

The Primal Blueprint Podcast – Episode #27: Liz and Farhad Mostaedi Talk Life and Work at Primal HQ

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Brad Kearns: Welcome to another edition. I am your host, Brad Kearns here in the Malibu Studios. We have two very special guests to the podcast. I think you guys are going to set the record right now for the shortest-traveled guests to the podcast because we looked no further than down the hall to two of our favorite Primal Blueprint employees, Elizabeth and Farhad Mostaedi. Thank you for coming all the way to the podcast in Malibu.

Liz and Farhad: Hi, Brad. Thank you for having us.

Brad Kearns: [00:00:29] It is a question that you even asked off the air, "Why are we on the podcast?" My answer is that you, first of all, you guys are on the ground floor of the inner workings of the Primal Blueprint and the Primal lifestyle and it has been an interesting influence on your personal lives. A lot has happened during your career here at work as a keen listener might notice. You guys have the same last name, which, I believe, when you were hired, was not the case.

Elizabeth: It was definitely not the case.

Brad Kearns: So you were Liz Kane, when I first met you, how did this whole deal happen?

Liz: [00:01:07] Well, that is quite an interesting story. I know that recently you had "Paleo Girl" author, Leslie Klenke, on the podcast and she told a little bit of our background... our common history of how we got together at Primal Blueprint. Basically, a friend of a friend back home (we're from the same area in Ohio) told us about the Primal Blueprint. We had been crash dieters together for quite some time and I thought this sounded like a really logical answer to the kind of health quest that we had been on for some time. We decided to start in on a Monday. I'd been in finance for almost 7 years and I kind of wanted to transition out of that career, so a few days later I started searching online for job listings, just to make myself feel better more than anything. The second job listing I found was a position at Primal Blueprint. I thought it was very strange. I just got that book the other day so this must be some kind of sign that I should see what is up there. So I submitted my resume that day. I had a meeting with the general manager Aaron and Mark and within a couple of days, I had a job. It was not even a week later after getting the book in the mail. I remember calling Leslie on the way home from the interview, and I said, "I don't mean to be cocky, but I think I got the job. This is all just too weird, I think it must be for me!" That is how it worked out. I have been here for about 3-1/2 years and Farhad... Farhad, how many years?

Farhad: About 5-1/2 years ago I was a recent college grad and needed a job and saw this job on Craig's list and here I am, to this day.

Brad: You were here before Liz. Were you do part of the interview/hiring process or were you just doing your own thing over there in production?

Farhad: I was in my office and what Aaron normally does when we have an interviewee, he brings them over and introduces him or her to me and.....

Brad: Do you do that looking up and down and get a first impression kind of thing and behind their back, give thumbs up or down?

Farhad: Oh, no. But Aaron usually does come up to me afterwards and ask me what I thought.....what my first impressions are. I believe you, Brad, have done that as well.

Brad: Basically, everyone who comes into here....we go into your office first which is near the door and you get the first impression and then the important guest comes through the main entrance foyer and all that.

Farhad: Exactly. Usually they come in to my side of the office and at least one person will always say, "This is where all the magic happens." So....

Liz: So I got the Farhad stamp of approval?

Farhad: You definitely got the Farhad stamp of approval.

Brad: [00:04:24] Just to set the tone we are here in Malibu at the headquarters and a small but growing team, probably about a dozen people come to work here every day and we also have a few other remote people in Los Angeles. So it is about 10 or 15 people who make a nice small intimate family style work place and it's such an intimate family style workplace that sooner or later here, Elizabeth Kane, our ambitious marketing social media community relations person was making the rounds and met Farhad soon after you started here?

Liz: I did. I had been here for quite a while before I really we started dating. We had sort of an accidental date on my birthday a couple of years ago.....

Farhad: I had an art show in downtown LA and I invited everyone in the office to come. And, by chance, Liz was the only one that showed up even though multiple people said that they would come. It was really dumb luck how it turned out.

