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Nadia [00:00:06] Hi everyone. I'm Nadia Pateguana and I'm back for another episode of The Fasting Method podcast. Today, my amazing co-host is away on a much-deserved break. So Megan Ramos is not here with me today, but I am joined by an extra special guest who was with us for episode 29. Some of you might recall Wende talking to us about her diabetes reversal. And the episode was so amazing, she was so inspiring, and so many of you were left wanting a little bit more and so were we. So Wende has so generously agreed to come back today. First of all, I wanted to say, "Hello." Hi, Wende. How are you?

Wende [00:00:54] Hi, Nadia. Thanks for having me.

Nadia [00:00:57] Well, absolutely my pleasure. So today, we are going to record a Hot Topic and today's Hot Topic is on neuropathy. So before we hear a little bit more about Wende's amazing journey, I wanted to talk to you guys a little bit about this topic of neuropathy. So some of you, unfortunately, know this a little too well, way too much, unfortunately.

[00:01:21] Neuropathy is a condition that develops when there is damage to your peripheral nerves, and this can cause symptoms such as weakness, severe pain, numbness, and tingling usually of the hands and feet. The major cause of neuropathy is actually diabetes and, again, very common as many of you know. Wende, although she seems like an alien, I often joke, she is a human and, unfortunately, 40 years of diabetes did take a toll on Wende's body. Now, there are a lot of really amazing celebrations to Wende's journey and story and we will talk about that as well. But unfortunately, Wende, too, like I said, even though she may seem like an alien because of how amazing she is and how strong she is, at times we've called her superhuman, but she is nonetheless a human. And so she has generously agreed to share her story of neuropathy with us.

[00:02:28] So tell us a little bit more, Wende. For those that listened to episode 29, they got to hear about your amazing journey and recovery. And you briefly mentioned your very recent surgery that you had, but there's a lot of background to this, right, about neuropathy and your experience with neuropathy, and the consequences of that, again, with some silver lining, with some celebrations along the way. So let's hear a lot more from you, Wende.

Wende [00:02:55] Thank you, Nadia. Yeah, it was about ten years after I had diabetes. I went to my primary care doctor and I said, "I don't know what's going on. My pinky finger falls asleep and it's like, I don't have feeling in it. And my feet tingle. It's like falling asleep. I don't know how else to describe the feeling, but I know that I don't have the normal feeling that I once did." So she said, "I'm going to send you to a neurologist and we'll figure out what this is." I said, "Okay." And I waited. And I went to this neurologist. I looked up what a neurologist was, I didn't even know what a neurologist was.

[00:03:53] He was very nice, very friendly, very gentle. And he just talked to me and he said, "Tell me, why are you here?" And I said, "Well, I've had diabetes for 20 years now and my pinkies on both hands are falling asleep like they are numb. They get tingly and sometimes jabbing pain." And I noticed when I rode my bike, my feet would do the same thing. My first step always off the bike wasn't right. So I, I just said to him, I said, "We need to find out what this is." And he said, "Oh, we will." He said, "What I'm going to do is run a test on both your hands and your feet and your legs." He said, "I have this machine here,"

and I called it the Frankenstein machine because it did make me a little nervous. And he took his probes. I remember he had these probes, and he put a little round stuff on my legs and my feet. We started with that.

[00:05:14] He took the probe and, Nadia, it felt like he was jabbing my muscles. There were, like, really strong impulses. And, I mean, it hurt. And I was like, "Whoa. You have the electric too high?" That's what it felt like. It felt like he was giving me some kind of an electric shock. So about a half an hour for one side between my left side, my feet, my legs, my hands, and my arms. And then another half hour on the right side.

Nadia [00:05:55] Wow. That does not sound like fun at all, Wende, to say the least. And that's what, unfortunately, most people with diabetes that have this consequence have to go through even just to get diagnosed, right?

