it as such.

00:06:07 — And so when I started my career as a neuroscientist, which I have been for many, many years at this point, decades, I was so fascinated with the idea that the environment can become part not just of our bodies, but of our brains as well, right? It's one beautiful way that we can bring the nature inside of us and really use those beautiful compounds and phytochemicals and everything that nature provides and use it to our advantage.

00:06:37 — And that was more or less the time that I moved to New York. I was born and raised in Florence in Italy, and we were just talking about the fact that. I also studied in France. I went to a French high school. And so my connection with food was always very passionate, you know what I mean?

Marie Forleo

00:06:57 — The French and the Italian. Come on.

Lisa Mosconi

00:06:59 — Yeah. I love good food. I've always been so enthusiastic about food. And then I moved to New York and my diet completely changed.

Marie Forleo

Terrible.

Lisa Mosconi

I had no idea what I was doing. I was eating at the local cafeteria. I was a PhD student. I didn't really have that much of a budget, to be honest, and it was my very first time. I'm cooking for myself and doing grocery shopping just for me without my family, without my mom and my dad. I gained 20 pounds within, like, a year.

00:07:29 — I remember I went back to Florence and my father's face, like, he saw me, he was like, ha! "Oh, God."

Marie Forleo

00:07:39 — The shock and the horror. You're like, what the hell have you been doing?

Lisa Mosconi

00:07:41 — You know, just trying to keep a straight face, like, what happened to you sweetheart? And so then I realized there's something wrong with the food I'm eating because I'm not doing anything different. And then I took a deep dive into nutrition, not just for something to prevent disease or how to eat when you have a disease, but nutrition for prevention as well and how to support yourself and your body. And thank goodness the pounds came off, which was great. But it was really quite eye-opening, like the effect that your diet can have, not just on your physical health, but your mental health, I could not think straight.

00:08:17 — I was going from a little bit of a slave to myself and I really loved learning. So there were days that I would just have my nose in a book for like 12 hours straight with very short breaks and no problems, like 100% focus, great memory. As soon as my diet changed, I just, I found myself just reading the same thing over and over again, because I could not remember what I was reading.

00:08:46 — And then I would forget what I was doing in the middle of like a statistical analysis, which is unheard of for me. I was just like, there's something wrong with me, I'm sick. And so I started going to the doctor and the doctor offered me antidepressants. And they said, maybe you're depressed because you're homesick. I was like, "Maybe, but how do I know about this?" And so I went back to the basics and I changed my line of research because I was really interested in learning more about the ways that diet, exercise, and lifestyle can support brain health.

00:09:22 — And I changed my diet right back, I actually believe I optimized my diet for brain health. And a lot of research that I was doing at that point in time was really about diet and nutrition for brain health, and they do brain imaging. That's my specialty. I have a PhD in nuclear medicine and neuroscience, so I really do brain imaging all the time.

00:09:47 — And we were able to provide neurological correlates and brain imaging correlates to having or not having a healthy diet and what kind of nutrients are more closely associated with high brain energy levels or better outcomes for brain health and also reduce risk of Alzheimer's disease.

Lifestyle tweaks that keep your mind sharp as you age

Marie Forleo

00:10:09 — Yeah. And let's talk about that for a second because I feel like that's really big when we're thinking about this from a societal perspective and a collective perspective. I read in your book Alzheimer's in the US alone is 5.3 million people at this point.

Lisa Mosconi

6.2.

Marie Forleo

Oh, 6.2. Okay. Can you imagine? I think so. It's gone up. And, again, at the time of the writing, ballooning to 15 million by 2050.

Lisa Mosconi

00:10:33 — And that... Now 32.

Marie Forleo

00:10:34 — Now... It's like, wow. So all of us paying attention to this, not only for ourselves, but our loved ones, it's big. It's really big.

Lisa Mosconi

00:10:45 — No, it's huge. It's huge. And I think what's changed in my field, which is the field of cognitive aging, Alzheimer's disease, brain aging, is the understanding that your choices really have an impact on your outcomes. And things like a healthy diet, a healthy lifestyle, regular physical activity, stress reduction, sleep quality, those really all compound together to determine, at least in part, your odds of experiencing cognitive decline in old age and developing Alzheimer's disease in old age. So when I started, that was unthinkable. No one or very few people actually believed that Alzheimer's could be, the risk of Alzheimer's could be impacted by everyday life.

Marie Forleo

00:11:35 — Wow.

Why most women ignore doctors' advice about Alzheimer's

Lisa Mosconi

00:11:36 — And now it is such a well-established observation that there are Alzheimer's prevention clinics sprouting all over the world. And I lead one, I run the Alzheimer's prevention clinic at Weill Cornell Medicine, and a lot of what we do is lifestyle based. It's really has become such an integral component to Alzheimer's prevention and just support of cognitive aging that I think is fascinating to see like this switch, right?

00:12:08 — Not just in research and science, but also in clinical practice.

Marie Forleo

00:12:13 — Yeah. Yeah. And that's why I wanted to... I was so excited. Well, first of all, I'm obsessed with this stuff. I'm obsessed with learning, obsessed with science, and also really excited to have this discussion on the show because we actually learned our audience is shifting and changing a little bit. We have a lot more younger people watching our show these days. And of course, we have folks that are in their 30s, 40s, 50s, and 60s plus, and all of us can benefit from this.

And I feel like as a business person and a marketer, one of the things I know to be true is prevention is actually one of the hardest things to sell. Because when we're young, we're often like, oh, we have that kind of... «We're immortal.” We don't... You know what I mean? But however, as the years go on and those of us that experience cognitive decline and those we love and start to face some of these challenges, it's kind of a good wake up call. So I just, I wanted to highlight that because this is so, so, so important for us to get now.

00:13:05 — And the earlier we start, the better our chances are of kind of having this, not only individual healing, but a societal healing.

Lisa Mosconi

00:13:13 — Absolutely. And actually at the clinic, we see similar effects. Like people who come to the. Alzheimer's prevention clinic range from 21, which is obviously the minimum legal age, up to 100 years old and over. So it's really any age, there's never a limit, right? The sooner you start the better, but it's never too late to take care of yourself and support the health of your brain.

Marie Forleo

00:13:40 —I love that messaging, and I feel like that's such an intrinsic part of who you are because. I've been so steeped in all of your books these past few weeks, and we'll get to just some things that you wrote that really, really made a difference to me, especially in menopause brain. We'll get there in a little bit, so you're going to have to keep watching and keep listening. Interesting.

So I thought that what was interesting, you wrote about out of all of our organs, the brain can be one of the most vulnerable or susceptible to our diet.

00:14:08 — And then in brain food specifically, you had two amazing brain scan images of women that were in their 50s, so around the same age. And one brain scan was of a woman who most of her life had eaten a Mediterranean style type diet, and the other one who is more of a kind of Western diet. And those images were so starkly different. Can you speak to what you've seen in these thousands of brain scans you've done?

00:14:40 — And this was something new to me, I didn't know this, that we cannot grow new neurons. So how does this incredible work that you do, if we can't grow

new neurons, and maybe you can break that down, what can we expect to see in terms of changes? If we start adopting from a nutrition standpoint, neuronutrition and also, of course, lifestyle.

How to stop your brain from shrinking over time

Lisa Mosconi

00:14:58 — Yes. So that was quite impressive to me as well when we started doing brain imaging in women who were like in their 40s and 50s and men as well, but I specialize in women's brain health. So the images are from two women. And as you said, we have now hundreds and hundreds of people in the study and we keep collecting information on diet, exercise, sleep, stress, all the things that could make your lifestyle is either wonderful or terrible for you and for your brain, right?

00:15:28 — And what we find, not just for those two women, those were like examples, but what we have shown and published multiple times is that women who eat more healthily show better brain energy or higher brain energy levels that remain consistent over time, yeah, less brain shrinkage over time, and just healthier looking brains overall, as compared to women who follow more like the standard American diet.

Marie Forleo

00:16:00 — The SAD diet, which is so smartly named.

Lisa Mosconi

It is very funny, because for that group of women, and look, our participants are relatively healthy. So it's very unlikely for us to find a lot of comorbidities, you know, so we have a fairly clean, squeaky clean population, where very few people have diabetes, very few people have high blood pressure, no one has a history of cardiovascular disease, nobody has depression.

00:16:30 — So these are very healthy women to start with. Wow. And still, we could see a different rate of change where the brains of the women on the standard in the SAD diet are not as healthy to start with, already midlife, and then show more brain shrinkage over time, they lose metabolic activity over time.

00:16:51 — And we also see that they tend to develop Alzheimer's plaques in their brains around midlife, like late 50s, early 60s, it kind of takes off at that point. That's accounting for everything else. So we take into consideration physical activity, sleep, stress, everything is in the model.