Liz: Yes, so I spent the evening with Farhad and I met his dad and we all went to dinner and I met his close friend of Farhad's. It was very cozy. Things just kind of grew from there. I think that we saw each other more as coworkers before that. You have a certain relationship at the office. It is just different outside of those walls...

Brad: When I heard that story.....if you want to compete for the romantic story and the special nature. Here is a guy putting his soul on his sleeve and putting up an art show. It is such a vulnerable thing to do for an artist anyway. Most artists never even get to the art show because they are afraid. He invites everybody in the office. He's got the swagger. Said, "Come to my show. It's going to kick ass." It is all the way across town. We are not talking about some boo foo town here. We are talking about Los Angeles. It is a huge commitment to show up in downtown LA for the art show. And he gets percentage-wise..... it is a low percentage turnout for the number of employees that were invited, but it is not about the quantity. It is about the quality, in the case of that night.

Liz: Yeah, actually, there ended up being a riot downtown. It rained. It was very LA. We have a very LA story.

Farhad: We got stuck down there for at least an hour. There was a two-block radius where SWAT came in and just blocked it and we couldn't get out of the parking lot. Eventually we made it out safely.

Liz: It ended up being peaceful, but there was a lot of riot gear.

Brad: [00:07:18] So you come to work here. It is sort of an unusual place to work. Some of the people might have seen Mark's Daily Apple videos going in and doing the workplace dynamics where everyone is doing their stand up thing at their desk, their tread desk. We just finished filming a comprehensive production here today where we turned the place upside-down for Mark Sisson and Katy Bowman program called "Don't Just Sit There." It should be coming out soon with a total makeover education on body alignment, movement, and dynamic workstations. The point is when you come to work here you can't do your own thing, check out at 5:00. You are sort of obligated to be in this lifestyle in certain ways. Would you say that is accurate?

Liz: I wouldn't say obligated. You definitely are exposed to a lot of information working here so the more you learn, the easier it is to just implement all of the different aspects of the Primal lifestyle into your own because it just begins to make sense. I think it is just natural.

Farhad: In my case, as soon as Liz and I moved in together.....

Brad: You are skipping a lot here. We have plenty of time. It is just a podcast. We had the art show and as soon as Liz and I moved in together.....Do we have some other issues come in to play at the art show? Were you guys both single? Do mind if I pry here?

Liz: We were definitely single at the art show.

Farhad: It didn't take very long for me to jump the gun because I realized I had something good and I proposed a maybe few months later.

Brad: Was anyone aware that you guys were even dating? Did you keep in under wraps for a while?

Liz: Actually, we joke that I really didn't let Farhad call me his "girlfriend." Basically, we just went from dating to engaged...

Brad: My coworker and I are going to Hawaii for 4 days. I'll be back on email on Tuesday.

Liz: Maybe the older you get - after different life experiences - things just start to become more clear..... you don't need to take years to figure out if this is the right thing.

Brad: The dating scene you have the performance of the date that goes on for the first 11 days. The gentlemanly thing goes on. He opens doors for you and pays for most of the things, but then you are working together. You go over the production area. The place is booming. The guy is all stressed. You can see what he is really about when he is under the gun. You can't put on an act for 8 hours a day.

Liz: That is a really good point. That is actually something that I have thought about and that we have talked about. Knowing each other in a professional setting, I knew what his ethics are. I knew what he was like when he is irritated or angry. It is inevitable. You end up spending more time with your coworkers than you do with your family at home, especially in an office environment like ours. It is tight knit. It is a family environment and we are all in close quarters. So normal office issues arise and you see people work through that in their own ways. I have always had the utmost respect for Farhad and how he handles himself.

Brad: These guys are on opposite sides of the hall. There is a little bit of a barrier. Who is more clean and tidy?

Farhad: My office is definitely very messy on any given day.

Liz: You have neatly stacked clutter.

Farhad: I try to be as organized as much as possible because I have to know where everything is. And things are constantly moving. This product is selling faster than others so I want that to be more accessible and so on and so forth. I will have random people come in unexpectedly and I am always so embarrassed of how messy the place is. That is what you get for being in the shipping office.

