

# Dr. Casey Means on Building a Metabolically Healthy Mind and Body

Analysis by [Dr. Joseph Mercola](#)

May 18, 2024

## STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- › Dr. Casey Means is a Stanford-trained physician and co-founder of Levels, a company focused on metabolic health
- › After realizing the health care system is based on an outdated, symptom-based criteria of diagnosis instead of the physiologic basis of disease, Means left conventional medicine behind
- › Her book, “Good Energy,” empowers people to make informed health decisions using self-trust, intuition and technology-enabled tools to reach higher levels of metabolic health and, ultimately, joy
- › While building health involves proper nutrition and avoidance of environmental toxins, it also involves freeing yourself of fear; Means describes cellphones as essentially “digital terrorism,” creating unnecessary fear by bringing bad news to you 24/7
- › Means recommends combining modern technology with a healthy lifestyle and ancient wisdom to optimize how your cells create and use energy

**Dr. Casey Means is a Stanford-trained physician and co-founder of Levels, a company focused on metabolic health. Means shifted her career from surgery to functional medicine after recognizing the potential to prevent chronic diseases through lifestyle and dietary changes.**

Her book, "Good Energy," empowers people to make informed health decisions using self-trust, intuition and technology-enabled tools to reach higher levels of metabolic health and, ultimately, joy.

Means' journey toward spreading the word about limitless health is as intriguing as her health recommendations, which center on combining modern technology with ancient wisdom and optimizing how your cells create and use energy. "Everything requires energy," Means says. "So, if we don't get that right, we're not going to be healthy."<sup>1</sup>

## **Moving From the 'Belly of the Beast' to Holistic Medicine**

After graduating from Stanford Medical School, Means held research positions with the U.S. National Institutes of Health, New York University and Oregon Health & Science University.<sup>2</sup> Trained as an otolaryngologist, or ENT, head and neck surgeon, she had only six months left of her residency when she realized she had to take a different path.

"I'm like, I can't finish. I fundamentally don't agree with what we're doing here. And when you get to that conclusion, try going into the operating room and cutting a patient open," she says. "I literally couldn't do it. Because I ... had integrity."<sup>3</sup>

After nine years in the conventional medical field, Means had an awakening. She realized the tools the conventional health care system was teaching her weren't helping people get better. On the contrary, they often made people worse:<sup>4</sup>

*"What I really noticed is that so many of these conditions that we call, you know, comorbid, they kind of go together. That's our word in medicine for conditions that sometimes cluster together. They're all going up at the same time ... we're on track this year to have more new cancer cases than any year in human history. 2 million cancer cases in the U.S., autoimmune diseases skyrocketing, depression, anxiety, skyrocketing.*

*Developmental disorders, behavioral issues in kids going up. Infertility going up, Type 2 diabetes going up, obesity going up. Heart disease cases, going up,*

*heart disease deaths, fortunately, going down but that's because of treatment. But it's this everything all at once situation.*

*And we are somehow still buying into this idea that the more money we throw at the problem with the same approach that we've been doing, the better it's gonna get – and that is totally false.*

*Because what the science is actually showing us, what the real biochemistry and cellular physiology research is showing us, is that all these conditions are connected. They're all connected by similar, invisible, physiologic disturbances happening inside ourselves. And we know this now, they're all fundamentally metabolic driven issues. And yet our health care system is not practicing metabolic medicine.”*

## **Why Means Is ‘Obsessed With Metabolism’**

After realizing the health care system is based on an outdated, symptom-based criteria of diagnosis instead of the physiologic basis of disease, Means left conventional medicine behind.