00:17:11 — But when you just adjust, you kind of remove the effects of all these other variables by saying, OK, if everybody exercised the same, if everybody slept the same,

if everybody had the same amount of stress, what's the impact of diet? And the impact was sizable. Wow. So that was quite an eye-opener for me. And what's important to realize, to your point, is two things. Number one, the brain has a very specific diet. I hear this over and over again, that people come to me and say, "If I eat more of this, if I eat more of that, is it going to help my brain?" I'm like, "Look, the brain is not a sponge."

00:17:51 — It's not like you just can push stuff inside your brain. It's such a fantastic organ that is so protected and shielded, and it makes its own decision. It's like your brain has its own mind, also when it comes to eating. And the way it works is that the brain is protected by something called the blood-brain barrier, or at least some kind of a system that shelters the brain from the rest of the body.

00:18:16 — And this barrier comes with little receptors that are like gates that are specific for certain nutrients, right? Only some nutrients and not others. And then the brain opens the gates when the brain wants the nutrient, not when you want the nutrient. You know what I mean? It's an active system.

00:18:37 — Like, when the brain is hungry, these gates will open, and the nutrients will come in. When the brain doesn't want those nutrients, the gates don't open, which is very interesting and fairly understudied, but we know that from a number of clinical studies and preclinical work. So number one, the brain has a special diet. There are some nutrients that are very important and very welcome, and other nutrients they can't even get in. And if you want, we can talk about which ones.

00:19:04 — No, we're definitely going to go there. But then the other thing that you mentioned that I think is fascinating is that the brain is quite different from other parts of the body, where from the neck down, our fibers, our tissues are built to change very quickly. So from the neck down, our tissues and muscles, our body fat, the storage in the system is built for change.

00:19:29 — And that's why if you exercise, if you change your diet, you can change your body weight quite quickly. You could impact your body weight quite quickly. You can lose fat. You can lose... You know, it can build muscle mass fairly quickly in a couple of months, right? You can see significant changes. The brain not so much. Because brain cells, the majority of brain cells are born with us and stay with us for life.

00:19:55 — There is a little bit of turnover and regeneration, but only in very specific parts of the brain. And it's just a little bit. It's not like your entire brain keeps growing neurons, otherwise we will lose our minds. We couldn't be able to remember anything, we would have to keep learning things over and over again. Instead, our neurons are there for the long run, which means that your brain is built for stability. And what that means is that for lifestyle to have an impact, you need to have consistency.

00:20:28 — It's not going to take a couple of months because that would make us weaker from a brain perspective. Our brains would be too vulnerable to changes

in the environment. So if you want to change your brain with lifestyle modifications, with diet, with exercise, that takes time, but the benefits are for life.

Marie Forleo

00:20:48 — That's amazing. You know, consistency is probably one of my favorite words, you know, when I'm teaching and coaching and working with people and myself, most importantly. It's like success doesn't come from anything you do occasionally, it comes from what you do consistently. And that's so fascinating to hear that with our brains. And I love how you... I'm just reflecting this back to you, you probably know this intrinsically, but like you have such an incredible way of framing things in the positive.

00:21:14 — Like something that could... You know what I mean? You're like, "Oh my God, my brain's not going to change so fast." And then you're like, "But wait, this is a good thing." And I'm like, "Oh, it's a good thing. This means it's more stable and less vulnerable."

Lisa Mosconi

00:21:24 — Yes. And then whatever changes you're able to make will be preserved, right? The brain will preserve them because neurons are built to only change when the change makes sense in a way, unless you're doing something bad for a really long time. And then you may actually negatively impact the health of your brain, which I think is very important when you make a choice.

00:21:49 — Like I like to think of my lifestyle as function and information, but something that was helpful to me was realize that these nutrients are not just nutrition, it's not just something you eat for fun or they're actually function, but most importantly, they are information.

So what they do is they reach your brain, they go inside your brain cells, and they travel all the way to your DNA. And then they talk to your DNA and say, "I'm here," you know, like let's say an omega-3 fatty acid, which is mostly anti-inflammatory. It can travel all the way inside the brain and activate a nutrigenomic pathway where it says to your brain, "I'm here to take care of the inflammation, go make more protein." Right? But if it's not there, then the brain...

Everybody knows that there's a risk of inflammation throughout the body and more anti-inflammatory compounds need to be made. So it's a little bit of a checks and balances system. I think it's very beautiful to see that the outside becomes part of the inside.

Marie Forleo

00:22:54 — It's quite poetic and I think it is also really connective in terms of, I think a place that we need to go individually and collectively is that level of recognizing

what is outside is coming in and what is inside can go out. And like on a very deep kind of quantum physics level, it's like, yeah, it's all energy. It's all information.

Lisa Mosconi

00:23:20 — We're all stars.

Marie Forleo

Yes.

Lisa Mosconi

We all come from the stars. It's so true.

Marie Forleo

So another thing that I did not know, that I was like, "Another thing to underline in Lisa's book," was that the brain is 80% water and the body is 60% water. So I want to talk about this because I feel like this is probably — and I'm curious if you would agree with this — like one of the simplest, easiest things that we can do immediately to start taking better care of our health is stay hydrated.

00:23:47 — And I'll tell you, yesterday on our team call — so my company, everyone is completely distributed, so we're always on Zoom for our team meetings — I was like, "Guys, Mosconi's book, everybody take a big drink of water right now." And I'm like, "All water is not created equal. So let's break this down." I know you said as little as 3% to 4% dehydration can almost immediately impact your brain. And this is something that I realized recently.

00:24:11 — I love to dance, and I love to work out. And there are times when I don't feel like I've adequately rehydrated myself afterward, and then I feel like I've got a headache. You know what I mean? I'm like, "I need to take a nap." And then I'm like, "Oh, shit. It's not because I worked out too hard; it's because I haven't rehydrated properly." So, walk us through this.

Stop doing THIS to fix headaches and brain fog

Lisa Mosconi

00:24:30 — Absolutely. And you know, this is very funny because when I wrote Brain Food, I thought this was obvious. And I thought everybody knew that hydration is so important for brain health. And they realized that nobody really talked about it. And everybody was fascinated by this knowledge because it's so intuitively, like you can tell that that's the case. So the brain is really mostly made of water, and water

is effectively a nutrient for the brain because it's needed to power every single cellular reaction that takes place inside the brain.

00:25:06 — It's the medium that provides cushioning for the brain, it shelters the brain so that if you hit your head, you don't get hematoma. Hour, but also really has a nutrition, a trophic effect in some ways.

00:25:21 — And what's interesting is that even just mild dehydration, which is a two to four percent water loss inside the brain, right, not just in the body, but specifically inside the brain, can trigger neurological symptoms from headaches and dizziness, migraines, vertigo, brain fog, mental fatigue, which I deal with a lot because a lot of participants, a lot of patients come to us for brain fog.

00:25:53 — And also this is interesting. So we do brain scans and there's a type of brain scan, it's called a PET, scan P-E-T, where we need to do an IV. The first thing I do with every single patient who works in the door, I'm like, okay, when is the last time you had a glass of water, actual water? Don't tell me purified water. I don't care about seltzer, soda, it's not water, you know, actual water in the billet. Two, three hours ago, great, we're going to drink a nice glass of water, hot.

00:26:23 — Yes, warm water is a vasodilator. So what it does, it makes your veins pop. So number one, I can get the line in much faster, but also for you, it really supports rehydration. So if you ever feel dehydrated, warm water is the best way to get the electrolytes in and give you volume.

Marie Forleo

00:26:45 — Wow.

Lisa Mosconi

Yeah.

Marie Forleo

I didn't know that.

Lisa Mosconi

00:26:47 — Yeah. Yeah. So that's a good trick.

Marie Forleo

00:26:49 — So let's talk about... Because the kind of water you drink matters. Yeah. So I went down this big rabbit hole. So from other testing I've done, I learned that I've got some excess old lead in my system.

Lisa Mosconi

Yeah. Same.

Marie Forleo

Right? That we need to get out.

Lisa Mosconi

Same.

Marie Forleo

And so we have, in two places, we have reverse osmosis. And I was like, oh, shit. So, you know, the reverse osmosis, you know, great for getting out contaminants, great for getting out different things that we wouldn't want to be drinking, not so good because it takes out some of those essential minerals like the magnesium, right, and calcium. So let's get down to brass tacks because I know in your book, you know, talking about natural spring water, amazing if we can, best that we can do. So if you're going out to dinner or you're going out or you have an opportunity to have that in your home, all thumbs up.

Lisa Mosconi

00:27:42 — Wonderful.