Liz: I am good at hiding the clutter on my desk.

Brad: [00:12:08] You got the book, Liz, before you even got hired. And you were getting in to the Primal thing and you were doing great. How did that go for you guys personally? Where were you, Farhad, at that time in terms of the Primal lifestyle outside the workplace?

Farhad: When Liz started working here, I was probably in my second or third year at Primal Nutrition and at that time I had adopted most but not all the Primal principles. Let's just say 70-30 Primal. Most of that was that I was already naturally Primal, I'd say, except for the college days where there was a lot of fast food involved. Other than that as soon as Liz and I started living together, I pretty much became a Primal person. I didn't have a choice. When I learned I couldn't have bagels at home on Saturdays, it pretty much changed my life. I will have to go through life without having any bread. It is fine now. It is a way of life now. It is like anything. You make adjustments. I can eat veggies all day now and protein all day and I am okay. I don't need bread any more.

Brad: That is interesting. We get that question a lot at PrimalCon where one of the spouses, or partner, is far more engaged than the other one. They will ask that question of Mark at Q and A. How can I enroll my friends and family? Many people have difficulty with that. It seems like you have made somewhat of a smooth transition but you did have that sacrifice. What do you think the magic formula is that the two of you have a household all of a sudden aligning Primally without the struggle or the pushback?

Liz: Well, I think it is really important to navigate the focus to the health benefits. For me it is crucial to my personal health. Farhad and I have very different backgrounds and very different genetics. So it is imperative that I kind of follow a low-inflammatory diet and live Primally. I have seen amazing strides in my health and my physical appearance since I started doing that. I think, for Farhad, it was probably a little bit easier to make compromises and his body didn't really react in the same way that mine does.

Brad: It is a good motivator. A lot of people come to this movement with health challenges. It is interesting that you say your focus on the inflammation thing because you had health conditions related to that. And, Farhad, you sort of not so much. What benefits can you feel and how do you stay motivated to?

Farhad: [00:15:17] The benefits....I guess I don't pay too much attention to the benefits other than that I am sleeping a little bit better than I used to. I always had problems with sleep, ever since childhood, never really getting more than 6 hours a night. And to this day, I really don't get much more than that, but my sleep is a lot more consistent now. I don't wake up as many times in the middle of the night. But I don't feel as tired any more. When changing to the Primal lifestyle, I don't get the carb crash or the sugar crashes any more. The one time that I really noticed it a couple of weeks ago when we were in Sacramento visiting my brother and just kind of took the weekend off from being Primal. Was it that Sunday where I felt I actually had to take a nap? It was because I had sugar crash. I never had the need to take a nap except for times like that. Now I know. It is evident because of all that sugar I had that weekend.

Liz: That was kind of nice. It was very validating for him to actually say, "I feel bad today. I can tell that I ate badly."

Farhad: That is what happens when you eat so well for two years straight then all of a sudden you take one bad weekend. I had never paid attention to that before. After working here at Primal, it has been brought to my attention.

Brad: [00:16:51] Mark talked about this in an earlier podcast....how your sensitivity is heightened in the same manner that a smoker who smokes a couple of packs a day, taking that 41st cigarette and doesn't notice it. If they quit for 10 years and start back they will start hacking and coughing. It seems generally a

positive benefit that you are not into all those unhealthy practices and are more finely tuned, more sensitive, and more vulnerable, too.

Farhad: Definitely. I think the best thing that has come out of this is that Liz constantly reminds me that I am going to live longer without even realizing it. I never had an issue with disease or weight or anything like that in the past. I think, that Liz again, points out to me. I grew up I ate more Primally than I realized. I grew up in a Vietnamese household. Everything was home cooked. We didn't have any processed food. The thought of having McDonalds was a treat when I was growing up. It never happened. My meal every day was meat and rice and a salad. My desert was a piece of cucumber. I looked forward to that piece of cucumber every day.

Brad: Until you got to Cal State Northridge and went to that Baskins and Robbins across the street and whatnot?