“We need to modernize and update the healthcare system. And in that interim, while the health care system is essentially not catching up, we need to empower individuals to understand this aspect of their health, learn how to track it, learn how to improve it,” she says. This is the crux of her book, and her drive to spread this message was further strengthened by experiences with her own health and her family:<sup>5</sup>

*“My own health was basically trashed during residency when I was just working all the time and had to leave my surgical training to heal myself. But my mother, unfortunately, she, tragically, represents essentially missing the warning signs of metabolic disease and treating patients in silos until they get the ultimate warning sign, which is a lethal diagnosis that takes their life prematurely. And that's what happened to my mom.*

*She died far too young from pancreatic cancer, which is a cancer that's deeply tied to metabolic issues, and obesity and high blood sugar are driving factors of this cancer. And so looking back at her life now from the vantage point where I stand – a vantage point that I did not learn at Stanford Medical School – of root cause physiology, it is so clear to me the trajectory that she was going on that was totally missed by our system.”*

Means' parents also encouraged her to act with integrity, think for herself and ask tough questions. So, when she decided to leave her residency, her parents celebrated the decision. “[They] gave me that sense of, if you follow the light, or the signals that the universe is putting in front of you ... things just will work out ... if you ignore them, life will be hard ... the most disastrous thing you could do in this lifetime is hear calls and signals and ignore them,” she says.<sup>6</sup>

Ultimately, Means realized that disrupted metabolism, including mitochondrial dysfunction, is tied to most chronic disease:<sup>7</sup>

*“The reason it's showing up as dozens, if not hundreds, of different conditions ... it's very simple. We have over 200 cell types in the body ... and under powering in different cell types will look like different symptoms. That doesn't mean it's a different disease.*

*We're confusing the symptoms for the disease. The disease is inside the cell, the symptom is what it looks like, externally, when a certain type of cell is dysfunctional. But instead of treating the disease, we're treating the symptoms ... the beauty of all of that is that ... the way out is simpler than we've been led to [believe].”*

## **Trust Yourself, Not Your Doctors**

One of the chapters in “Good Energy” is called Trust Yourself, Not Your Doctor, as Means urges people to tap into their intuition to heal what ails you:<sup>8</sup>

*“Trust Yourself, Not Your Doctor is fundamentally about a trend that is very, very pervasive in our world right now, which is the subtext that drives our \$4 trillion failing health care system, which is this idea that obviously health is too complex and disease is too complex for us to understand it for ourselves.*

*We have to outsource all of this to these huge, complex industries. Innovation is the answer. You know, and don't trust yourself, trust the science.*

*... And as we have trusted the science and not trusted ourselves, we've had an explosion of chronic disease rates in children, adults and the elderly, and our life expectancy is going down.*

*And we spend two times more than any other developed country in the world ... the body is speaking to us every second, it speaks to us through symptoms, through our diseases, through our moods, through our interoception – what's happening inside of us. It's constantly speaking to us. And the way I think about symptoms ... is that symptoms are a gift.*

*Symptoms are the language through which our cells are trying to get our attention to tell us something very specific – their needs are not getting met.*

*And when we actually run through the checklist of the ways we can meet the needs of the cells, then oftentimes the symptom melts away ... with compassion, and curiosity, think for two seconds, what is my body trying to tell me about how its needs are not getting met, and like a parent would do with an infant that's crying, figure out, brainstorm about how to meet those needs.”*

Means is also a fan of leveraging technology, including lab tests, wearables and biosensors like continuous glucose monitors, to gain more clues about what's happening in your body. “Learn the basics of the 10 to 15 key basic biomarkers that together can help you read the tea leaves of what's going on inside your body and your cells, [and] track them every three to four months,” she says.<sup>9</sup>

## **If You Feel Joy, You're on the Right Track**

If you wake up each morning feeling joy, it's a sign that your body is balanced on a physical, mental and spiritual level. The amount of joy you have is "the ultimate biomarker," Means says, adding:<sup>10</sup>

*"If you want instant biofeedback on whether your diet and lifestyle and sleep and supplements are working ... what is your level of waking up with a sense of optimism, joy and total awe at this precious miracle of life? And that's not going to be every single day, right? But on a general level, it's that sense of just really cosmic ... unflappable, joy there.*

*When we're doing all the things we know that create metabolic health – getting in the sunshine, walking, moving, eating, managing our emotional health, cultivating fearlessness, avoiding toxins – that is emergent from that way of living more in touch with nature and not in antagonism with nature."*

