

**EPISODE 28**

[INTRODUCTION]

**[0:00:01] AS:** You know battling food and your body doesn't work. You want to love and accept yourself. And because you're insatiable, you want results too. And wouldn't you know, you bring the same intensity to your life, wanting to maximize your time, potential, and experiences you have here on this beautiful and wondrous planet Earth.

Fair warning, it will be a rollercoaster. But for those insatiable, that's your prime time to thrive. We're here to say "YES!" to the hunger of wanting it all. I'm your co-host, Ali Shapiro, a health coach who helps people end the losing battle of dieting and find a truce with food.

**[0:00:44] JB:** And I'm Juliet Burgh, nutritionist, fitness expert, and a co-owner of Unite Fitness Studio Franchise.

[EPISODE]

**[0:00:52.8] AS:** Hello everybody and welcome to episode 28 of our insatiable podcast. Today we have Bob Schoenholtz who is such a special guest to both Juliet and I, I have a very funny story of how I came across Bob that I'm going to share in a minute but he has such a profound impact on both Juliet and my life and our own healing journey from our various lives.

We were kind of joking before we even got on that I had opened Bob's resume and it's quite impressive but I never really knew all that he had done because I had gotten a referral from him from integrative physician and I remember this is probably, it's a pretty personal story but it had been the fall of 2011 and I was feeling really depressed and I intuitively knew that talk therapy wasn't for me, I had been doing therapist before, it was really helpful but just felt like that wasn't it.

And I had done — I had called a modern day shaman that I knew very well from Facebook who I still really respect to this day and I did a soul retrieval with her and I was telling this integrative physician about this soul retrieval and he was actually interested and curious and as he asked

me how it went and all this stuff, I started crying and he was like, “Ali, I think this is what you need to work on, and I have just the person for you and his name is Bob and he is an art therapist.” He said, “You actually don’t need a shaman to be the inner midyear for the healing that you need to do.” I said, “Okay.” I remember — I don’t know if you remember, Bob, Dr. Rosenzweig.

**[0:02:32.2] BS:** Of course, I do.

**[0:02:34.0] AS:** It was so funny, as he left, I said to him, “How did you make it through medical school?” Because he was such a different type of doctor and he said, “Ali, that was my near death experience.” So I called Bob who was in center city at the time and I remember Bob sitting down with you, our first session, I don’t remember if you remember but I said, “If you’re going to tell me that my cancer happened for a reason, I just can’t handle that.”

You’re like, “It didn’t happen for a reason. It might have given you access to other things,” and it was the first person who has ever framed something in such a way of opening and allowing me to make new meaning of what had happened. Or at least let me know that I had the choice in how that happened.

That really was a profound effect in the work that we did, which we’ll weave in and out today. I know Juliet also, that I referred a ton of my clients including Juliet and Juliet, you told me what I said to you about how I reference Bob because it was such a different type of therapy than I had ever done and what did I say to you? “You’ve got to go see him.”

**[0:03:43.1] JB:** Yeah, you were raving about him at our friend’s Sarah’s house, she had a bunch of people over for a get together and you were saying how it was so transformative and you were talking about the imagery therapy and all of the guides that were coming to you in all of —and your experience and it was so intriguing to me because I had only done talk therapy for most of my life and it just seemed like a really, really different kind of healing experience and then of course you were like, “And, he was in Oprah Magazine.” So I’m like, “Well then I’ve got to see him.”

**[0:04:23.4] AS:** I want to share all of this with the listeners before we actually talk to Bob, because I don't think I would have been open to this. Even though I went to see a shaman over the phone.

**[0:04:34.2] JB:** Oh you saw the Shaman over the phone?

**[0:04:35.4] AS:** Yeah, she actually does really well with sound actually but it was still something that was so, I'm so cerebral and analytical, it was something that I don't think if I had been referred by an integrative physician and yet it also at the same time now having gone through the process, it is just actually made me realize how wise the body is and things like what we're going to talk about today, feeling fat and body image, how it really isn't about what we look like. So I really want to give people a window into some of the other meaning behind that today. So Bob, thank you so much for being you and being here.

**[0:05:13.6] BS:** Thank you for having me. It will be hard to live up to being me after that introduction.

**[0:05:20.1] AS:** Well I love, for everyone listening, I said to Bob, "I'm going to just get the highlights of your resume," and he is like, "It doesn't even matter, it's just most important that you two, you know, that everyone has a good experience with him," and I just...

**[0:05:31.3] JB:** That's so true.

**[0:05:31.8] AS:** That's so you Bob, that is just so you. But Bob does have an extensive art background, which I just love and I think is so important and shouldn't be separating from the healing process. He is also a licensed in professional counselling, he is a bachelor of arts and then also studied at Penn where he got his masters of science and Bob, do you remember — I don't know if you remember one of our sessions, we both laughed because what we do is so holistic, we wondered if they knew at Penn what we were really doing.

**[0:06:01.7] BS:** I know, I know.

**[0:06:05.1] AS:** Bob has tons of, and his bio will be on the podcast website, but tons of therapy background, he is a teacher of graduate art therapy and so Bob, I think that you get off, will you give us your definition of visual imagery and how you found this as an access point for therapy?

**[0:06:27.4] BS:** Well, I'm not sure exactly where to start there but having been trained in art, I developed a relationship with imagery that came up from within, not so much the imagery from outside and over the years and being trained eventually in counselling, I also started to realize that people use imagery very much in their language about explanations about anything but in particular, about their body and about as a way of understanding things that comes up often as images.

I had the opportunity quite a long time ago to study knowing through imagery, the idea that if you can relax your rational mind and allow your arational unconscious mind to come up a little bit, what happens is that images start to flow. It's a lot like being in a dream, except that instead of being asleep and having sort of no awareness of it, there's enough ego that you are present for the dream, you know what images are coming.

You can relate to these images in a way which can help them to be informative instead of just sort of being trippy and scary and fun or whatever they are, there's a way that you can relate to these images, they're informative and they're informative because they come from your unconscious, they're an aspect of you, an organic part of you.

So over the years I developed a method of working with people, which enables me to help the people to see how to use that imagery as a way of knowing that doesn't depend on the rational mind, sort of the rational for that is that if you're going to depend on your rational mind, you can pretty much talk yourself into or out of anything. The rational mind is very facile with, "I want this or I want that or this is good for me or that's not good for me," depending on what's the fad now or what happens to be attractive in the moment.