Wende [00:06:07] Yep. So another half hour goes by. He knew right away. I mean, this doctor was an old-time doctor. And he said to me, "We'll try some medicine, but you have neuropathy and it's common with people with diabetes. When your blood sugars are out of control, it does damage and that's what neuropathy does." So he says, "You have neuropathy in your hands to your elbows. Both hands. Both elbows." He said, "Your feet. The neuropathy is worse in the left foot to your knee." He said, "The right foot shows some neuropathy, but it's not as bad." He said, "When you walk, what foot do you lead off on?" And I said, "I'm left-handed, but I start walking with my right foot." He said, "Exactly."

[00:07:15] So this man knew. He was an expert in his field. I don't remember the medicine that we tried. It might have helped a little bit, but I would cut myself, or burn myself cooking, and not even realize that I'd hurt myself until I looked down. This is a very serious situation.

Nadia [00:07:41] It's a very serious and debilitating concern and consequence of diabetes. And I think you're right, you know, especially such an experienced doctor like yours, he was very aware of this condition because, unfortunately, so many of his patients with diabetes would, of course, have this. And so many of the people listening in to us today, I just want to make sure that we're very, I know you are for sure, Wende, but I just want to make sure that we're very aware and really considerate of the people listening in. This is not a subject that we're taking lightly. We're not talking about this lightly. I mean, Wende herself has been dealing with this for, I guess, decades now. Over ten years, you said, right, Wende?

Wende [00:08:24] Ten years. I had diabetes for 20 years at that point. And so when it was diagnosed, I had 20 years of my blood sugars...

Nadia [00:08:37] Yeah, it's been over 20 years of this. So many people listening in. This is the kind of thing that they're dealing with. And I mean, we could obviously have a Hot Topic once a week, every week could be a Hot Topic on all the dire consequences of diabetes. So tell us what you've experienced as a consequence of this.

Wende [00:08:57] Well, what happened was, several years later, I went for treatment. I went back for more tests and I was hoping there would be improvement. There wasn't. It was getting worse. And what happened in 19... (we'll just say 2000), I went back to him and he said, "You can't work anymore. You're going to start falling down." And I said, "What?" He said, "You're going to start falling. You need to take things slow. It's time for you to retire and move on."

Nadia [00:09:45] Is that because you were losing so much sensation, Wende? That you were going to start falling and he was worried that you were going to start falling and create serious injuries?

Wende [00:09:54] Yes.

Nadia [00:09:56] Okay, and then what happened?

Wende [00:09:57] He was worried about my motor skills. And I just said, "Well, I'm going to start exercising, I'm going to start..." I had a piece of equipment that I used (it was like a glider) that I would stand on and do that for an hour. I was going to try and reverse the neuropathy. I didn't know about it. I went to the library. Internet was now available, so I learned about neuropathy.

[00:10:32] I'd like to jump now to 2021, if I can. My diabetes, my A1C was very high and, because of that, the neuropathy, of course, got worse too. And what happened was all the bones in my left foot (my arch) collapsed and it was very painful and I had fallen. He was right. The neurologist was right. I didn't just fall...

Nadia [00:11:11] Unfortunately, he was right and it happened to you. And it wasn't a light fall. Tell us a little bit about that story. I've heard a little bit about this story, but I know it was, you know... Nobody wants to fall and the consequences of falling, especially as your health becomes more debilitated, can be quite severe. And yours was not easy, and with a lot of consequences to follow as well. But you fell... Was it in an airplane or an airport?

Wende [00:11:40] It was getting off an airplane. I took my first step, expected to feel the ground and I didn't. It was like I lifted my leg up too high, not feeling the ground. I stumbled and I flew down the ramp.

Nadia [00:12:02] Wow.

Wende [00:12:02] And all I could think about was, "You're gonna hurt. You need to try and relax. They'll be over in a second. Let's see what happens." All the airline personnel came running to me and picked me up and threw me in a wheelchair and ran me up the ramp to the ticket agent. And from there, things just got worse.

Nadia [00:12:31] I'm going to want more details. So things got worse, as in what? What happened to you? And you're telling us that this was all a consequence, basically, of the neuropathy and then all the damage that diabetes had already done to even your bones?