Marie Forleo

00:27:42 — What is your opinion? And I'm asking, this is like personal questions for me, what's your opinion on the best ways to get some of those electrolytes or those core minerals back in? And this is not about particular brands, I'm just going to say it because they're easy for me to get, but we can talk broadly based on where people are in the world so they can find things that are good for them. Like I know, obviously, a lot of electrolyte and things that you can pour in your water that I've been doing.

00:28:08 — Like I've chosen sugar-free versions, you know, and really looking at the ingredients to go like, what's the simplest?

Lisa Mosconi

Sodium.

Marie Forleo

Yes. The simplest things that I can put back in this to give my body what it needs, because. I know that the water coming out of my filter is... It's purified, but it's stripped of all the minerals.

Lisa Mosconi

00:28:24 — Yeah. That is unfortunate. You know, one thing you can do that we did was to call the city, 311. And they come to your house and do testing, and then they give you a list of possible filters that you can put under the sink. Oh, really? Yeah. We have one for the entire house. Okay.

Marie Forleo

00:28:42 — I'm going to do that.

Lisa Mosconi

00:28:44 — It works really well. It takes all the impurities and heavy metals out, but leaves the electrolytes in.

Why you should ditch soda water (unless you WANT to feel terrible)

Marie Forleo

00:28:53 — Oh, great. It's big. That's okay. Yeah, exactly. But it's something to do. I also was looking, too, and Josh and I were looking at this, and I was like, "Oh, there's remineralizers." Have you heard of those?

Lisa Mosconi

Yes.

Marie Forleo

What do you think of those?

Lisa Mosconi

00:28:59 — I don't... There isn't a lot of research on it. It makes sense to me in principle. The question is always...

Marie Forleo

The sourcing of what are, like...

Lisa Mosconi

The sourcing, the origin, and how complete that might be. So in water, of course, we know that there are some salts and minerals, but there's a lot of compounds that have never been tracked or studied. So there may be more to water than just...

Marie Forleo

00:29:26 — Those things that they're remineralizing with.

Lisa Mosconi

Yeah. Yeah.

Marie Forleo

Okay. That's fair.

Lisa Mosconi

But I'm not sure. Yeah. So I would love to see more research.

Marie Forleo

More research. Okay. About that. Last question on this one, just because, again, I think it's... It's helpful for everyone. You know what's important?

Lisa Mosconi

00:29:38 — Yes. I think it's important to realize that your brain doesn't just want something wet.

Marie Forleo

Yes.

Lisa Mosconi

So... And water means fluids with nutrients that can promote hydration.

Marie Forleo

00:29:52 — Yes.

Lisa Mosconi

00:29:52 — And I know this sounds weird, but seltzer doesn't have any. And...

Marie Forleo

00:29:56 — This is good for people to know.

Lisa Mosconi

00:29:57 — ...Carbonated water does.

Marie Forleo

00:29:59 — Yeah.

Lisa Mosconi

00:29:59 — If it's naturally carbonated from a spring source, like San Pellegrino, I'm not promoting. I don't know them. I don't...

Marie Forleo

00:30:05 — Yeah, yeah. No, no, no. But...

Lisa Mosconi

00:30:06 — But just as an example, that's a natural spring source that just happens to have bubbles.

Marie Forleo

00:30:11 — Yes. And that's why I wanted to talk about this because one of the things I think I always get frustrated with, not with your work, by the way, but whenever I work, I'm kind of going down a health rabbit hole because I'm like, "Yeah", but I need to know what to do. You know what I mean? I need to know exactly what my options are. And so that's why I wanted to just open this up because I'm sitting there and y'all know, We all know what the internet is like these days. You don't know what the hell you can trust. You don't even know what you can't trust. So the last thing I'll ask you is about, and again, it's not about this particular brand, but it's the one that I have access to.

00:30:42 — It's like these fulvic minerals that you can put in, it's called black, and you can put it in your water. I'll show you offline. Okay. But when I went down that little research rabbit hole, it was about the electrolytes and putting minerals back into our water. That makes sense.

Lisa Mosconi

00:30:56 — I think that makes a lot of sense. I think if you have access to clean water, even tap, that's great. If you don't, that's a perfectly viable route. And yeah, if you can access spring water, obviously, that's great. It doesn't have to be fancy, but you can go to Target and it's not super expensive. I mean, tap would be better, but a lot of people, unfortunately, don't have access to clean water.

00:31:22 — So I think in that case, yeah, rehydration salts and minerals can be helpful. Coconut water is another really nice way to rehydrate. It is sugary though.

Marie Forleo

00:31:33 — Yeah. We got to watch out for that. I remember, you know, I was in the grocery store yesterday actually after I had driven for a few hours and I came home and I felt it and I was like, I went to the store and. I looked at it and I was like, holy, you know, this particular brand was way too much sugar for me. So I was like, I'm going to put that down. But you also noted aloe vera juice.

Lisa Mosconi

00:31:50 — Oh, I love it.

Marie Forleo

00:31:51 — Yes. I love it so much. So that's another way. Your local health store.

Lisa Mosconi

00:31:54 — That's another very nice way. Another one. So this was always interesting to me how in this country, a lot of people have said to me that they don't like to drink water because it doesn't have any flavor. I taste it. And a lot of people in Italy, where I'm from, are like, "Oh, this is this kind of water!" And this water is not as good as this other water, right? So I think your palate has something to do with that, perhaps. But something that I find interesting, especially now that my daughter is little, and sometimes she would like to drink something else, not just water, I do liquid chlorophyll. Minty chlorophyll. And I think that that's also nice in terms of rehydration.

Marie Forleo

00:32:36 — Like little drops and you could probably get them in the health store, on Amazon.

Lisa Mosconi

00:32:39 — Yeah, yeah. On Amazon. Easily, like a teaspoon makes everything taste minty and fresh, it looks green, so it's kind of cool.

Marie Forleo

00:32:46 — Yeah.

Lisa Mosconi

00:32:46 — But it also... That specific brand I'm thinking about at least that I thought was a good one, very clean. Also contains salts and minerals.

Marie Forleo

00:32:55 — You want to say it?

Lisa Mosconi

00:32:56 — So it's really good for your hydration.

Marie Forleo

00:32:56 — Because people are going to... I'm going to see in the comments. What's Lisa like?

Lisa Mosconi

I don't recall the brand.

Marie Forleo

You don't recall? Okay.

Lisa Mosconi

I'll find out and tell you.

Marie Forleo

We'll find out and we'll put it in the comments. I'll check and tell. Yes, yes, yes.

Lisa Mosconi

00:33:03 — I remember exactly what the bottle looks like, but now I'm kind of blacking out on the actual brand.

7 superfoods for the ultimate brain boost

Marie Forleo

00:33:09 — We'll find it. There's so many things out there. So let's keep going and talk about some of like the best and worst foods for our brain. So we know that water, A, yes, hydrate, hydrate, hydrate, B, let's get it with those electrolytes and minerals in it. And in terms of food for the brain, and again, you go into so much incredible detail in your book. So for all y'all, you want the big full on, you know, uninhibited list, you have to pick up Lisa's books.

00:33:35 — We're going to talk about some top line things. And then I want to mention one thing that surprised the pants off me that I want to dig into more. I know.

Lisa Mosconi

00:33:43 — I'm curious.

Marie Forleo

00:33:43 — Yes. But tell me, what are some of the top line things like when it comes to, let's say, amino acid profiles, what are the foods that give us the best support for mental clarity and sharpness for life?

Lisa Mosconi

00:33:54 — There are several nutrients and therefore foods that contain the nutrients that have been shown time and time again to be associated with better outcomes when it comes to the health of your brain where the outcomes can span from better mood to better sleep to better cognitive performance. And there's a whole range and they really are whole foods. And that is really important to say that nature provides for us and diversity is key.

00:34:27 — So there are so different types of apples, there are so many different types of nuts and seeds and whole grains and legumes and animal food is a different story, but that is helpful too. It can be helpful if you enjoy animal foods as well. I would say my top five are actually on the cover of the book, yeah, and I'll tell you, the number one is caviar.

Marie Forleo

00:34:53 — Yes. I know. That was the one that surprised the pants off me. Can I tell you, I have literally never had caviar in my life. Never had it. So I was like, "Okay, I need to go shopping."

Lisa Mosconi

00:35:04 — And I don't want... I know it's expensive. I was not trying to sell caviar to people.

Marie Forleo

00:35:10 — No. Of course you're not.

Lisa Mosconi

But we gotta...

Marie Forleo

You're a scientist.

Lisa Mosconi

Yes.

Marie Forleo

And we gotta be mature. You know what I mean? Yes. Like we have to have conversations where it's like, not everybody needs to buy everything and not everybody needs to like everything. And everybody's got... You know, I love... There's a term. It's like the bio-individuality. You know, my best friend in the whole world, she's like my soul sister, she's a vegan.