When you allow your unconscious to be more present, there's sort of a more authenticity about it. So the dialogue that happens then between this sort of exquisite balance of your rational mind and your unconscious can bring up all kinds of authentic information about who you are and lead you directly to where you need to heal most or where you need to grow most. So to

sort of sum that up, Carl Jung talked about consciousness itself as being composed of four parts, thinking, feeling, sensing and intuiting.

And when you look at his writing intuiting was pretty much always about imagery in one form or another. So it's thinking, feeling, sensing and imagery, and he said those four things should be in balance in a person. I think in our society for the most part, most people are not in balance, it's mostly rational mind, some feeling, some sensing and very little intuiting. I think intuiting is not thought of as being as important as the rational mind in general. So this is a way of balancing all that.

**[0:09:49.8] AS:** Yeah, I remember you saying to me like, "This isn't about dumbing down your intelligence, it's about bringing up the intuitive side of you," and that was really helpful. Like, "Oh, these don't have to compete but we need all of that to be really knowing," and one of my favorite quotes from Jung is, he said, "Intuition does not contradict reason, it's outside the province of reason."

I love that because it's like, when you look back on your life, granted we're narrative creatures but often, what didn't make sense going forward or looking back, you can make sense of it. It just hadn't — the big picture wasn't exposed yet.

**[0:10:26.2] BS:** Yeah, I think it was Pascal that said, "The heart has its reasons, which the reason shall never understand." I love that quote. It's the same kind of thought.

**[0:10:38.6] AS:** Yeah, so will you define imagery for the audience because I think if I had never heard of it, I'm like, "Is this pictures, is it a sensing?"

**[0:10:47.9] JB:** Is it hypnosis? Yeah.

**[0:10:50.6] AS:** Define imagery, how you're referring to it?

**[0:10:53.2] BS:** Well, so two things, one is imagery itself and the other is the process of engaging with imagery. So imagery itself is not just visuals. Imagery is pretty much anything that comes from the unconscious, so it's a little misnomer in a way but feelings are part of it and a lot

of people, interestingly enough when they do imagery, they don't really have any concrete images.

The two of you both had pretty concrete images. But a lot of people have just sort of a sense of energy and sometimes they can assign a color to it or kind of heat or movement to it, and sometimes they don't, it's just the feeling of the movement of energy. That is one of the most powerful kinds of imagery. So you can see it really covers in a way that the three of Jung's outside the rational mind packages, right? The feeling, sensing, and intuiting.

So the other part of it is the process of doing imagery, it's really, I don't know if either of you would relate back to it being as a little hard to learn maybe or a little hard to kind of adapt to doing it. But it's often difficult for people to relax the rational mind, they're guided into sort of relaxation and then relax the rational mind so that you're not analyzing, you're not judging and you're just start to allow these images to flow.

Then instead of it sort of drifting into day dream or getting lost in it formlessly, a rational mind kind of holds the space for it, almost like a frame that holds an empty space for this freedom to take place. Constraint for the possibility of freedom. Then within that constraint then, a narrative can arise and you shape that narrative by your expectations and your needs. If there's something really pressing in you that needs healing, it's going to come up.

Here's a little talk I gave both of you I know in the beginning because I give it to everybody, that if you were to scratch yourself or cut yourself on your skin or something like that, your body knows what to do to heal. It will just go about what it needs to do without any conscious intervention from you. It might be possible that it would be complicated enough that it would need, it would get infected or something, and then it would inform you by hurting, throbbing, that kind of thing that "I need help here" and you would clean it out and wrap it up and do whatever you need to do to protect it.

But once you do that, the body takes over again and it's the body that does the healing. It's all setup to take care of that for you. Well I think it's exactly the same parallel kind of process in the mind that when there's a problem in the mind, it will want to move toward healing and you just need to set the conditions right for it to be able to heal and imagery is one of the ways you can

do that. It's really interesting when you work with children, it works really fast because they haven't sort of healed over the wound so much, it's all pretty present and they're very comfortable with imagery, you know? They can talk in images and it's easy.

**[0:14:15.2] JB:** When you think about children, I remember all I did was play pretend with myself all day long when I was a kid. Just imagined things, make up whole universes and frolic around in the woods for hours.

**[0:14:28.0] BS:** Sure, sure. There's a lot of testing and a lot of growing and kids kind of know what to do when adults kind of get trained out of that. This is a way of sort of going back to that sort of simple, organic kind of process.

**[0:14:43.0] JB:** Now, when you're saying that the mind knows that it needs healing, would it be fair to say that there are symptoms that arise that are telling people this? Like anxiety or depression? Or like even physical ailments that are coming up, like pain?

**[0:15:01.3] BS:** Absolutely. They're analogies who let's say the throbbing of an infection, there's a kind of pain, which should bring your attention to a problem. It's the function of pain in the system, is to bring your attention to a need, a problem.

**[0:15:16.3] JB:** We were just talking about this yesterday, Ali and I, about physical pain and how do you know that this physical pain is coming from emotional trauma or is it something that's coming up from you fell off your bike 10 years ago and now all of a sudden you're out of alignment? So you know, those kinds of things. How do you tell?

**[0:15:36.4] BS:** Well, sometimes you can't, it's tricky.

**[0:15:38.9] AS:** Does it matter?

**[0:15:40.6] BS:** Well that's it. Part of the thing is that, I don't know, we're getting a little philosophical here.

**[0:15:45.8] JB:** Oh I love that. Six more credits, I would have had a masters in philosophy, it's my thing.

**[0:15:50.7] BS:** Oh okay.

**[0:15:52.0] JB:** Really?

**[0:15:52.3] AS:** Yeah.

**[0:15:53.1] JB:** You might as well just go back. Add it on.

**[0:15:56.3] AS:** I can't do another thesis, that was the enemy.

**[0:15:58.1] JB:** Oh god, yeah.

**[0:16:01.5] BS:** So the thing is that I questioned sometimes and I think I really believe that the body is just the densest part of the mind.