Wende [00:12:47] Yeah. The fall... I didn't know at the time what damage was done. I was visiting a cousin. I wasn't home, I was in Florida. That night, I took my shoe off and my sock, and my foot was huge - black and blue, throbbing. I did feel the throbbing and I'm like, "Whoa, I need to get ice on my foot right away." My cousin wanted me to go to the emergency room and I didn't want to do that. I wanted to deal with this when I got home and I live in Arizona. So for the week that I spent, I stayed in the swimming pool and off my foot as much as possible. I used crutches, so I knew I wasn't doing any further damage, but I didn't know what damage was done yet.

Nadia [00:13:55] Well, thank goodness for that. So when you finally got home, what did you find out?

Wende [00:14:00] I had gone to a foot doctor and they took x-rays and immediately they saw multiple fractures and a dislocation of my foot.

Nadia [00:14:13] A lot of people don't know this, Wende, but, unfortunately, diabetes, especially very poorly controlled diabetes like in patients with type one or patients that take insulin, type two diabetics that take insulin, many people don't know this, but diabetes can lead to very poor bone quality and increased, very high elevated, risk of fractures. Diabetes is often talked about as being, you know, a very high incidence of diabetes and obesity in North America and all over the world, but I wonder how many people actually know that they are at not just a high risk for neuropathy and blindness and all of these terrible things that have happened to you, so not only are you more prone to falling because of the neuropathy, but you're a lot more prone to fractures and really having poor bone quality.

[00:15:05] And I know at this point this is all sounding very doom and gloom. Right, Wende? Because this is just... What a journey, what an experience you've had. And so many people listening, I know, our listeners and friends, unfortunately, are dealing with some of this stuff themselves. But this story does get better and you are a ray of sunshine, Wende. You are just hope [laughs] in one person. So I know that we're going to talk a little bit more about the journey that you've had and about how much you've actually overcome. So not all of it is going to be positive, but there are some amazing things that you're going to share with us before we go today. I just want to make sure that everybody knows that you're here, you've asked to be here (we've asked you and you've agreed to be here) because you want to share hope with people.

[00:15:57] So please continue. So then you were diagnosed, you had the x-ray and they found all these fractures. But then what happened? I know you had to wait many years to have this treated, but tell us about your A1C and then what happened.

Wende [00:16:10] My A1C was 15, one five, and it was totally out of control and they wouldn't do any surgery, let alone... They put me in a cast and every week I'd have a different cast, and every week they'd do more x-rays. I went through three foot doctors. I went through an orthopedic surgeon. And with each of them, we had to start over from point A. I'm in point H! Well, we had to start over. But in the meantime, I took my A1C very seriously. I knew I was in danger. I knew that if I didn't make changes, I wouldn't be around. So my goal was to lower my A1C, and it went from 15 to 9. And I'm rushing through this because we talked about this in the first podcast.

Nadia [00:17:10] Yes, we did.

Wende [00:17:11] It's now... I'm at my foot doctor's office and I said, "Look, I've lost all... I need help. I know you don't take care of Charcot. I've been diagnosed with Charcot in my left foot. Look at my arch, my arch has collapsed. All the bones are crumbling in my foot." My foot doctor says, "I know who can help you. I went to school with his wife." And I've gotten his approval, Nadia, to mention him by name because he is my hero. His name is Dr. Jeffrey McAlister, and he's part of the Foot & Ankle Institute of Arizona. I went and saw Dr. McAlister and he took x-rays. He saw x-rays from my foot doctor and other doctors. I'm on a portal, it's a shared portal, and it's quite frequent that all doctors can see. You have to give your approval, and I did.