Lisa Mosconi

Right. I have been for a long time.

Marie Forleo

Yes. So it's like my friends, all of us, it's like we're eating to the best of our ability in a way that we believe.

Lisa Mosconi

00:35:37 — Yes. And that works for you.

Marie Forleo

Yes. That is the healthfulliest or most helpful for ourselves, the planet, like everything. Like we're doing our best. So ain't, you know, Dr. Lisa ain't telling us like go out and do it like this.

Lisa Mosconi

00:35:50 — Actually, I misspoke. I was vegan.

Marie Forleo

00:35:53 — You were vegan.

Lisa Mosconi

00:35:54 — For a while. Yeah. I've been a vegetarian for a really, really long time, but an Italian vegetarian. So I do eat fish on occasion, but again, I'm not trying to say you have to buy caviar. I'm aware that it's expensive.

Marie Forleo

00:36:07 — Of course.

Lisa Mosconi

00:36:07 — I'm aware of the way that it's produced. I'm aware of a lot of things. I was talking about the neurochemistry.

Marie Forleo

00:36:13 — Yeah. Let's talk about that. Again, this is important to talk about. Yes. We can be mature and know that there are considerations. It's good.

Lisa Mosconi

00:36:19 — So eggs in general, regardless of source, provenance, are a fantastic brain food because. Because they're high in lean protein, complete protein. They're very high in good fat, especially fish eggs, because they're high in a very specific type of fat that's called omega-3 fatty acids, so polyunsaturated fatty acid, which is basically the best brain food or the best brain fat, right?

00:36:48 — So this is what I was talking about before, about these little gates that open and close. So the brain very specifically needs polyunsaturated fatty acids for function because all the membranes of your neurons are made of saturated fat and polyunsaturated fat. But whenever a cellular reaction takes place, like synaptic activity, it's the polyunsaturated fat that is being consumed.

00:37:15 — The saturated fat lasts for a very, very long time.

Marie Forleo

Is that the myelin?

Lisa Mosconi

00:37:20 — Yes. The myelin sheath. But also when you look at the tip of the neuron, there's a part that's called the synaptic cleft and the synaptic button where the neurotransmitters come out from. So yeah, so it's literally the membrane folds in to make like a little pouch that is filled up with neurotransmitters. And then the pouch is relieved in, it's like a bubble that bursts in the synaptic cleft. And all of that is fat and protein, fat and protein, fat and protein.

00:37:49 — So there is quite a bit of cellular turnover, and the kinds of fat that are being used to make the membrane and rebuild the membrane are based on polyunsaturated fatty acids, predominantly omega-3s, omega-6s, omega-9s, there's a lot of different types. Yes. So that's the kind of brain fat that the brain really wants and needs, whereas a lot of people People are surprised to hear that cholesterol can't get inside your brain.

00:38:20 — There are no gates for cholesterol. And I think it's important to clarify that because many people are aware that the brain has a lot of fat, contains a lot of fat. And then the assumption is that you need to eat a lot of fat to replenish whatever fat is in your brain. And I'm always like, no cholesterol and no saturated fat so much either.

00:38:43 — So the gates for saturated fats are quite open when we're little and we're children, but they're kind of, they're not very responsive as we get older.

Marie Forleo

00:38:53 — Interesting.

Lisa Mosconi

00:38:54 — Yeah. And there are no gates for cholesterol. Why not? Because the brain makes its own. Yeah.

Marie Forleo

00:38:59 — So self-sufficient.

Lisa Mosconi

00:39:01 — Completely. Yeah. In terms of cholesterol, yes. And then it really shields the cholesterol away from the rest of the body and the circulation. So there's some cholesterol can come out, either from the blood or cerebrospinal fluid, but no cholesterol can get in unless there's a damage in your blood-brain barrier. It's huge cholesterol. It's a very big, chunky molecule. So it's more efficient for the brain to just make its own.

Marie Forleo

00:39:25 — Interesting. And so, okay. So fish is great. So fish is great.

Lisa Mosconi

00:39:29 — Any food that contains omega-3s, really, so almonds, hazelnuts, I love hazelnuts.

Marie Forleo

00:39:37 — Me too. You too? I love chopping hazelnuts and, like, putting them on salads.

Lisa Mosconi

Oh, yes.

Marie Forleo

Forget about it. Like, hazelnuts, I can't even. Very good. Like, I gotta watch myself.

Lisa Mosconi

Me too.

Marie Forleo

00:39:47 — But also, right? Chia seeds?

Lisa Mosconi

Chia seeds are good.

Marie Forleo

00:39:50 — Yeah.

Lisa Mosconi

00:39:50 — You know what's really surprisingly good? Green peas.

Marie Forleo

For omega-3s?

Lisa Mosconi

They're sweet. Yes. So they're good sources of phospholipids that are bound to the omega-3s.

Marie Forleo

Amazing.

Lisa Mosconi

Surprising. And those are quite high in protein.

Marie Forleo

00:40:04 — Yes.

Lisa Mosconi

00:40:04 — So for vegetarians, vegans, that's actually a good source of brain fat as well.

Marie Forleo

00:40:09 — I love it. Walnuts too. And I was...

Lisa Mosconi

Walnuts.

Marie Forleo

Is it...

Lisa Mosconi

Also soy. Soybeans.

Marie Forleo

Yes.

Lisa Mosconi

Edamame..

Marie Forleo

Edamame.

Lisa Mosconi

Really good.

Marie Forleo

What do we think about... Is there really a distinction there with black walnuts versus regular walnuts? Or not really? It's like...

Lisa Mosconi

00:40:23 — Maybe a little bit. You know, it's like when people say brown rice is so much better than white rice but the amount of fiber is not, you know, yes, it's better, but it's a subtle difference in some ways. There isn't a ton of fiber, whereas if you get a red rice or a black rice...

Marie Forleo

Now we're talking.

Lisa Mosconi

Then there's more...

Marie Forleo

00:40:42 — Right? Now it's like party on when it comes to...

Lisa Mosconi

But there's more fiber.

Marie Forleo

00:40:46 — Yes...

Lisa Mosconi

Even better, wheat berries or spelt, there's more fiber there.

Marie Forleo

Great.

Lisa Mosconi

Yeah. Also spelt has more protein than quinoa.

Marie Forleo

Is spelt gluten-free?

Lisa Mosconi

Much better.

Marie Forleo

00:41:00 — Ah, shit. Okay. So that has to be off my list because my tummy is not happy with the gluten. But all the other things.

Lisa Mosconi

Then quinoa.

Marie Forleo

Then quinoa it is. Okay. So let's talk about what's the number one nutrition tip you have for brain health, like the thing that we should stay away from.

Lisa Mosconi

00:41:14 — Oh, away from. Can I tell you what my number one tip is?

Marie Forleo

For the pro? For what we should have?

Lisa Mosconi

Yeah, for the pro.

Marie Forleo

Brain!

Lisa Mosconi

Antioxidants.

Marie Forleo

Okay. Yes. Tell me. Tell us the top ones.

The WORST thing you can do during menopause

Lisa Mosconi

00:41:23 — A ton of research, a ton of research has shown that antioxidants are extremely important for brain health.

Marie Forleo

Why?

Lisa Mosconi

Because the brain is the most metabolically active organ in the body and neurons do not regrow. So what happens when you're metabolically active and you burn glucose for energy is that inevitably you're going to suffer from free radical production and increased oxidative stress.

00:41:51 — It's just a byproduct of running on glucose, right, the same when you, with regular fuel cars, there's anyway, you get my point. And so what's really important to realize is that the oxidative stress will damage your neurons in the long run. And it's really important to counterbalance that kind of rusting effect. And the only way to do it is to bring in antioxidants from your diet.

00:42:16 — And there's a ton of research, in my opinion, there's plenty of research to suggest that the diet rich in antioxidants is really supportive of brain health. And we see that with the brain scans, with the brain imaging, especially for women in our studies to be replicated, to be confirmed, at least in my hands, the intake of antioxidant in the diet is strongly and directly correlated with brain energy in midlife.

00:42:46 — We work with women who are like 30 to 65, 70. And yes, and I think that's really important because brain energy, I mean, you can't do anything if you can't think, right?

Marie Forleo

00:42:59 — Absolutely not, right? At least it's like a domino effect, which we'll start talking about. But okay. Top ones.

Lisa Mosconi

00:43:04 — Vitamin C. Vitamin C. I love vitamin E. I think it's really a little bit underrated when it comes to brain health, but the research shows that it's really...

Marie Forleo

00:43:13 — Supplement or food form?

Lisa Mosconi

Food.

Marie Forleo

Yeah. Let's talk about real food sources for both.