**[0:16:11.6] AS:** Oh I love that.

**[0:16:11.1] JB:** I do too.

**[0:16:13.7] BS:** I heard that Ali, just to bring one of the things full circle, I heard that from a shaman. Yes, in a training that I went to and I wrote that down really quickly and I've kept it ever since. My meditation experience kind of brings me to that as well that really, the mind is more of the essence of who we are and the body is just a denser kind of manifestation of the mind. So it's really tricky.

On the other hand, maybe it's not so tricky sometimes. A pain brings your attention to something and you work it through, it can sometimes be very obvious whether it needs to be worked through physically or sometimes it's not so obvious and the problem is that, think of yourselves before you came to see me, no one has been informed about how to access this information through their imagination when all that information is there.

**[0:17:11.3] AS:** Yeah, I think you said a really interesting point that I actually in grad school had a big debate with one of my professors because I was using the term “mind” in one of my papers and she said — and you know in academia, you have to define your terms.

**[0:17:23.7] BS:** Oh yeah

**[0:17:24.2] AS:** It was a really important discussion that we had and she said, “The mind has never been actually located. People use this term like mind, body connection but the mind is actually an invisible projection of your body and thoughts together.” It took me, it’s still — I have to wrap my head around that concept because it basically is describing imagery that what you’re seeing is a mix of sensation, what you think that sensation is, right? It’s all four of Jung’s ways of knowing often mixed together.

To your point that we don’t often know, I mean I remember when I came to you, I had been — so I’m the first generation of childhood cancer survivors. They were like just so excited that we were physically as a group, living, there was no emotional healing and having to go through an experience like that. I remember going through talk therapy when I was 26 and then that really helped me and I realized a lot of my depression and food issues were around that and then I was like, “Okay, I’m changing my life, I’m going to make new meaning of this, it’s put me on this new path.”

And I thought, I never realized that when I came to you Bob, I’m second guessing myself in ways that are very out of ordinary for me. I’m actually a pretty confident person, or so I thought. I was and I wasn’t confident in the areas that were vulnerable and as I said to you, the pain for me was like this doubt and the sadness that had come up. I thought that I had been through, I think the work that we did together for an entire year was basically going through the grieving process of having had cancer.

I thought I had been through that because I intellectualized it and I had made new meaning but the body was still storing all these ways that I wasn’t accepting how vulnerable that experience really made me. So I think that’s a kind of a concrete example of how the body sometimes lets you know, it was the sadness on top of this out of ordinary, second guessing and something

missing and you said to me that feeling like something's missing can be a reflection that part of you is missing.

You said, "Shamans will call it soul loss but I think it's a loss of confidence when you have trauma and you haven't actually owned how you've reacted to it and work through it on that deepest, densest level," which was the body in this case. The sadness that was coming up.

**[0:19:48.3] BS:** Yeah, a soul loss and loss of confidence are really two ways of saying the same thing and the experience of soul retrieval where you reintegrate a part of yourself that you've had to dissociate when once that's reintegrated, you experience a gain of confidence. These are the same thing, really.

**[0:20:11.8] AS:** Yeah, what I've realized with body image and being thin or what we — a lot of it, this is what I've seen and again I have probably certain sample size but so many people project and this is what I had done and Juliet, I'd love for you to try them too, maybe you came to the same conclusion but being thin is this projection.

My clients will say, "Well I know that my life isn't going to make a complete 180 but I'll feel more courage, I'll be the real me and I'll be more bullet proof, I'll take more risks, nothing will hurt as much," and what I think they're describing really is this resilience that can only come from going back to the places where you've been wounded the most and healing from those.

That wholeness is what we're really projecting onto weight loss and being thin. It's not the thinness, it's this idea that, "Oh I will feel whole." But it's so hard to deconstruct that projection until you've traveled very far.

**[0:21:10.0] JB:** Yeah, I was just thinking, when I saw Bob, it was a little bit different and I was going through my own crisis, not depression but you just used the word disassociation a minute ago and something that I've dealt with most of my life is, well since I was nine, I've had these bouts of disassociation where for anywhere from 30 seconds to three weeks at a time, I feel like I'm in a complete dream state and I feel like I'm not really real. It's hard to describe and maybe bob you can elaborate a little bit more on disassociation.

[0:21:50.0] **BS:** Oh you said it pretty well.

[0:21:53.7] **JB:** It's a terrifying state to be in and it's a way of protecting yourself from grief, trauma, emotions, you basically just feel numb, yet you're having massive anxiety at the same time. So you're not really numb but you feel like you're not really all there, you feel like there's just a fog around you. It's very terrifying. So when I saw Bob, I was going through a bout with that and I've been going through it since I was really young and through the imagery and then we'll get back to the feeling fat and the body image because this is all connected. I'm not going to go off on a tangent, I promise.

But through the imagery, when we're talking about soul retrieval, I had to go back to that little girl that initially was feeling those feelings of wanting to disappear and I noticed the pattern of my whole life from having neglect. I basically wanted to numb myself and I did it in many different ways through food, through actually one things would get too tough, disassociating and this feeling completely numb, through over exercising to kind of just — that's a form of disassociation like all of this things I was doing was basically to escape the trauma and the feelings that I was having. I never wanted to face them.

Through imagery, you get to actually face those things and go through them and I had images of me being that little girl and Bob can talk about this a little bit more but you actually are confronting that child part of you, that part of you that was sort of lost because there's a development that kind of stops right there when that three year old version or your eight year old version of however old you are has that trauma if you don't really work through those feelings. You're sort of stunted at that place.

So we went back and did the work to sort of confront that side of myself and bring her home and when we talk about soul retrieval, we're talking about like completing yourself a little bit more. With the whole feelings of fat, I did that all the time, anytime I would feel, start to feel those feelings of loss, loneliness, anxiety, I would internalize it as "I feel fat and I don't feel good about myself, something's wrong with me, my body is disgusting, I hate myself." All this horrible things I would say.

It was an easier way for me to confront the scary emotions, which are, “I feel lonely, I feel scared, I feel uncertain, I don’t know what’s going to happen.” And that started for me, interestingly enough, right around the time of my parent’s divorce is when that, when I start to notice myself saying that, I need to go on a diet, I’m fat. I think that happens for many people, something traumatic or some situation that’s very uncertain, they internalize it on to themselves.