[00:18:27] He saw, and he saw pictures that I had taken since day one of this injury. And he said, "We need to talk about the elephant in the room. You need reconstructive surgery and I'm your guy." I said, "Okay, thank you." He says, "But we need to talk. We need to talk about the elephant. We need to talk about what might happen." I said, "Okay." I knew what was coming, but okay. He said, "Wende, if, for whatever reason, your body, or I can't reconstruct your foot, or your body doesn't accept this surgery, or you get an infection, I may have to amputate your leg below your neck." And that brought back all kinds of memories with my aunt being a type one diabetic. So I shook my head. I couldn't even talk to him. I just shook my head, "Yes." I controlled my emotions and then said to him, "When can we do this?" He says, "What's your A1C?" And I said, "My A1C is 7, thanks to TFM." And he's like, "What's TFM?" I said, "The Fasting Method. Ever hear of Dr. Jason Fung?" "No."

Nadia [00:19:59] You're pretty amazing, Wende. You know, you're getting emotional and I'm getting emotional. This reminds me of the first day that we met and when you came into our Zoom meeting, we talked about it in the last episode that we were together. But it's almost impossible to not get this emotional when talking about a topic like this, and I really appreciate it. I know you have very fond memories of your family members that have suffered with diabetes and, unfortunately, had to get amputated. And again, I know how sensitive this topic is and so many people listening in might be struggling and dealing with similar things right now. And you had to be faced with this very challenging, scary decision, which was you had to have this very serious surgery to fix your foot. But being a diabetic, or at least previously having been a diabetic, and causing that much harm, of course, the diabetes having caused that much harm to your bones, to your health, creating the neuropathy that originated all of this, and then having to decide to do this surgery that you needed for the quality of your life. But then, you know, running the risk of having to possibly, and it's hard to even say this, possibly having to be amputated. Right? But that was a real risk, and the diabetics know only too well.

[00:21:20] So the fact that you found your own... I know you are so great at celebrating TFM, The Fasting Method, and our Community, but really you're the amazing one that's put all of this into practice and you have done such a great job bringing your A1C down from 15 to 9 and then to 7 so that you could do this surgery and just really blow everyone away with what came out of this. Still, that journey wasn't easy, was it? Tell us a little bit about that surgery and post-surgery.

Wende [00:21:53] Yeah, it wasn't. Well, I got a call from Dr. McAlister and he said, "Wende. Yeah, COVID. I'm going to try and protect you as much as I can. There's an opening. I want you to go to this surgical facility." It's about 50 miles away from where I live. I said, "Okay." I knew about this facility because five years before me, my brother had the same surgery. So I knew of the facility and I just jumped at the opportunity. I said, "Yes, I'm there. I'm there right now. I'll be there, yes." And he said, "Okay."

[00:22:41] So the surgery was done. I was released from that facility and the first blood work that was done showed I had an infection. I knew I had an infection. I said in your Zoom meeting, Nadia, just prior to me coming home, "My blood work isn't right. My blood glucose is shooting up into the 200s and because I'm doing time-restricted eating, they're coming back down to 80. And it's blown everybody away, including me. I never had an infection and my blood glucose is normal."

Nadia [00:23:25] So this was definitely a sign that something wasn't right. But before this, we skipped a very (we must celebrate our victories, as we often remind people in our

Community), a super important part. So when you had the surgery, I know this for a fact. You know, I've been following your journey quite closely. So when you had your surgery, the day after the surgery or just a few hours after the surgery, your blood sugars were amazing. There were (I remember you telling us) in the 80s, or 80, and the doctors and nurses were blown away. Again. They're constantly getting blown away by you. But they were blown away by the fact that somebody who previously, or still, you were still diagnosed as somebody with diabetes... Post-surgery, usually, people's numbers tend to go up, but you didn't expect your numbers to go up. You expected your numbers to be amazing, and they were amazing. So you weren't amazed by them, but the doctors and nurses were because you had, I believe, an 80.

[00:24:25] And you were discharged, right, from the hospital with a clean bill of health and were expected to have an amazing recovery. And then you started to notice - this is the red flag. Then you started to notice that (You expected your blood sugar to stay in the 80s because you were doing TRE, time-restricted eating. You've reversed diabetes. You've done amazing with TRE.) your blood sugars start shooting up to 200. And even though they were coming back down to 80, every time, you knew something was wrong. You knew this was a sign, definitely, that something was wrong. So then, you went to the hospital and they diagnosed you with...