Lisa Mosconi

00:43:18 — So the overall recommendation is to get your nutrients from your diet. Yes. In part because the nutritional synergies and in part because we haven't fully mapped out all the phytochemicals in foods. So antioxidants, for the vast majority, come from plant-based foods, fruits, veggies, nuts.

Marie Forleo

00:43:39 — Blackberries, wild blueberries. Yes. Yes.

Lisa Mosconi

00:43:42 — Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Goji berries. Goji berries. Fantastic source of vitamin C. Amla, the Indian type of mulberry. Yes. Gooseberry.

Marie Forleo

00:43:53 — Gooseberry. I'm going to have to search that out.

Lisa Mosconi

00:43:55 — But amla. And it's probably one of the best sources of, concentrated sources of vitamin C that you can find in foods, like antioxidants. And then I would say coffee is a great source of antioxidants.

Marie Forleo

00:44:10 — Oh, that's the nectar of the gods. I mean, I was off of it.

Lisa Mosconi

And cacao.

Marie Forleo

Oh, yeah. Oh, cacao.

Lisa Mosconi

00:44:15 — Also a really good source of antioxidants.

Marie Forleo

00:44:17 — Yeah. So you can have a good time. You can get all your antioxidants and have a really good time eating them.

Lisa Mosconi

00:44:21 — Oh, for sure. Yeah. Sure. Like eat the rainbow.

Marie Forleo

00:44:24 — It's like an antioxidant party.

Lisa Mosconi

00:44:25 — Leafy greens, dark leafy greens usually are good sources of antioxidants as well as spinach, kale. Yes. All sort of. All the rainbow. Leafy.

Marie Forleo

00:44:35 — Yeah. The Skittle of Whole Foods, just not Skittles. Speaking of. Yeah. Tell us. The worst. Yeah. The worst of the worst of the worst. And I was guilty of this for so long. So y'all, when you hear this, and I just want to tell you about my recent journey, go for it.

Lisa Mosconi

00:44:48 — Well, processed foods, heavily, highly processed foods have been really strongly correlated with increased rates of cardiovascular disease, stroke, diabetes, obesity, and to some extent also with dementia. And they also have been linked with an earlier onset of menopause for women and reduced reproductive fertility. And, yeah, so...

Marie Forleo

00:45:13 — Anything processed. So obviously if it comes in a bag. Yes. If it comes in a box, right? If you look on the back, you don't know what the hell these ingredients are, you can barely pronounce it. But I think this is important too, because I think for years I kind of let myself slide on this one. As an Italian American, there's a lot of really yummy deli meats.

Lisa Mosconi

Oh my God. Cookies. Well, there's cookies. Chocolate chip cookies.

Marie Forleo

00:45:37 — There's all of like, you know, again, in this country, like we're here in Soho and in the West Village, there's an Italian, for lack of a better word, a place that does the most amazing sandwiches. So it's got the salami, the mortadella, the this, the that, and you're just like, yeah, no, must. Right? Can't do it. It's like terrible. So can you break down? It's not just the stuff that's in chips and crackers and all that stuff. It's also food that's highly processed, like the bacons, the sausages, the deli meats.

Lisa Mosconi

00:46:06 — Oh, for sure. Deli meats.

Marie Forleo

Yes.

Lisa Mosconi

00:46:07 — Yes. Yes, but also, you know, Wonder Bread, the kind of bakery goods that are everywhere. It's incredible. There's, I mean, I can't say specific brands, I think it would be unkind, but like...

Marie Forleo

You just look around.

Lisa Mosconi

There are all sorts of candy and treats and little, I don't even know what they are, but they're like muffins on the go or things that are just packaged and last forever. If something lasts forever, it can't be...

Marie Forleo

00:46:37 — Good for you.

Lisa Mosconi

00:46:37 — It can't be natural.

Marie Forleo

00:46:38 — Yeah.

Lisa Mosconi

00:46:38 — So that's a goal. Rule of thumb. Also if it has really weird colors. I think that's a good way. If something is bright green or bright blue, it's very hard to make a natural dye that looks that color. Right.

Marie Forleo

00:46:50 — Unless it's like blueberries or blackberries. That's the only way...

Lisa Mosconi

But they don't look bright.

Marie Forleo

No, that's true.

Lisa Mosconi

Right? They look deep. They look darker.

Marie Forleo

00:46:56 — And saturated. Yes. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Lisa Mosconi

00:46:58 — So that's it. Like for my daughter, I always say to her, did you see what color that is? And she's like, okay, okay.

Marie Forleo

00:47:03 — What a great way to teach her.

Lisa Mosconi

00:47:05 — That's awesome.

Marie Forleo

00:47:06 — She gets it.

Lisa Mosconi

00:47:06 — And also, you know, it's good to provide healthy alternatives.

Marie Forleo

00:47:10 — Yeah.

Lisa Mosconi

00:47:10 — So it's not a deprivation. You can't eat that. It's more like, why don't you have that instead?

Marie Forleo

00:47:14 — Yeah.

Lisa Mosconi

00:47:15 — So, yeah. Now she's happy. And she eats everything. I mean, the other day she was like, mommy, where are my greens? Ooh. Yes.

Marie Forleo

00:47:21 — Smart.

Lisa Mosconi

00:47:22 — She's very, yeah, health conscious.

Marie Forleo

Smart soul. She's smart. Not surprising coming from you. Okay. I want to shift gears and talk about menopause brain. Yay. So congratulations. Congratulations.

Marie Forleo

Thank you.

Marie Forleo

New York Times bestseller. So many different bestseller lists that you've hit.

Marie Forleo

Yes.

Marie Forleo

How friggin awesome. It's fantastic. I know you look surprised. You should not be surprised at all.

Lisa Mosconi

00:47:40 — I was surprised. Instant. It was an instant New York Times bestseller, USA bestseller, in Canada, and then in England. And I was like, whoa.

Marie Forleo

Yes.

Lisa Mosconi

You know what? The reason I was surprised, it's a good book. I promise. I love it. But it's specifically about women, about menopause, and about brains in menopause. So it's kind of like very specific target audience.

Marie Forleo

Yes. Right?

Why women's brains age differently than men's brains**Lisa Mosconi**

00:48:05 — So I'm so happy that it's been well received.

Marie Forleo

It has been, and it will hopefully continue, and I hope we get a lot more folks getting their hands on this. From a business and marketing perspective, it's actually the best way to sell anything is the more specific you are.

Lisa Mosconi

Yeah.

Marie Forleo

So...

Lisa Mosconi

Oh, good.

Marie Forleo

Home run. You open up with this nice little subhead, which I loved: "Am I losing my mind?" And then a portion of your sentence — "Between the ages of 30 and 60, many women will wake up one morning and wonder what hit them."

00:48:33 — Brain fog, not being able to remember words or names, emotional darkness, depression. So a lot of women feel like this. I've certainly felt this and was like, "What the hell's going on? Are we losing it?" And one of my underlines in your book, you say, "The truth is, women's brains are not the same as men's brains. They are hormonally, energetically, and chemically different."

00:48:54 — Can you break that down and talk about why it is so friggin' important for every woman between the ages of 30 and 60 to educate themselves on that fact, on the fact that their brain is different and it's important to pay attention to it?

The infuriating reason doctors treat women like “smaller, more emotional men”

Lisa Mosconi

00:49:07 — Yes. And this is actually the main focus of my research is really about women's brains. And the reason being is that I have a family history of Alzheimer's disease that impacts the women in my family. And my grandmother, who was one of the very first women in Italy to go to university and graduate from university, and her two sisters who also went to university, I mean, it was so adorable.

00:49:35 — They would set out every morning, they lived in Parma, but they had to go to school like hours away. They would just wake up at dawn to catch the train,

you know, it was in the 1950s I suppose in Italy and she was so brilliant and so bright, but then she started showing signs of cognitive decline, which ended up in a diagnosis of dementia at that point in Italy, but it was obviously, I mean, it was so textbook Alzheimer's.

00:50:02 — Now that I know more about Alzheimer's. And then her two younger sisters also developed dementia, Alzheimer's disease and died of it. Whereas their brother was spared, even though they all live to the same age.

Marie Forleo

00:50:17 — Wow.

Lisa Mosconi

00:50:18 — And that brought me to ask a lot of questions about Alzheimer's, but also about women's brain health more generally. And what I think the most interesting takeaway from our research and from everything I've learned in more than 20 years of thinking about this is that, like you said, women's brains are not the same as men's brains. But there's this misconception in medicine and in neuroscience that sex does not matter and that women are considered like smaller, more emotional men with different reproductive organs.