**[0:24:56.8] AS:** I think part of imagery Bob, what you say is to go back and own how you react into it. Not in a — I mean I know Juliet used the word confronting but I think it’s more of a safe way now that you’re older and have the adult perspective even though you’re going back as that child. Would you say that Bob? Or is that — you’re the expert. Tell us what happened to us under your...

**[0:25:19.7] BS:** Well, actually it’s really interesting, you’re the experts on your experience and it’s interesting to hear you both talk about your experiences in your language. I mean there’s no argument about any of that. In terms of how I would describe the same kinds of things. When you go back, when you talk to an image of your child self, it’s a little safer than just trying to remember what happened to you and talking about it. Because there’s a little bit of a distance there, it’s almost as though this observing you that’s talking to the one that’s in pain.

**[0:25:57.7] JB:** Also, do you think it can be traumatizing for somebody to just, if you ask them, “I would like you to go back to that day that such and such happened and recount all of the,” — I think that that can re-traumatize someone.

**[0:26:11.4] BS:** Well actually, there’s evidence about that. People that work with trauma advise it’s not always such a good thing to retell the story over and over, and over again. My wife and I went to New Orleans for a conference shortly after the big flood down there, after the hurricane. When we were in restaurants and bars and things like that, people always wanted to talk about what happened to them.

As a therapist, I know, that’s probably not the best thing but I wasn’t being a therapist, I was just having fun so I didn’t try to stop anybody or correct anybody. But I felt like there’s a desperate need for them to resolve something and people often feel the need to, “Maybe if I talk about a resolve it?” But maybe it’s just reinforcing it too.

The context of the place and time that you give the narrative is also very important. When you feel safely held in an environment like a therapist office and you trust the person you're with and you let this things up. It's a whole lot different than when you're thinking about it on your own or you're talking to your friends, it's a whole lot different. That safety and that feeling of being loved in that moment is huge.

**[0:27:29.4] JB:** I'm just thinking that you can use retelling your story either to your advantage or disadvantage. Because I'm just recounting all the times that I told the story of my dad's death growing up. Like when people would ask me, "What happened to your father?" And I would go into like, you know, "I woke up and I found him lying on the floor."

I don't want to have to go through that story again. I should say that I used to talk about it a lot and I would use it almost to my disadvantage in that it would re-trigger a lot of emotion for me but I was not over this situation. I think it was like, it wasn't until I did it in a safe space and worked through it that I was able to like, I could tell the story now without having a panic attack but I would start to tell people and I would start to feel panicky, I'm like, "Why am I even doing this? Every time I tell this story, I'm like suffering."

**[0:28:19.1] BS:** Yeah, you're recreating it without resolution, it's almost like there's this anxiety to take some action and do something but it's not a, it doesn't lead you necessarily toward resolving kind of behavior. Another example of this that I think I may have discussed with one or both of you because it comes up a lot on my office, is this idea called the repetition compulsion in which people find themselves repeating a behavior over and over again that's always unsuccessful and they can't figure out why they wind up picking the same potential partner or a potential partner, it feels like a different choice each time and yet somehow, that other partner begins to behave in the same kind of ways that earlier partners did that made the relationship unsuccessful.

And the reason that happens I think is because the unconscious is leading the person toward a possibility of resolution of a certain kind of painful process. So, "Let's go. Let's try again." If you don't have enough awareness of what you're doing then you're just going to stumble into

behaving the same way. Imagery helps you to see why you're doing that, how it's different and my experience is then people wind up making different choices as a result of it.

**[0:29:43.0] AS:** Yeah, we had Dr. Danna Bodenheimer on for episode 13 on trauma and she said, "Diets are the hallmark of repetition compulsion."

**[0:29:51.8] BS:** Yeah.

**[0:29:52.2] AS:** You know, and a lot of it is about underneath the tension between being invisible versus visible, which Juliet I was thinking when you were talking about your disassociation, if you feel visible or invisible. There's tension and everything. It's just interesting how it plays out in different ways.

So one of the things, Bob, that you talked about when — what I've noticed with my clients and I'm working on helping them make this connection but they have to do it in time. But often, they will feel fat when they feel unsafe, they don't know that at the time but you talked about when you do imagery in a safe environment and you feel loved and held, it's a very different experience than when you were feeling that feeling, whatever it is out in the world where you don't feel safe.

So I'm curious about when people say they feel fat or have you had clients? Did they — do people come to you? I mean I would think that, like I didn't come to you because of food stuff, I had worked through a lot of mine. However I did notice that through the year, it was one of the toughest years in my life, 2012. But by the end of it, I had had like a little bit of a track in my mind of good and bad foods.

After that experience of just embracing all the messiness of some of the things that I hadn't resolved, I noticed that the categories of good and bad in my food were no longer, they were obliterated and I took that as metaphorical. I'm just more comfortable with uncertainty now. I'm assuming that most people don't come to you saying, this is going to help me with my body image or whatnot, they don't know that but I'm sure that it is a side effect or do they? I'm curious if you've ever worked with people specifically around their weight with imagery?

**[0:31:36.4] BS:** I don't think anyone's ever come to me with their initial complaint being about their body image but I've had lots of people get to that where they'll start to talk about it because I think they start to see their relationship between their anxiety and their body image and how when they're anxious, their body image feels more distorted.

**[0:32:02.2] AS:** Can you talk more about that? Because I find that fascinating.

**[0:32:05.4] BS:** Well it is fascinating. There's another aspect to it also. When I go to the gym, there are times when I'm working out of the gym and they always have mirrors everywhere in these gyms, working out at the gym and I'll be aware of my body in a way, maybe I'll glimpse myself in the mirror and before it registers that that's me, I'll have a sense of what I see in the mirror and I try to match it then with what my inner experience is and it's so variable, it's totally unpredictable for me.

There are times when I can feel like, "Oh my god, I'll never make any progress, I'm not losing weight, I'm not building, I'm not doing anything, what's the point?" And there are other times where I feel like, "Yeah, this is great, keep going." I don't think it has anything to do with what I'm seeing.

**[0:32:55.8] JB:** 100%, I can attest to that in a day span where I have to look in the mirror all day long with training clients because, you know, there's mirrors and it can be in the morning where I'm like, "Oh yeah, looking good," and it can be by the end of the day where I'm like, "Oh my god, did I gain 10 pounds recently? I didn't notice? What is going on here?" In a span of a day this can happen.