Farhad: I can't do dairy.

Brad: Where did you go after you left home?

Farhad: There's a lot of Carl's Jr. They have the biggest burgers for what you can get on a college budget. Liz: That brings up a good point that I kind of bring up with him. You know Farhad has a very high metabolism. He definitely requires a lot more food and a lot more calories than I do. He's just naturally has a lot of muscle mass developed without trying. Again, really great genetics. Growing up. I am from the Midwest. I am from Ohio. I lived in the middle of miles and miles of corn and soybean fields. We know were treated regularly with pesticides and even though it is hard to say what kind of effect that had on me growing up. While my mom was pretty good at having us on a balanced diet, it was the 80s and 90s so colorful cereals were definitely popular and Little Debbie's were definitely a part of it. We ate a lot of conventional processed food. Growing up in that environment, after years and years of that, it definitely takes its toll. I am paying for it in my adult years. When I was growing up, I missed a lot of school. I was constantly having colds, bronchitis, and chronic sinus infections. I had pneumonia. I was always having respiratory issues. But I haven't had those into my adult years, even after moving out to California, it was always a part of my life. Every season I would be down. But since I have been Primal, I haven't had those.

Brad: Fantastic. [00:20:21] So you have also seen numerous employees more recently coming in the door, to start working here. How are the effects, in general, when you see people exposed to the information in the workplace? It is an education company that is constantly dispensing information.

Liz: Yes, it is really interesting to see. I think that regardless of the background that everybody has when they come in here, there is some kind of attraction to the health field. It is not a requirement for anyone to follow any of the Primal principles to work here but it is something everyone naturally gravitates towards. So I would say most of the time, it is an easy sell.

Brad: When you look in the lunchroom and see these incredible spreads that people bring in their Tupperware as a routine. You look at it and say, "WOW! What is that?" The answer is sliced flank steak on a bed of fresh strawberries and.....

Farhad: We get the best gluten free/sugar free cookies on every birthday here at the office.

Liz: From " Primal Cravings."

Brad: Is it true you are the reception point of various products in the Primal/paleo world?

Liz: I am.

Brad: So you get to do some product testing here.

Liz: We do. Especially chocolate, jerky and Primal granola.

Brad: Coconut butter.

Liz: Coconut butter. God-bless Nikki's.

Brad: They will confiscate Nikki's coconut butter at the TSA checkpoint for being over 4 ounces of liquid. I said to them to try it. It is not liquid it is coconut butter. One scoop of this and you will know it is not liquid. But it does not good. They will throw it away. Or maybe they put it in a special drawer for themselves.

[00:22:24] So Farhad. Five and a half years here.

Farhad: Yes it is.

Brad: So when you started here. You are in the production site. Your finger is on the pulse of what is going out of here..... what is shipping out of here. You are also creating all the brochures, flyers, and marketing material and so probably nobody knows better.....having seen visually, how this company has grown and how the books have sold. Tell us about that experience over there.

Farhad: When I first started here, I was the one-man shipping guy and we had only supplements being shipped out of here. I think the Primal Blueprint book was in the making. It was released 6 or 7 months after I had started. In the beginning pre any publication, I'd say the Damage Control Master Formula and the Vital Omega Fish Oils were the top sellers. They definitely were the bread and butter of the company. Ever since the book...all the books came out. The original title, the 21-Day Transformation book has been a huge seller. The Primal Fuels, in recent days, including the Primal Flora, has taken off quite well, actually. That is pretty much it.

Brad: [00:23:51] On Liz's side.....your official title?

Liz: Community Outreach Manager.

Brad: Community Outreach Manager. As we know, Mark is extremely active in blogging and social media. You are managing all kinds of relationships on contents. Tell us what your day looks like and also how the social media has helped this movement grow and connect.

Liz: A big part of my job trying to keep an eye on the activity all across the blogs, the forum, and social media... keep an eye on the comments and see what is trending. If people have any questions or if there is a topic we need to cover or questions that we need to answer. I have to make sure that everybody is playing nice. Occasionally we get the troll or the nasty comments are in there. It's not a Mark's Daily Apple problem; it's an on-going age of the internet issue. That's a big part of it and then I do a lot of intercepting of some of the different products that get sent out way.