00:50:53 — But just those reproductive organs notwithstanding, everything else is supposed to function the same way and grow the same way and age the same way. And that is just absolutely not true. So what we've learned, you've seen those graphs where they show age over here in brain cells or neurons up here.

00:51:15 — And then they say, "Oh, you know, it's pretty much stable in midlife. And then you just go down a little bit linearly, just a little bit. You lose a little bit of neurons every year." We say, we talk about this all the time — absolutely not. That's a man. That's what happens if you're a man. That's a man's brain. Yes, you're stable, down a tiny little bit, unless something happens, of course, unless a neurological disease sets in.

One surprising way that pregnancy changes our brain chemistry.

Lisa Mosconi

00:51:40 — For women, it's a whole different thing, and I wish I could draw it for you, but basically we're born with a ton of neurons, like a lot of neurons, and then we hit puberty. And from then onwards, aging does not look linear. Let me tell you, at puberty, for both girls and boys, the brain shrinks, but the timeline is different. For girls, that happens earlier, and it tends to coincide with puberty. They will reach a peak of neurons, and then we just shed.

00:52:14 — It's interesting, it's called pruning. Yes. And a lot of neurons are being discarded. And I have a whole explanation for this if you're interested. But for now, we lose the neurons and the connectivity in the brain changes, and brain energy levels change. It's a lot of changes. But then what happens? The boys. The brains kind of settle down and you keep going. For girls, we get a menstrual cycle and what people don't realize is that their brains as women are profoundly connected with the ovaries.

00:52:45 — So much so that every time your ovaries cycle throughout the month, your brain micro cycles. It's really in sync and the sex hormones that come out of the ovaries go straight inside the brain and convey messages to the brain. And the brain sends hormones back right down in a feedback loop that is really important, not just for menstruation and fertility, but also for brain health.

00:53:10 — And that's for your entire life, your entire reproductive span. And then, let's say you get pregnant, right? There's this neuroendocrine system that connects the brain with the ovaries that gets super over-activated every time a woman is pregnant. Your brain is having a party there, right? In many ways. I mean, you get all these wonderful hormones, and there's this boost in a lot of different things, but then everything crashes down once the baby is born.

00:53:39 — And there's a phase that is quite hard on the body as it is on the brain, the postpartum phase. Every time a woman gets pregnant, and guess what? The brain loses neurons when we're pregnant, even more after the delivery. And then there's a little bit of a recovery, but mostly there's a rewiring, just all these changes that take place, and they keep happening.

The BEST part about going through menopause (that's NOT about your period)

Lisa Mosconi

00:54:03 — Then you get back, your menstrual cycle, your brain keeps cycling until you hit menopause. And people think of menopause, which by the way, every woman goes through menopause, whether it's part of aging or because of medical interventions, but all women who live long enough go through menopause. And we think of menopause as something that is more like one day on the calendar, right?

00:54:29 — We think about it like puberty. One day you get your period and you're an adolescent, you're a teenager. But menopause is a process that can take at least 10 years from start to finish, because it starts a few years before the final menstrual period, and for many women it takes a few more years for everything to kind of adjust and settle down.

00:54:52 — And then your brain needs to basically regroup, because now all these beautiful hormones, right, that were keeping us healthy and young and energized are severely reduced, and you need to find another baseline and keep carrying on.

So it's much more like a stepladder, I would say, if you're a woman, and we don't fully appreciate the impact that having ovaries has on the brain.

Marie Forleo

00:55:19 — One of the things I love about your framing of this, and I want to thank you for it because when I read *The Menopause Brain*, it was really the first messaging that hit home that there was possibility of like optimism and upsides because I feel like, especially in maybe the past few years, you know, there's a lot of menopause talk and this is awesome. Like, this is thumbs up all the way around, discussions, understanding, talking about all the different ways that all different women can navigate this particular transition.

00:55:55 — But I haven't heard much about how coming out on the other side that we can actually be stronger and better. And so I feel like you have such a great sense of humor and I want to get into the upside of menopause. What can you tell us about menopausal perks?

Lisa Mosconi

00:56:11 — Yes. I think it's important to put everything in context. So the first thing is that the menopause brain is a brain in transition, right? So menopause is a neuroendocrine transition state, which means that your brain is changing just as much as your ovaries are in your endocrine system, your hormonal system. And every endocrine state, neuroendocrine transition state comes with pros and cons.

00:56:36 — And we're used to really focusing on the cons and not really talk about the pros, whereas. I think it's important to have a balance, right? So what are the downsides? They're obvious, especially when it comes to the brain. It's the brain symptoms of menopause, which a lot of women don't know that they come from the brain.

Marie Forleo

Tell us.

Lisa Mosconi

I'll just add. So when women say that they're having hair loss, night sweats, insomnia, depression, anxiety, brain fog, memory lapses, those are all neurological symptoms of menopause.

00:57:11 — They have nothing to do with your ovaries. Those are signs that your brain is being changed, has been rewiring or transforming because of menopause. Right? So those are neurological symptoms and they do impact over 75% of all women. And so more than three out of every four women experiences at least one neurological symptoms, and there's more than 30.

00:57:37 — I have a whole list in the book just because it's important to know that certain things like tinnitus could happen as you go through menopause, and it's not your ears, right? It's your brain that's creating those symptoms, or skin-crawling sensation could be really scary.

00:58:00 — Your thermoregulation is all over the place, but you can have electric shock sensations as well.

Marie Forleo

00:58:05 — Wow.

Why menopause makes many women reckless

Lisa Mosconi

00:58:06 — Which is a neurologic, is more rare, of course. But there's a whole range and menu of symptoms that comes from menopause that are neurological in origin, and we don't know how to talk about. Most women don't know why they're having them, and most physicians don't know how to address them because menopause is usually OBGYN, right, and OBGYNs are not trained to be fair to manage your brain health.

00:58:33 — That's what neurologists, psychiatrists, psychologists do, but then brain specialists are not trained to manage menopause. So we are a little bit in the soup in that respect, but things are changing. So those are the downsides. But there are upsides because these transformations have an evolutionary significance. There's a reason that they happen.

00:58:58 — And I think the best way for me to explain it is to compare menopause with puberty and pregnancy. So with puberty, the brain is shrinking, the connectivity is changing, energy is changing as well, and there are symptoms. We all know that adolescents are foggy brain, they have trouble concentrating sometimes, their sleep is all over the map, and there's this feisty emotions or reckless behaviors, a lot of crying and big emotions, big feelings.

00:59:34 — But the same transformations that trigger those symptoms in the brain are really important for the brain to strengthen some connections in the theory of mind networks. Now, theory of mind is our ability to mentalize or to put yourself in somebody else's shoes, which is the fundamental basis for becoming a grown up and living in society.

01:00:01 — So the symptoms are a side effect of this very important transformation that your brain is undergoing, not just your body, but your brain is undergoing so that you're able to take care of other human beings. Yeah. So that's the perk of the teen brain or the teenage brain. Something similar happens in pregnancy. The

brain shrinks another time and the connectivity is changed so that the same exact network, the theory of mind network is strengthened even more.

01:00:31 — Why? Because as a new mother with a child who can't speak for a very long time, you need to be able to literally read minds for a long time. And you need to be able to protect this child no matter what. So your intuition is up to the roof, right? Your ability to foresee what's going to happen is off the charts.

01:00:55 — Your ability to multitask and plan and function on no sleep, your endurance At the same time, you may have mommy brain, you may feel sad, you may feel weepy, you may have postpartum depression, you can have the brain fog, 30% of pregnant women have hot flashes. It's the same brain, it's the same system, the neuroendocrine system that is impacted by hormonal changes. And now we get to menopause. Menopause is the same process from a brain's perspective, in reverse.

01:01:27 — So now all these neurons that were so important to give you a menstrual cycle, right, to support the pregnancy, should the pregnancy occur, who gave you these instincts when you're a mother, whenever they made you capable of taking care of your child, these neurons don't need, you just don't need them anymore. And as a brain, it's very expensive to have a ton of neurons.

01:01:53 — So, in my opinion, menopause, and other people's opinions, of course, menopause is a biological clue for your brain to go through pruning again, shed all these neurons that are not needed anymore, and rewire all these different neurons in a different direction. So, yes, you have the side effects, unfortunately, which can last a while because the transformation takes a while, the remodeling takes a while.

Marie Forleo

All renovations take longer than we want them to take. Yes.

Lisa Mosconi

01:02:25 — Yes. Especially because you can't, you know, your neurons need to stay with you for another 30 years. Yes. Yes. Yes. So you better go calm.

Marie Forleo

01:02:32 — Yes.

Lisa Mosconi

01:02:32 — You don't want to make mistakes. Right. Take your time. But the idea is that these changes will prepare women for the next phase of their life, which is not reproductive, but it's supposed to be productive. Right? So your ovaries can close down sharp, but your brain needs to keep going.