**[0:33:19.1] BS:** Yeah, so the perception of the body as related to the mind right? It could be that you're not feeling safe, you're not feeling loved. I think actually that's often the bottom of it is not feeling worthy enough, feeling loved and starting to think, well, what could possibly be wrong? Maybe it's my body that there's something wrong with me relating to the body. Other times it's that, well maybe you're a little bloated that day? Maybe you've retained some liquid that day because of too much salt last night or something.

So then you have this other experience with the body and it's generalized, and you think, "Oh, you know, I can't make any progress, I can't do anything." I feel like the things that I've heard from the two of you about food makes so much sense to me because it's not about being obsessive in dieting, it's not about getting compulsive and imposing a system upon yourself that you may or may not be successful at. It's about feeling yourself, it's about feeling what's right for you and going with that.

One of my teachers, Heinz von Foerster used to say, "Always choose to increase your number of choices," and I think that that's part of what I hear the two of you do in a sense that how do you increase awareness in a way that allows you to make choices about things? Dieting isn't about choice. Once you choose your diet then you don't have any choice anymore. You have to follow this rigid kind of plan, which sometimes works until you stop and then doesn't work anymore, you know?

**[0:34:52.0] JB:** With choices comes a lot of mistrust for people, right? They're scared because they don't trust themselves to make the right choice.

**[0:35:01.7] BS:** Yeah, well so then it goes back again to worthiness and loveliness, "am I okay?" Do you have the confidence to be able to say, "I'm doing the right thing and..."

**[0:35:13.6] JB:** Because no one really knows if they're doing "the right thing". That's a made up constraint just saying like, "It's the right thing."

**[0:35:20.9] BS:** Yeah, but there is a feedback system, right? Your body will tell you.

**[0:35:27.1] AS:** Yeah, that was one of — we actually talked about this on our Q&A episode. I realize several years ago, I don't even remember when it was, that whenever I — this was when I was still worried about my weight and I would have the same wardrobe, right? Some days I would feel fat or whatnot and I realize, I made this intuitive connection that the days that I was going out into the world and my approval was up for grabs, that's when I felt fat and it was almost this permission to shrink back in a way and what's really interesting, especially Bob, after our work together is whenever I am now heading into very uncertain situations like keynote talkies, which I've done them before but they're like, people are judging you, right?

I don't worry about my body anymore. I notice my health, I become so paranoid about my health I'm like, "What kind of air am I breathing? I've only been filtering my water. I need to get back to Bikram because I don't sweat a lot." I recognize the pattern, it's so irrational but now that I worked through the illusion of what being fat is about for me, it's now this, the health issue which I don't know if I'll ever get over.

So if someone feels fat, I want to get people some beginning steps of how to work with the sensation of feeling fat or they feel insatiable. Sometimes even feel insatiably hungry. I love your counter intuitive advice because people are like — the traditional advice is, "Oh, say a mantra." Like, "No, I am loved and worthy," or whatever. But you say to greet the image and so can you tell us a little bit about that?

**[0:37:01.1] BS:** Well, one way to work with this is let's say to use one of your examples, "I'm feeling fat today." So I noticed that I don't feel very good about myself. Instead of trying to compensate for that by choosing some certain kind of clothes or whatever one would do in a sort of superficial way for it. One thing you could do is ask an image to arise for that part of yourself that feels fat and greet it and thank it for coming.

Ask it why it's here right now. What does it have to show you or tell you that you need to know about the experience of feeling fat? Now that could lead in many different directions, right? It could take you in to childhood experience, it could take you into kind of an awareness about your ego and how your ego is present for the particular thing, it doesn't need to be.

It could be — it could take you anywhere, there's no predicting it and I have no expectations when I guide people into doing that because I really want it to be idiosyncratic. But wherever it takes you, if you stay engaged with that image, it will help you to understand what your struggle about feeling fat is about.

**[0:38:19.1] AS:** What do you mean by engaged?

**[0:38:22.2] BS:** Engaged? It means to be open to the information and the feelings that arise as you are aware of this image and you continue to dialogue with it.

**[0:38:37.7] AS:** And should people will be lying down? can they do it standing up? How much time?

**[0:38:42.5] BS:** Well, when people start this, it's often a lot more formal than it is later because it is a learning process and you need to get good at it. In the beginning, you can formalize it a little bit by either sitting or lying in a way that you're really comfortable and doing a kind of a relaxation piece where you maybe do a progressive relaxation, relaxing all your muscles. The idea with that is to be in your body and not so much in your head and so you're aware then through the relaxation more of your body and then when you ask an image to arise, it's coming more from that kind of body experience than it might have if you were just in your head.

So after you get comfortable with it and it feels like you trust the process to do that, then you can do it anytime and it can be very brief and get a lot of information very briefly. You can multitask this once you're really good at it in the sense that your left brains is having a conversation and is sort of aware of what's happening in this moment and your right brain is an imagery so that then as I'm talking to you, I can be informed by an imagery guide about the more subtle aspects of what's happening in this conversation right now.

But that's pretty advanced. In the beginning, you just engage with the images and the tough part of the practice is to keep the engagement, it's not like it gives you some little nugget of information then you're done. You stay with it, you stay with it, you stay with it, and you notice when fear comes up or dissociation or confusion or something. You tell the guide that, "I'm feeling this," and it will continue to help you to be more and more present and more and more integrated in yourself.

**[0:40:36.0] JB:** Yeah, and for those listening out there, when you were saying Bob, you have to sort of like greet it with no judgment and judgment will arise and it's okay because who knows what images will come. But the images, I remember, that came for me were so childlike and so strange sometimes that I'd be like almost like wanting to laugh at myself like, "Really? Is this the image that's happening right now?" Winnie the Pooh came a lot and would talk to me.

It was always like weird child like animals like a Cheshire cat from Alice in Wonderland. Then your rational mind is like, “Well, you know, am I just making this up? Is this not really like coming from my unconscious?” But you have to — if you set that aside and then you just bring yourself back to being in that moment, being with those images. I just think just for the people listening out there, it’s okay to question for a second and then like return back to the image and then question again, that will happen right?

