

**CHOOSE
YOUR HARD**

PROF GRANT SCHOFIELD

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**THE SCIENCE OF DOING HARD SH*T TO
BUILD HEALTH THAT LASTS A LIFETIME**

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“(Grant is) setting the nation on a path to increased coronary artery disease”

Professor at a prominent New Zealand university

(Grant) could “undermine public confidence”

Professor at a prominent New Zealand university

Fantastic. A whole book encouraging people to try, just what we need – more motivated people making the rest of us look bad.

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CONTENTS

How I Got Here	1
Introduction	5
Key Terms to Understand	7
Part 1: Swimming in Pleasure	11
Part 2: The Seven Truths	29
Truth 1: Move or Rust	31
Truth 2: The Dopamine Economy	47
Truth 3: Food, the Holy Grail of Health	59
Truth 4: Face the Elements	79
Truth 5: Distraction is the Thief of Time	95
Truth 6: Own Your Emotions	111
Truth 7: Know Your Meaning	127
Part 3: Hard Starts Now	145
Design Thinking Process for Your N=1 Experiments	163
The Prof's 19 Best-Kept Secrets	165
Epilogue	169
References	183
About the Author	191
Acknowledgements	193

HOW I GOT HERE

I've written six books on nutrition, been cited over 18,000 times in the scientific literature, and spent my life in public health, thinking about what makes us well. Yet I find it hard to control my own weight without loads of exercise. Just because I know 'what to do', it doesn't mean it comes easy to me.

Let's travel back in time. It's 2010, and I'm wondering why dietetics (the science and practice of how food and nutrition affect human health) clings to outdated guidelines that promote processed food, such as low-fat cereal, as 'healthy'. Beyond a passing frustration, I let it lie.

Then, in 2012, three events collided, changing everything.

First, I was commissioned to write a men's health book with All Black legend Wayne 'Buck' Shelford. The brief included a detailed guide for men on healthy eating. Research meant trialling the ideas myself, and at that time, the 'Dukan' diet was all the rage.

Pierre Dukan, a deregistered French doctor, promoted a high-protein, low-fat, extremely low-carb diet. I tried it. I suffered. I lost a lot of weight on a diet that was mostly the opposite of conventional nutritional wisdom (high-carb, low-fat). To be clear, this is not a sustainable way of eating. But it was interesting to see how doing the exact opposite of what was suggested worked. I liked the counter-narrative.

Secondly, a trip across the Pacific island nations of Tonga, Kiribati,

and Vanuatu to study chronic diseases like type 2 diabetes, heart disease and more.

At its worst was the island of Tarawa, part of the country of Kiribati, where over 50% of adults we tested were diagnosed with type 2 diabetes (high blood sugar). On the low-lying coral islands with little fresh produce, polluted waters, and fishing rights sold offshore, locals relied on instant noodles, sugary drinks, and carbs like rice. Children were malnourished; adults were obese and chronically ill. Foot amputations due to complications from having type 2 diabetes were routine. The World Health Organisation's prescription was the usual 'eat less, move more' with guidelines favouring low-fat diets and 'healthy' grains. It was hard to imagine more out-of-context advice.

Aneityum is the southernmost island of Vanuatu and stands in stark contrast to Kiribati. They ate no processed food and performed daily physical work. These people suffered almost no cancer, heart disease, or depression. Old age brought death, usually in their sleep, at the end of a healthy life that embodied the 'live long drop dead' mantra. Their traditional way of life rejected outside influence. They thrived on a relatively low-carb, moderate-protein, higher-fat diet that is rich in saturated fat. I began wondering if saturated fat had been wrongly crucified.

Finally, our university lab had started using a breathing test (respiratory exchange ratio) to measure how much fat versus carbohydrates athletes burn during endurance exercise. The results were striking.

1. People with high blood sugar could hardly burn fat at all. A diet high in sugary foods and carbohydrates lead to high blood sugar.
2. People who ate like the Aneityum tribe (similar to the ketogenic diet of low-carb and high-fat) for a few weeks improved fat burning and ultra-endurance performance.

The evidence stood in complete contrast to the mainstream public health recommendations.

But I couldn't just ignore it, right?

What happened next felt like this meme.



Alongside Caryn Zinn (dietitian and now professor) and Michelin-trained chef Craig Rodger, we published the books *What the Fat?* and *What the Fast?* Shifting our research careers into low-carb, ketogenic, and fasting, nutrition.

The pushback from orthodox nutrition was fierce. We endured an open letter to our university's leadership, signed by nearly every public health and nutrition academic in New Zealand, demanding that we stop. Our colleagues, such as Professor Tim Noakes, faced disciplinary hearings for stepping out of their lanes and talking about this new nutritional science.

However, the university backed us because this is what a university is all about: new science that leads to debate and ultimately progress.

HOW I GOT HERE

Our position remained simple yet unchanged: whole, unprocessed food (e.g., meat, vegetables, fruit) is the foundation of good health.

Today, with more conflicting data, die-hard dieting, and internet bio-hackers focused on experimenting to optimise their health, we have overcomplicated nutrition. Losing an essential truth that the Aneityum tribe has known for millennia... if you want a good life, eat whole food. If you want a great life, be wild about food that was recently wild itself (plants and animals).

INTRODUCTION

You're here for the truth, not empty promises. You're here to be the best you can be.

In this book, I show you that the real science of health and longevity is to do hard things. I'm saying the good life isn't easy, but it's earned, and it will be worth it.

I'm Prof Grant Schofield, and for over three decades, I've been at the forefront of health and performance science. I'm known for challenging conventional thinking and following the latest science. I take the science and turn it into real things people can actually do. I'm here to help you achieve health, resilience, and a relentless pursuit of excellence.

But even with all that knowledge, I'm not immune to the same struggles as everyone else.

The batteries on my scales had run out. But I knew. I'd gained weight. Again. It starts with my eating drifting, too much alcohol, and too much processed food. Before long, I've put on 10 kilos. WTF? My clothes get tighter, so I avoid the scales. Does it sound familiar, or is it just me?

I live and breathe health and well-being. It's my job, my passion, my path. And yet, I too struggle to stay fit and healthy. Just because I struggle, it does not mean that you, the reader, should not trust me; it just means that it's hard. I've worked with hundreds of high achievers

INTRODUCTION

who struggle too. The truth is that staying fit and healthy in the modern world is bloody hard. The only thing harder? Being unfit and unhealthy.

And that is the paradox that is at the heart of this book. Both paths are hard, but one leads to a better life. There is no ‘one and done’ in health. There is only a conscious choice to be made over and over again. We live in a world our biology wasn’t built for, and we’re all struggling to stay healthy in it.

The absence of discomfort is not comfort; it is decline. If you think daily movement, healthy eating, and saying no to booze is a big ask, wait until you see the bill for comfort. You cannot pay it upfront; you’ll pay it off slowly, over decades, in instalments of chronic disease, low mood, frailty, and wasted potential.

The good news is that this book can help you change course and give you the clarity and confidence to take action now to do what actually works. You’ll learn how to turn your ambition into results, unlocking sustained performance and well-being. The truth is, every path is hard. In *Choose Your Hard*, I’ll show you how to lean into the temporary discomfort. We’ll get into the exciting new science of something called mitohormesis and reveal my seven truths of health and longevity. Each truth is practical, grounded in science, and aimed at helping you to choose your hard and win.