01:02:53 — So this rewiring in a way, it's helpful because there are neurological changes that take place that seem to give women more empathy, more calm, more peace of mind, and more emotional mastery.

Marie Forleo

01:03:08 — Yes. And I love it. In your book, and you said the polite version, I will say the full version, also known as giving fewer f***s, which is fantastic. And I loved kind of how you threaded all of this together because my friends and I, we often talk about this, and I have friends of all age groups, but I've noticed and I've watched and witnessed, especially friends that are older than I am, I'm like, "Oh, oh, oh."

01:03:36 — You know, like feistier and fiercer and more transparent and more just, nope, this versus this versus this. And I love it. It's like beautiful and amazing. And so when I was reading this, I was like, yes, emotional mastery, also known as giving fewer f***s. The brain is growing leaner and meaner, discarding information and skills that we no longer need and growing new capabilities that we do. I love you also wrote, interest, priorities, and attitude shift in a positive way.

01:04:03 — This notion of like a second adulthood. For many, a rush of physical and psychological energy. And Oprah's quote, it's a moment to reinvent yourself after years of focusing on the needs treatments of everyone else.» Those are all amazing. And I feel like I'm so happy that you have highlighted this and also are shining a light on it because we do need a more balanced viewpoint of it.

Lisa Mosconi

01:04:28 — Yeah. Because otherwise, the entire focus, besides this narrative of menopause is the beginning of the end.

Marie Forleo

01:04:35 — Yeah, which is bullshit. And doom and gloom. Yeah.

Lisa Mosconi

01:04:37 — But also then the focus is all about treatments.

Marie Forleo

01:04:40 — Yeah.

The “Spikes” lesson from animals that THRIVE after menopause

Lisa Mosconi

01:04:41 — Right? And if you don't also have a balance in your understanding of what menopause is and isn't, then you're just scared about the symptoms and you're just going to obsess about getting this treatment or that prescription medication. Which is not to say that they're not helpful. Right. But I think the spirit or the attitude matters. That's right. Your mindset matters. And knowing that there's an evolutionary reason, according to many scientists and many clinicians, for women to go through menopause is important.

01:05:15 — Because see, what most women don't know, to be fair, is that menopause is quite unique. If you have ovaries, menopause is a fact of life. But in reality, it's a little bit of a biological riddle. Because all over the planet, most females die right after menopause, right?

01:05:38 — So the end of fertility coincides with the end of your lifespan for almost every female animal species on this planet except a handful, women, killer whales, I love that, the analogy is so cool, norwolves, I believe, another type of whale, some whales, a type of giraffe, A type of elephant, the Asian elephant, I love elephants, they're so adorable.

01:06:07 — And an insect, the Japanese aphid. I don't know if you've ever seen one. No, I don't know if I have. I hadn't until I was looking up, you know, because of menopause. What happens to this little thing is then as they become non-fertile, they sprout spikes. They turn like into a kind of chestnut, like do not touch me. And I think that is really, really funny that they go from looking like a bug to a kind of hedgehog. That's amazing.

Marie Forleo

01:06:37 — You know? Yes. Okay, two things.

Спикер ?

01:06:38 — It's really funny.

Lisa's step-by-step menopause survival guide

Marie Forleo

01:06:39 — I do want to talk about some practical steps. Yes. And then I want to get back to mindset because that's the place where I feel like it's so, so important. And again, we haven't had enough light shining or emphasis on that piece. So in your book, you talk about a lot of very practical steps for women to take care of themselves and their brains during this transition. Things, exercise, stress reduction, supplements, botanicals, and even self-talk. I love the botanicals. Oh, I love the botanicals too.

01:07:05 — I feel like I can so see that in your design and everything. Even that word, I love. Like anything with botanicals, it's like a little magnet for me. Like I'm a sucker. One of my favorite like pieces of skincare, it's like all botanical based. I'm like, yes, I'm in. Okay, exercise. Exercise. Let's talk about how much exercise we really need, weightlifting, which I'm a huge fan of gentle, how does exercise impact us and what does the research tell us?

Lisa Mosconi

01:07:31 — Yes. So, first of all, there isn't a ton of research, as you can imagine, right? But the research that we do have shows that different types of exercise may be more helpful for specific symptoms or specific needs or challenges during menopause. And there's three major exercise groups that have been identified as being beneficial for the menopause brain and just the body overall. So cardiovascular activity, like cardio, seems to be quite effective for hot flashes and for brain fog.

01:08:05 — Weight training and resistance training is obviously helpful for bone density, muscle mass, but also for mood, seems to be really uplifting and energizing in terms of mood. And then there's flexibility and balance exercises and mind-body techniques like yoga, pilates, tai chi, more gentle, if you will, exercises that require coordination and posture.

01:08:34 — Yes. Where form is really more important than intensity in some ways. And those are helpful for stress relief and sleep as well as flexibility. So, ideally, one would do everything, right? But if time is a constraint, as it is for so many women, then I think it's important to know that some types of exercise may help more or less with specific concerns.

01:09:00 — And you can always find ways, I think, to mix them up. You can do weightlifting that also stimulates cardiovascular activity. Completely. Right. Or the other way around. You can walk, but with a heavy, you know, with a vest, with a weighted vest on.

Marie Forleo

01:09:15 — Or this little wrist or ankle, oh, we can prancercise, like that was one of my favorite things. So I'm going to go to Florida in a few weeks and I feel like I'm going to put on my ankle weights and just prancercise my ass all around Palm Springs or Palm Beach.

Lisa Mosconi

01:09:27 — I love Pilates.

Marie Forleo

01:09:28 — Me too.

Lisa Mosconi

You do?

Marie Forleo

I do. I love that. I love yoga. Well, I actually change it up because I have a little bit of an ADHD brain and I just like variety. So weight training, dance, yoga, and Pilates are like, I just kind of cycle through. And you don't even... You know, they're the best.

Lisa Mosconi

01:09:44 — Because it has to be sustainable. Yes. I think what's most important is something that you can do consistently. There's that word again. Yes. It's a magic word. I think it's important. You know, there's nothing you can do for a couple of weeks that will have a long lasting impact. And again, menopause lasts for years. Yeah. So if exercise is one way that we want to support our brains and having to have a gentler menopause, then I think it's important to find things that give you joy, that is not a chore. It's something that you want to look forward to. And for me, that's Pilates. I even got a reformer.

Marie Forleo

Oh, in your house?

Lisa Mosconi

Yes.

Marie Forleo

01:10:21 — Good for you. I love it.

Lisa Mosconi

01:10:22 — And we just got a treadmill, like a bigger treadmill, because I love Pilates and running. Yeah. I'm not into weightlifting at all, but I'm trying. I was speaking with JJ, and she was giving me little tips.

The Japanese secret for using menopause to gain respect and status

Lisa Mosconi

01:10:35 — I wanted to try this. I wanted to try that.

Marie Forleo

01:10:37 — You know what? You're here in New York, right?

Lisa Mosconi

Yeah.

Marie Forleo

Yeah. I'm going to take you to a class.

Lisa Mosconi

Oh, okay.

Marie Forleo

Then you're going to come with me.

Lisa Mosconi

Okay.

Marie Forleo

And I think I can... I'm really good at this. So one of the things...

Lisa Mosconi

Am I going to die?

Marie Forleo

No. I would not take you to anything that would potentially make you... I wouldn't even take you to anything that would, like, be scary. I'm only going to take... I only take friends to, like, super joyful things, but my really dear friends always know I'm really good at helping people kind of move through little challenges, so we'll talk about it when we're done.

01:11:05 — Okay. Now I want to go to mindset because it's so fascinating to me, and I love how you put a lens through other cultures outside of here in the U.S. I love our country. I love being in the U.S. I love being American, and there's every place that has its pros and cons. We have some awesome, amazing things, and we've got some

things that are challenges. So you write, "What I find particularly striking is the complete absence of any sense of achievement or gain in status associated with becoming menopausal. How many societies in the East and West see this milestone as a kickoff that moves you to a place of honor."

So my favorite thing was this: koneki — and if I'm not pronouncing that right, someone will correct me and that's cool — but the Japanese word for menopause. What does it mean?

Lisa Mosconi

Renewed energy.

Marie Forleo

Oh, come on. This is a season of renewal and energy. And I thought it was interesting you noted that only about 25% of Japanese women report experiencing hot flashes.

01:12:03 — Now, of course, we don't know if that's about the reporting or whatever, just interesting to note.

Lisa Mosconi

01:12:09 — I think it's interesting to note that in Japan, the most common complaint in menopause is frozen shoulder. Interesting. Yeah. It's more like aches and pains, joint stiffness. Yeah. But there are other societies where women also don't really report hot flashes, but they have like in some parts of India, the major concern is vision that they can't see as well.