**[0:41:35.5] BS:** Yeah, the answer to that question, “Am I just making this up?”, perhaps surprisingly is yes.

**[0:41:44.5] JB:** Like, where did that come from, right?

**[0:41:48.0] AS:** I love you Bob.

**[0:41:49.5] JB:** No, but it’s true. Having not watched Winnie the Pooh since I was six years old and not seen anything, it’s like when you’re dreaming, right? You’re like, “Where is that coming?” When you're having a dream.

**[0:41:58.9] BS:** Yeah, well you’re making it up, it’s coming from your unconscious, it’s coming from the same place your dreams come from and that’s the activation of your imagination as a way of knowing. That’s the thing that I get really excited about, is that imagination is a way of knowing.

**[0:42:15.1] AS:** I think it’s important too, Bob, you talk about this in the same way that everyone’s images are going to mean something based on their own context of their life. It’s so fun to go to dream books and be like, I dreamed of Winnie the Pooh and this is what this means. But why you have to stay engaged with it is because it’s going to be about the meaning that that’s had for you in your life.

**[0:42:40.2] BS:** Oh that’s so true, it’s so important. Years and years ago when I was working in mental hospitals, I remember I was at the time adhering pretty closely to the standard psychotherapy, art therapy model and when images came up, I was using the standard interpretations for these images. There was one instance that really just turned me around

about that and that was that somebody did a drawing in which they drew the walls to their room as this bright red color.

The traditional interpretations for that probably would have gone toward this person is angry or something like, “There’s strong passionate feelings going on here.” Instead of just making interpretation about it, I said to the person, I notice that the walls are red, tell me about that. Well the walls were red in their room when they grew up.

So you know, that may have had an effect on them but it wasn’t the effect that the interpretive model would have. So I started moving away from interpretive models and even though some of them have some validity because they really tested over large populations and so that means in a bell curve, 65% of the people are going to match the interpretation. I just don’t go with interpretive models at all. It’s always individual to me. It’s always, “What does it mean to you?”

**[0:44:03.9] AS:** Yeah, I think too for people listening to, I’m someone who tends to be impatient so if I don’t get it on the first try I’m like, “Oh, this doesn’t work.” But I remember in our sessions Bob, For me, an owl was often present in the beginning and it wouldn’t talk to me, which was, I feel like it was like my unconscious being like, “This is not an analytical game Ali, you have to learn something else.”

**[0:44:25.4] BS:** That’s what it was.

**[0:44:28.2] AS:** Well and I don’t know if you guys can see, but Carlos bought me this owl because it’s like now my spirit animal because that owl was there all the time but I remember the first couple of times, the owl just wouldn’t — I couldn’t get any meaning from it and then I remember some of the most profound, even to this day I think about those themes and it’s influenced how I actually view nutrition and healing. But the one time I remember the owl wanted me to just sit in all this oil in a tree and I was like, “I can’t do it, I can’t do it.”

Finally I just did it and I remember crying but I felt so dirty but that was metaphorical for just like being in pain which I had never gone to the heart of. Then I remember that owl a couple of other sessions took me, always in the sky, to rooms where I was — then I was little girl and I remember still being in this sweater and pants and I was trying to detox. I remember trying to be

in this saunas that the owl had guided me to these saunas in the woods. I can't believe I'm sharing this, it sounds so crazy.

But I remember what I took away from that even to this day was like, I've always — like the idea of detoxing and cleansing which is so popular in culture these days, is like to just purify without actually living through the mess and those that owl, while it was quiet the first couple of times, it eventually led me to things that I wouldn't even be able to still verbalize the transformation that happened when I actually just came back to the images and stuck with it.

So I just shared that so people can — this could be over days or weeks that it is like a story, "What's the ending going to be?" I don't know and I think first people who are very intellectual or cerebral, there is a knowing and you may not think that you'll know because you question yourself a lot or doubt but you will know the emotion will arise. Would you like to add any to that Bob or give your...

**[0:46:18.4] BS:** Sure.

**[0:46:18.3] AS:** ...what we didn't include because it's just my...

**[0:46:21.4] BS:** Sure, well I've seen it a lot of times of course where people come to an image which feels like a really salient image, something really important but it won't interact with them and I think buy and large, the reason for that is because the person is not really engaged yet. There's some kind of resistance or defensiveness, disconnection that needs to be repaired in order for that part of yourself to really begin to engage.

So that means that the original awareness of the image is the beginning of that reengagement with a part of yourself but it sometimes takes some time to figure it out. I guess I want to be careful to say that this isn't a blaming kind of thing, this isn't like you're inadequate or you're afraid or you're whatever. This is more like, "How do you do this?" It's a learning process every single time. "How do you do this?"

The overall imagery process is not — that you can learn and you can learn how to do it better and better. Easier and easier and faster and faster. With each fresh image, it's a whole new

learning experience because it's a part of yourself that some part of you said, "Keep this at a distance," and so when you reintroduce it, you've got to kind of relearn. How do I do that and is it really safe and what's going to happen, this is a big one, a lot of people have the experience like, "If I do reengage, how will I be? Will I still be me? Will I change in a way that's, okay? What's going to happen?"

**[0:48:04.0] AS:** That's so interesting because that was the hardest year of my life and yet I wouldn't take it back. I feel like I got so much of myself and a calmness that I had never had before.

**[0:48:16.6] JB:** Yeah, the calmness I can say the same thing for me through working through that as scary as that time in my life was too, with my worst bout of disassociation I've ever had, it taught me a lot about myself and that I couldn't run away from it anymore. I couldn't disassociate anymore.

**[0:48:37.2] BS:** Well actually, you could have but you decided not to. That's kind of one of the remarkable things about both of you is that you both decided, "I'm going to test this out. Okay, I tested it out, my relationship with Bob. Okay, I feel safe with Bob..."

**[0:48:53.3] AS:** He was in Oprah.

**[0:48:59.9] BS:** "...the Process seems good, I'm going to go for it." You both had a tremendous amount of courage to just say, I'm going for it, I'm all in, I'm going to face myself with this. Your courage by the way is reflected I think today in you're so revealing about yourselves. This is your courage, it manifests very clearly.