Wende [00:25:07] Yeah. I went back to the surgeon for post-op, and that was the first time I saw my foot. I just gasped. I never saw anything like that in my life.

Nadia [00:25:24] And you have even given it a nickname. What have you called it?

Wende [00:25:27] I call that wound scary wound, because it scared me. It took my breath away. I never saw a wound just spread open the way it did.

Nadia [00:25:41] Right. And that was the cause of those super-high blood sugars that you hadn't seen for months and didn't justify based on, you know, what you'd been doing. So unfortunately and, you know, one of the most feared things, unfortunately, happened, which is you had this super-scary infection and it wasn't an easy thing to deal with. And you went through weeks and weeks of having to deal with that. So walk us through that a little bit. And then, you know, of course, we're going to end on a high note, as usual, with Wende. But walk us through that. You know, I know you had to go through a lot of medications.

Wende [00:26:17] Yeah.

Nadia [00:26:18] Tell us a little bit about that and then, consequently, how your blood sugars reacted and what you've been doing since.

Wende [00:26:24] Okay. Yeah, I got a phone call. I sent pictures to Dr. McAlister thinking that he saw them. He sent me to a wound doctor and I thought he would share and he wasn't. So the first time that Dr. McAlister saw my wounds, I had a big, huge wound on the dorsal - that's scary wound. Then I had a wound, a hole, in my plantar that shouldn't have been the way it was either. So I sent him pictures. The next day the phone rings. I have a special ring on my phone for doctors, so I know it's a doctor. I pick up the phone. "Wende, it's Dr. McAlister." "Hi, how are you?" "Wende, I saw the pictures that you sent me. This is what you need to do. You need to get to the hospital. I want you to go to the emergency room, and I want you to tell them to admit you, that you are having surgery tomorrow, and to call me." "Okay." I was shocked. "Okay."

Nadia [00:27:38] You had to have a second surgery, Wende?

Wende [00:27:41] The second surgery, March 7th, was the phone call. March 8th was the second surgery. I thought that, yes, they were going to check to make sure that the infection didn't hit the bone, whether it was on scary wound or my plantar. Well, what happened was that day they did the surgery. Dr. McAlister did a bone biopsy, a bone marrow biopsy, and stayed in the operating room with me until they got the results. Thank God, the infection did not reach the bone. He then closed the plantar up, stitched it up, and woke me up. I came out of surgery and I was thrilled. I was like, "Oh, thank you. You are my hero. You're wonderful." And he said, "You are the rock star." "What? No, no, thank you." So that was a great, great start, but there's still something wrong. So Dr. McAlister goes back to the office. I now meet the head of the hospital, and I talked about her in the first podcast.

Nadia [00:29:10] Yes, you did. Yes, you did.

Wende [00:29:12] And she is another hero of mine. And she came into my room. I'm just going to repeat, Nadia, because this was special to me.

Nadia [00:29:24] Please do. You know I'm a big fan of repetition, right? So go ahead, Wende.

Wende [00:29:28] Thank you. She came into my room and she said, "So I understand you are controlling your blood glucose numbers and you have an infection, a post-op infection, that we haven't identified yet. How in the world are you doing that?" And I smiled and I said, my first answer was, "Diet and exercise." She looked at me and I said, "Intermittent fasting." And she turned around and said, "I've read The Obesity Code." [laughter] And I was thrilled. I was like, "Oh, my gosh," And we were immediate friends. I said, "You need to read The Diabetes Code. You need to read The PCOS Plan. You need to read The Guide to Intermittent Fasting." I mean, I just went on and on and on. She said, "Wende, I would like to be your primary care doctor while you're in the hospital with us." "Great!" So we had a great relationship.