While building health involves proper nutrition and avoidance of environmental toxins, it also involves freeing yourself of fear. Means describes cellphones as essentially "digital terrorism," creating unnecessary fear by bringing bad news to you 24/7:<sup>11</sup>

*"This essentially creates a sense of fear every day, all day, that all of our cells are experiencing constantly, thinking that we're in a mass homicidal world all the time ... A challenge I have for people ... is to address every potential avenue of fear that is controlling your mind, your life and your behavior, and go to the ends of the Earth to figure it out, understand it, manage it.*

*That can be done through a lot of different ways ... it's therapy and counseling, some of it's journaling, some of it's reading ancient texts ... Read the philosophical work that helps us manage fear, go into nature, deeply soothing, gives us a sense of the bigger picture.*

*The average American spending 93% of our time indoors, this makes us petrified. We have to go outside to see the patterns of nature to realize the world is abundant. And there's actually nothing really to fear. We're an eternal, infinite expanding universe, we all need to calm down.*

*There's all sorts of different things that we can do to manage our relationship with fear that controls all of our behavior. And I think that is our No. 1 job as humans, ultimately, I think where it will lead you is to realizing that the world and the universe is fundamentally good. It's fundamentally connected, it's fundamentally one of light. And we can and should live fully and express fully and live fearlessly."*

## **Better Metabolic Health Gives You the Energy to Power Your Life**

Metabolic health is the key that ties all of this together, as it's essential for optimal mitochondrial function and energy production. Proper metabolic health ensures that mitochondria can function efficiently, contributing to overall energy homeostasis and cellular health.

Eating in a way that supports metabolic health is essential. Means recommends avoiding ultraprocessed foods, including seed oils, and instead focusing on minimally processed, nutrient-dense food grown in biodiverse soil. Fundamentally, however, your mindset and mood also influence healthy eating and overall health, as this is a spiritual journey toward metabolic and overall health. Means explains that even letting go of fear is part of supporting metabolism:<sup>12</sup>

*"The way this gets back to metabolism in a funny way is that, you know, metabolism is how we create energy in our cells. But fundamentally, it's how we transform energy from outside of us in food, to inside of us to a currency of energy that powers our lives.*

*And so, in a bigger sense, metabolism also relates to all of this because really good metabolism is the flow of cosmic energy that started in the sun, was stored in the carbon bonds of plants, channeling through our bodies to power this process that that we are.*

*When we're fearful and we are making decisions out of fear, which often are unhealthy decisions, which break our metabolism, it actually stops us from*

*doing the most miraculous thing about our body, which is transforming sunlight to human energy. So, we have to get on that journey.”*

You can learn more about Means’ recommendations for building healthy metabolism and limitless health in her book, “Good Energy” which is available on sale at all bookstores. If you want to get it at [Amazon you can get it here](#).

## Sources and References

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- <sup>1, 7</sup> [Dr. Mercola Interviews Dr. Casey Means, 1:19](#)
- <sup>2</sup> [Maria Shriver’s Sunday Paper May 11, 2024](#)
- <sup>3</sup> [Dr. Mercola Interviews Dr. Casey Means, 23:51](#)
- <sup>4</sup> [Dr. Mercola Interviews Dr. Casey Means, 2:03](#)
- <sup>5</sup> [Dr. Mercola Interviews Dr. Casey Means, 7:43](#)
- <sup>6</sup> [Dr. Mercola Interviews Dr. Casey Means, 37:01](#)
- <sup>8</sup> [Dr. Mercola Interviews Dr. Casey Means, 42:32](#)
- <sup>9</sup> [Dr. Mercola Interviews Dr. Casey Means, 44:17](#)
- <sup>10</sup> [Dr. Mercola Interviews Dr. Casey Means, 27:05](#)
- <sup>11, 12</sup> [Dr. Mercola Interviews Dr. Casey Means, 50:48](#)