**[0:49:21.9] JB:** Well, Ali, you were talking about the Q&A and we were talking about how do you know when someone's ready and a lot of times you said the clients that come to you, you're their last resort. Not that Bob was my last resort. I didn't really think of it like that but I was definitely at a point where I was like, "Fuck this, I don't want this anymore. I want to be present for this, I don't want to have these feelings anymore, I don't want to feel numb. I'm ready to feel the feelings," and I knew that I avoided them for so long because I was just surviving and Bob,

you said, “You’re in a good place to — you’re not surviving anymore, you have stability, this is the time,” and just trusting that process.

**[0:50:04.2] AS:** I think that’s a really interesting example though because I know for me, because that part of me must have been gone for so long, like 20 years at that point. The running and the self-doubt have become so normalized that I didn’t even know that it could get better and I think that’s...

**[0:50:23.2] BS:** Yeah, that’s who you think you are at that point. You say, “That’s just me.” When someone introduces the possibility that you’re more than that, it’s like, “Really? What are you suggesting and how will it change me? Will I still be me if I’m willing to take this big leap?” I hear that a lot and I felt it myself when I was in therapy.

**[0:50:46.2] AS:** Do you think, this is one thing that we actually had this conversation about in Truce With Food. The psyche, I always find that because I work on story transformations with my clients, the unconscious stories. Not on a visual imagery level but on an intellectual kind of, but a meaning making level because it’s still so automatic. It’s more sensing I would say than intuitive healing and feeling.

But I find that life tends to bring you what you need. I don’t think I would have been ready to see you, probably even a year beforehand. I’m curious, this is more of philosophical, theoretical question. Do you think the psyche brings us what we need when we’re ready?

**[0:51:25.8] BS:** Yeah, that’s what I said before. I think you begin to notice what’s available to help you heal even when you’re ready for it and you don’t even notice it before. Of course, that’s somewhat ameliorated by people’s defensive systems and stuff like that, which can mask seeing opportunity.

But the fact that you can see opportunity means your psyche is ready for it, that’s sort of part of the fundamental philosophy that I work with imagery, which is your psyche knows what you need. If it comes up, you can trust you’re ready for it or it won’t come up, you won’t even know it’s there.

**[0:52:06.4] AS:** Yeah, your psyche is in your body. I think one of, I obviously took a ton away from our work together, but to me I left in awe of what the body loves around for us and what it stores and that I really think the body is the ultimate, it's the densest story teller of us. Not just our weight and what we look like but it really holds and it is the truth teller of if you've really resolved stuff.

**[0:52:35.2] BS:** I like that phrase, "the body mind", I don't like the distinction that it's a body or a mind, to me as I said before, if the body is the densest part of the mind then it's really one thing. I like that phrase "the body mind" and I do agree in a sense that the body is holding these thing but to me, what that means in a more refined way is that our mind is tricky and that it can create the illusion of there not being something there. Whereas the body isn't so tricky, it just is and when you're more in touch with it then it gives you lots more information that the mind can trick you out of.

**[0:53:18.9] AS:** It kind of comes back to that saying of it is what it is and I think with the images, there aren't, you don't feel like they're good or bad, they're just there and just figure them out in a way.

**[0:53:29.3] JB:** Would you say another good way of accessing imagery for people who are trying this out would be just to focus on a place in their body, maybe that they're holding tension and derive the image from there? Because I think that we did some of that with myself with, "I'm feeling a lump in my throat or I'm feeling heart palpitations or my stomach is hurting," and then just to start with that place and say, "Okay. Can you find that feeling and what images arise from that feeling in your body?"

**[0:53:59.2] BS:** That's one of the best ways to work actually, with imagery. Probably told each of you that at one point, during our work because I try to sort of plant the suggestion that maybe you'll use that because the body doesn't lie. There are lots of times when a person is sitting in my office with me and they will be telling their story, like what their week was like or what they're going through and of course a lot of that is still in their very rational mind.

You could see, a twitch will happen in their face or they'll reach for their arm because they felt something there or something in their body. And it's just almost a half unconscious thing that

they're doing right? But I'll say, "What happened there? What was going on?" They'll say, "Oh, I felt a little twang or something." And I'll say, "Want to work with that a little bit? Bring your awareness to that place and ask an image to come from it and ask it why it came at that particular moment, what it's come to tell you?" It's amazing how deep a person can go when you follow that kind of thing.

**[0:55:07.9] JB:** So much of stuff like that is unconscious in the way of, I remember I would grip the steering wheel when I used to drive, I would death grip the steering wheel and I wasn't even aware I was doing that. Things like that I think was sometimes we're just completely unconscious of, how we're holding our body.

**[0:55:28.7] BS:** Yeah. Let me say one more thing that I think is important, it's kind of a maybe an overwriting kind of idea with all of this, I'm not sure whether I ever discussed this with either of you. A lot of what we're talking about when we talk about mind here is about ego, it's involved with how we identify ourselves and our defensive systems to protect that.

When I'm talking about the body mind, lots of times, I'm talking about something beyond that, a kind of a transcendent idea of mind, which is not caught up with ego and defensive systems, that the sense of who I am is not just the historical, biological me but they're just something more expansive and when you can be in touch with that more expansive sense of self, lots of these body problems and distortions just fall away because you recognize them as manifestations of your ego. So that's a kind of imagery where you can imagine yourself as being a more expansive being than just the ego self.

**[0:56:43.1] AS:** That's pretty meta Bob.

**[0:56:45.4] BS:** I know.

**[0:56:46.6] AS:** That's why we love you. So it's about time to wrap up, but I just want to recap. If people are feeling fat or they feel the twitch or they want to get into imagery, what you said, the first thing is to calm the body down. First you have to make it formal, either do some deep breathing, lie down and just really give yourself a chance to relax. That's step one, correct?

**[0:57:14.2] BS:** That's correct.

**[0:57:15.2] AS:** Then the second one is to ask an image to arise or if someone is feeling fat or they're feeling body image distortion in general, do they greet the distortion, do they say, "Thank you fat for coming here?"

**[0:57:31.8] BS:** No, you greet the image that arises from the experience of feeling fat, which — and so the image is a kind of an imaginal manifestation of an experience and it personifies it so that you can deal with it.

**[0:57:46.4] AS:** Okay, that could be sensation, it could be a color that you see or it could be something more concrete that...