Nadia [00:30:42] Wow. And I mean, how amazing, too, that these two individuals crossed paths. You and this amazing doctor. Amazing Wende and an amazing doctor. This is where I want to start celebrating again because, you know, the fact that she came to see you in your room and the reason why she was so amazed is because, first of all, who is this person who brings down her A1C from 15 to 9 and then to 7? And then who is this person that walks out of a surgery with a blood sugar of 80? Because as we know, unfortunately, all diabetics know this and all pre-diabetics know this, every single time that you have a stress (of any sort - physical or emotional), any time that you have a surgery, a lesion, a flu, your blood sugars go up and they go up quite a bit. An infection, of course, as we've seen with Wende. You walk out of surgery with perfect blood sugars. So everybody's amazed at that for sure. Then, unfortunately, as can happen and, of course, this is one of the most-feared side effects of post-op, post-surgery, is a severe infection and yours was quite severe. And your body told you because you knew that, even though your lifestyle now includes intermittent fasting and TRE, you should not be seeing blood sugars of 200. So a blood sugar of 200 clearly indicated an infection. In this case, a serious infection and another surgery. Yet you walk out of another surgery, a second surgery, with perfect blood sugars and the doctors are amazed. What the heck is this woman doing that she has such amazing blood sugars? And so, you know, serendipity, of course.

[00:32:21] So now it's been three months, Wende, since scary wound, since the second surgery, since a lot of medication and antibiotics, and we're all dying to know what has happened? What has happened to you, Wende? What has happened to your foot and your leg? And it's all good news, so we're ready for it. Let's hear it.

Wende [00:32:42] I had a third surgery. This wonderful vascular doctor found a blockage in my left thigh, so we had to have a third surgery. I didn't leave the hospital for 11 days from March 7th, when I was admitted. So he was able to remove the blockage and immediately blood flow started, warmth in my leg and my feet started. Beautiful color in my toes started. Scary wound - I had home health coming to the house and I need to do a shout-out to my nurse, Pam, who took great care. Great. But amazing. Once blood flow started, the wound started healing. You need blood flow. You need protein. I did time-restricted eating from January until just recently, and that proved to me that I can heal my body. I can be on maintenance when I reach my amazing goal. Scary wound isn't scary anymore, it just has to form a scab.

[00:34:18] I have to wear what's called a Charcot boot for the rest of my life. And one friend said to me, "Boy, that's tough." I said, "Not at all." I said, "I have my leg and my foot. I'll wear whatever I have to wear. I don't care. And I'll have to teach myself how to walk, but I'm up for the challenge. I'm walking."

[00:34:46] I had so many angels come into my life to help me. And TFM is one of them, the Community. You all kept me in check and you all followed me and gave me the support that I needed.

Nadia [00:35:01] We were definitely, definitely, worried. But, you know, as you've shown us since we've had the pleasure to meet you, you can overcome just about anything, dear Wende. And you have been nothing but a source of great inspiration and motivation.

[00:35:20] And so I'm going to take this opportunity and ask you, Wende, today, what are some things, or one thing, what is your favorite thing? This is usually how we end off when we have an expert guest. And really that's what you are when it comes to this particular topic of neuropathy, and, I mean, having experienced all of this yourself and having overcome all of that. Leave us with a tip for today, Wende, for everyone listening in, people who may be where you were a couple of years ago, maybe they're halfway through their recovery journey and needing a little bit of extra motivation and support. What can you share with somebody? What would be your favorite tip to leave with us, with our listeners, today?

Wende [00:36:03] Never give up. Always remember your reason for doing what you're doing - your why. You just keep going, no matter what. You know, I took one step forward and three steps back. It's okay. Just keep on your journey because things are going to change. And I'm living proof for that to happen. Keep your why in check, your motivation. You can do this. Even if you have to talk to yourself out loud, "I can do this. I can do this."

[00:36:45] Thank you, Nadia.

Nadia [00:36:46] Thank you, dear Wende. You can be your own self-coach, a kind, loving self-coach. Thank you once again, Wende. And thank you to everyone listening today.

[00:36:56] We will be back next week with another episode, this time with our wonderful Megan back from her trip. Thank you, everyone.