Brad: The co-promotions like sharing other people's links and new books that are coming out, and going back and forth in that direction. It seems to me fascinating. I am not a huge social media consumer, but the ability to extract out of all the articles that appeared in publications today, you get 3 or 4 cool ones either from either Mark's own research, which he spends a fair amount of his day doing, or through your homies...your connections. How does that all work?

Liz: [00:25:57] It's pretty easy. I am so immersed into the movement, not just in a professional manner but because it is my own personal passion. I follow a lot of other blogs....a lot of other authors, and typically if something is trending, that is applicable to our cause, I'll be able to see that. Readers write in suggestions as well. I think social media is definitely really the key to be able to support the other thought leaders in the paleo/ Primal movement. We are all, regardless of the publishing company, or who is writing the paychecks, we are all kind of big family. We are all supporting each other. Lots of speakers come out to PrimalCon like Sarah Fragoso, Kelly Starrett and Rob Wolfe, a lot of the other big names players in the paleo community. We just try to help each other out. It is really important. Everybody's goal is the same.

You want to get the message across and it is working. More and more of the national news headlines are in our favor. Like fat is not the enemy. There was a great new *Time* magazine cover about butter. It is really beautiful to see and it is beautiful to be a part of that movement. It used to be such an underground thing. Just a couple of years ago when I started it was relatively unheard of. Now when I go out to dinner I overhear people talking about Mark or they are talking about Rob, or just the whole paleo thing. Or they ask for a gluten-free menu. We are making huge strides. It is not a fad. This is definitely something that is here to stay. The science speaks for itself. We are pushing more and more of that conventional wisdom that was prevalent only a few years ago. We are pushing it off to the side.

Brad: That's right. Even in the short time the Primal Blueprint book has been in existence and we have been doing various commercials. Back in the old days we were knocking on doors trying to get PR for Mark or booking interviews on some show.....some TV news or whatever it was. It is evolved to the point where it is "who cares? You want to pick whomever you want on that very narrow channel of media that we have been accustomed to for the previous 30 or 40 years. Now we don't need it. If you haven't seen that *Time* magazine cover that talks about butter, it has been pushed out in so many directions through the community at large, somehow it is going to hit you if you have the slightest interest.

Liz: Yes, it has all become very organic.

Farhad: It is interesting for me to see how many people texted me telling about the *Time* magazine article about the butter. I was responding, "Yes," "Yes," "Yes,"...you are about 7 days late now." Five years ago, no one was texting me about that. No one had a clue about what I did. How my life was transformed.

Liz: People would argue with us about how important whole grains are.

Farhad: I had more people telling me it was a fad five years ago and now they are asking me to tell them more. It is a good sign that people are changing and wanting my opinion.

Liz: It is beautiful to see. I have a fair amount of friends who have switched over and have made amazing strides on their health and physical appearance. Especially back home. It is huge for us there. Here in California we are a little spoiled here. We can be as picky as we want and any restaurant. We can be completely shameless. We are ahead of the game in a lot of different ways out here. Back home it is taking a little bit of time to get that information.

Brad: It is not too far. I know you can send an email to Ohio very quickly. Now that Klenke is becoming your world famous author, the whole state of Ohio is going to turn from.....I don't know if it was blue or red.....I think it was always a swing state. It might turn green and yellow and all those rich colors of Primal eating. This has been great to catch up with you guys, Liz and Farhad, and also Shelby who didn't make a sound the whole time.....a Primal miniature dachshunda very healthy dog, too, despite her advancing age, she looks like a youth dog. She did a good job during this podcast. Thank you so much for listening. Getting us caught up on what it is like to be right here in the epicenter of Primal Blueprint living. Farhad and Liz, thank you so much. I am your host, Brad Kearns, until next time.

Farhad and Liz: Thanks, Brad