01:12:35 — Although that could be aging, but it seems to really be part of their menopausal experience. Then there are some societies and groups in South America where women have no symptoms even though they tend to go to menopause, to menopause earlier. Fascinating. Yeah. And their hormonal levels are all the same. So it's not like for us, there's a drop in estrogen that is more severe than in other countries.

01:13:02 — It's all the same level of hormonal concentration in a way. And of course, you know, lifestyle plays a role, culture plays a role, diet, genetics obviously play a role. But I think it's really important to know that the experience of menopause is not universal. And there are women who do not suffer. In Europe, all the studies showing that life contentment actually improves after menopause and remains higher and higher and higher over time.

Marie Forleo

01:13:30 — This is what I'm talking about.

Lisa Mosconi

Were done in Europe. And I think, you know, it's not like they're so different from us.

Marie Forleo

Yeah.

Lisa Mosconi

01:13:39 — Many... It's just not that different. It's different.

Marie Forleo

01:13:41 — I think it's so cool.

Lisa Mosconi

But the mindset is different.

Marie Forleo

I'm getting on board with that. One of my fascinations in life, and my book Everything is Figureoutable is how this one simple belief can help you change your life and the world, and I'm like, look, beliefs are just these thoughts that we think again and again and again and that we believe are the truth. So regardless of whether or not we can quote unquote prove it, I'm like, I'm going to pick some good shit to believe because it absolutely has positive impact.

01:14:06 — I've seen it in my life. So regardless, so I love that about the life satisfaction, and then I love the rural Mayan women who actually gain in social status after menopause and another group. And they don't have symptoms. They don't report symptoms. That's right. I thought that was... I was like, let's go for mindset. Let's go for this.

Lisa Mosconi

01:14:22 — Let's go for mindset. And I think it's a well-known phenomenon in science that there's a placebo effect, but there's also nocebo effect, right? So if you think that something would be good for you, you may experience a positive effect even though you're just taking a sugar pill, but if you think that the same sugar pill will give you side effects, it will be harmful to you, you're more likely to experience a negative change.

01:14:47 — So if we think a menopause is something that can harm us, it's something that we have to fear, it's something that needs to be fought, something that needs to be avoided, it's possible that the experience will be worse than it would have been

otherwise. So I think. But mindset, just in general, I think the way that you experience and go through life, it's a powerful determinant of how you yourself react, to think that the same thing could be very upsetting or not.

Marie Forleo

01:15:18 — Yes.

Lisa Mosconi

01:15:18 — And something I've learned from meditation, I love meditation and I strongly recommend it, is to practice non-judgment when you're having a hard time or mentally especially. Actually, just look at the same situation without any judgment, right? Do not evaluate it as good or bad. Just look at the thing for what it is. And that sometimes just takes some of the anxiety away and that leads to relief in some ways.

01:15:44 — And I'm not being... I swear I'm not being patronizing or downplaying the severity of the symptoms of menopause.

Marie Forleo

01:15:51 — No, of course not.

Lisa Mosconi

01:15:52 — Absolutely not. It's just one more tool that we may consider to feel better and support ourselves as we go through menopause, because look, we're all going to go through it. 100%. Yes. It's important, I think, to spend those years, because we're looking at years, as happy as.

Marie Forleo

01:16:11 — We can be. 100%. Right? Yes. No. Brilliant. We've covered a lot of ground, and I want to wrap up, and I'm going to ask you if there's anything else that you want to leave us with. I obviously highly recommend all your books, and people can just kind of pick or choose whichever one they want to start with. But I loved at the end you wrote: "Are you losing your mind during menopause? No, you're getting a brand new one." And I was like, hell yes, Lisa.

01:16:39 — So is there anything else that you want to wrap with today or share with our audience?

Lisa Mosconi

01:16:45 — What everybody wants to hear from me is about hormone therapy.

Marie Forleo

Tell us.

Lisa Mosconi

I don't know if you do.

Marie Forleo

01:16:51 — I mean, listen, I'm always open when people ask the questions and if that's what the people want. I want to know. I'm super, super interested and I'm one of those open-minded people. I'm not like, no, never to this or yes, always to this. Talk to us.

Lisa Mosconi

01:17:04 — Oh, me neither. I am not like necessarily pro HRT. I'm really pro solutions.

Marie Forleo

Yes. Yeah. Yeah.

Lisa Mosconi

And I'm also anti-suffering.

Marie Forleo

01:17:15 — We're going to have a lot of fun together. I really like this. Pro solutions, anti-suffering. Check. Check.

Lisa Mosconi

01:17:20 — So many women suffer, and I'm saying this really with my patients in mind, our participants in mind, because so many women are terrified of brain fog. It's a common symptom, very, very widely overlooked symptom of menopause impacting over 60% of all women, at least in the United States. And sometimes the brain fog or the cognitive fatigue is so severe to really start concerns around dementia.

01:17:52 — There are so many women who come to us because they're, I'm going to say, terrified, perhaps concerned that they may be experiencing early dementia. So I think I would like to clarify that brain fog is very common in menopause and that there are things that one can do to find out if it's menopause or something else, right? There needs medical attention and intervention or prevention.

01:18:17 — This is something we do at the Alzheimer's Prevention Program at Weill Cornell, and we're open to see participants or patients.

Marie Forleo

01:18:24 — Oh, great. Where can people find that? How can they?

Lisa Mosconi

01:18:27 — We're on the Upper East Side in 72nd and York, and we have brain imaging available for pretty much all our participants get brain scans.

We do cognitive testing, which is so helpful with brain fog because, yes, you may be experiencing a change in performance, but it's still helpful to know if your performance is actually within normal limits relative to other women your age and education.

01:18:54 — And I also strongly recommend for women who are scared, maybe those with a family history of Alzheimer's, come to us if you can before you have an actual problem so that we can do a baseline. And it's every doctor's dream to have your baseline before there's an issue so we can compare you to you, and I think that's also really helpful to have for life. So that's one thing I wanted to say. The other thing is hormone therapy.

01:19:21 — I would say that it's been evaluated for brain fog and Alzheimer's prevention. It's not approved at this point, but many more scientists like myself are investigating this in detail at this point, whereas the research was simply just not there for a long time.

01:19:41 — And for now, hormone therapy is quite effective, is actually, honestly, is very effective for symptoms like hot flashes and night sweats, and also prevention of osteoporosis and relief of genital urinary symptoms and low libido, recurrent UTIs, vaginal dryness, which are really a common complaint for so many women going through menopause, also perimenopausal women, right, not just after the last menstrual period, the critical time, the difficult time is prior.

01:20:14 — So it's good to seek help. And also for two other brain indications, which is sleep. Sleep disturbances, especially when related to hot flashes and night sweats, and relief of mild depressive symptoms. Not clinical depression, mild depressive symptoms that are due to the perimenopause or menopause. I think it's important to know that these are FDA approved indications for hormone therapy and that this therapy can help.

01:20:44 — I would just like all women to make a decision based on information, rather than fear or outdated findings and things that are just been told for like 20 years that are no longer valid. You know, they've been disproved. Now, we know better, professional societies have changed their recommendations.

01:21:08 — So what I always say when women say to me, you know, my OBGYN won't give me hormones, even though I think I'm eligible, I say, you know what, download the guidelines, the 2022 guidelines of the North American Menopause Society. They're free on the internet. Download it. It's a PDF. Just read it through. Find the part that's important to you, print it out, and go to your doctor and say, look, can we read this together? If I'm not eligible, I'm not eligible, but there's a chance I might be. Can we talk about this?» And I think that that's quite helpful. Could be.

Marie Forleo

01:21:40 — Oh, it's hugely helpful. Thank you. I'm so glad that you walked us through that because myself included, I know earlier parts of my life, I've gone to doctors and asked for a particular test and just been kind of shut down. And, you know, I'm from New Jersey, so I get really angry and really feisty, and you know what I mean? It's like I'm flipping birds. I'm like, whatever, I'm out of here.

01:22:04 — But it's to feel empowered and to be able to take care of our own health and to be educated and to be able to walk in and have a collaborative, intelligent, fact-based conversation to quote unquote hashtag end our suffering when there are potential treatments available that can help us cognitively take care of our brains and our bodies and our mental and emotional and physical health. It's like we need to know this information. Thank you so much for taking the time to be on. I can't wait to, I'm going to take you around some twirls for classes.

01:22:35 — We're going to have so much fun, and for every body, get your hands on Lisa 's book. They are life changing, and we'll see you soon. Thank you.

Lisa Mosconi

01:22:42 — Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you for having me.

Marie Forleo

01:22:44 — Thank you.