**[0:57:53.0] BS:** Well, more likely, it's most likely it's going to be an animal or a person and it could be a historical person or it can be an imaginal person but it's more likely that like your owl, it's going to be an animal or a person and then you engage with that. Try not to make meaning about the animal, I've had people that the initial animal is a rat and they go, "I don't want to deal with that one," and I say, "Well just try it." What happens is that it's a rat because it's the whole resistance kind of thing coming up and that it transforms in the process of imagery to something that's more compatible.

**[0:58:28.9] AS:** I had a crocodile. Talk about scary.

**[0:58:33.4] BS:** Scary and powerful.

**[0:58:34.3] AS:** I think it was cute crocodile though.

**[0:58:38.1] JB:** All animals are cute to me.

**[0:58:39.4] AS:** Well I love that because I think we have a pretty cerebral crowd. So really just hang with the image and maybe revisit it every day or don't just do this when you're in panic but commit to it. Almost like making it your meditation, right? Meditation doesn't have to just be trying to clear your mind.

Then to your point, the third step is just to keep engaging with it, not in a trying to figure out, “What does this mean?” But, “Thank you for being here, what do you have to teach me?” And see what unfolds with the image.

**[0:59:10.7] BS:** Yes, in fact, my role as a guide when I’m guiding a person imagery is basically just to help them to stay in touch with the image and there’s a little bit more than that because I’m experienced with it and I can see maybe if they’re missing something of a blind spot or something like that. But it’s basically 90%, it’s to help them to stay engaged with the image because people don’t really know how to do that in the beginning.

They’re likely to greet the image and thank you for coming, have some kind of interaction and then start thinking about what’s going on instead of stay with it, let it follow it all the way through with the image as the guide to tell you what needs to happen. You can think about it later.

**[0:59:51.9] AS:** Yeah, and I think too, another just key take away from this episode is about body image being more sensation based. Not really visual what you see in the mirror but to Juliet’s example and Bob talking about his gym example, it really is so much more. I think a great experiment people try, looking at yourself in the mirror before I work out and then after right? Your sensing and your chemistry is going to be completely different.

**[1:00:18.5] BS:** That’s right.

**[1:00:19.5] AS:** just to kind of get that open that door that maybe your body image isn’t what you see and I know a lot of people think they have distorted body images but I think in reality, we all see our bodies always different.

**[1:00:32.9] JB:** Who knows what we really look like? You don’t know.

**[1:00:35.4] AS:** Yeah, exactly.

**[1:00:36.8] JB:** You’re only making meaning of what you’re seeing.

**[1:00:38.9] AS:** Yeah. So Bob, thank you so much for being here. Now, if people want to do visual imagery, we know that you're retiring in a year, we will have Bob's information on [Alishapiro.com/podcast](http://Alishapiro.com/podcast) episode 28, Bob's picture, his full bio and you do do distance clients. Do you have openings?

**[1:01:00.5] BS:** A few right now, a few. I do distance clients, my preference though is to have a person to person meeting or two just to start out so there's a kind of a good resonance and then it's not a problem to do distance. I would also refer a person, they can look at my website, I don't know, are you going to publish that on the thing?

**[1:01:22.5] AS:** Yeah. It's [theinwardeye.com](http://theinwardeye.com).

**[1:01:23.9] BS:** [Theinwardeye.com](http://Theinwardeye.com). I also have a blog which I really haven't updated in a really long time but it's got a lot of good information on, it's called [Knowingimagination.com](http://Knowingimagination.com), all one word, knowing imagination. The other thing that I would mention that you'll see references too in both places is that the professional training that I got, I got lots of different trainings and imagery, with the professional training that I got was from the academy for guided imagery in California.

So any professionals that are out there including the two of you who might want training in this kind of thing, that's there. One of the people who started that is Marty Rossman. He's got lots of books and CD's that teach how to use imagery. Really good stuff.

**[1:02:04.6] AS:** Yeah, is there on the resource for the academy of visual imagery. If someone is in another state, because we have people all around the world listening. Can they find, if they do want to work with someone, can they find a practitioner on the web?

**[1:02:18.5] BS:** Yeah, the academy for guided imagery has a practitioner listing, certified people.

**[1:02:23.7] JB:** That's amazing.

**[1:02:24.7] BS:** Yeah, I'm glad you mentioned that because there are people all over the place that had been trained.

[1:02:29.3] **AS:** Yeah, so if this resonates with you.

[1:02:32.1] **BS:** Yeah, the other thing is, art therapists don't all use the imaginary process the way I do but they all use imagery in a way. Looking for an art therapist might be useful too when you can find someone through a practitioner list at the American Art Therapy Association site.

[1:02:51.1] **AS:** I know we're going to wrap up but I do have one question, do you think that art — and that means the act of being creative. I don't mean just painting but I mean, if you do interpretive dance or writing or painting or anything that employs an artistic side of us. Do you think that helps?

[1:03:09.9] **BS:** Totally. You know, as I said, I'm sort of headed towards retirement and my big plan is make art, make art, make art. The reason for that is not just because it's fun, it's because it grows me, I continue to expand, I find parts of myself that I never knew were there. The way I like to make art is with found objects and the surprise of what happens when I start putting things together and it makes me feel more in touch with the whole universe when I do that.

[1:03:44.4] **JB:** We'll have to have another episode on this Ali, but I think that creativity is something that is missing so much in people's lives and plays a big part of what makes somebody feel whole and so I'll have to figure out a way to incorporate that into another podcast.

[1:04:00.1] **AS:** For sure because I think creativity generates that sense of possibility and I think often that's why people embark on weight loss because they think that it is a sense of possibility. "I can wear new clothes or I'll be more confident or I'll finally date or," — I'm saying all this stuff because this is all the stuff that I used to believe. It was like this doorway into endless possibility but really, you can access that now and I remember Dr. Brené Brown who Juliet and I love and I don't know if you're familiar with her work Bob but she has a quote that says, "Unused creativity is not benign."

[1:04:34.5] **BS:** I like that.

**[1:04:35.7] AS:** Yeah, because it's not saying that it's malignant if you don't but it's saying that it is not neutral if you just ignore your creativity and I think it's so important. So Bob, thank you for being you, for being so instrumental for both Juliet and I. I really feel like it was that final push. We're always healing, right? It's a spiral staircase but you'll always be a big part of that pie for me. Gluten free of course, no I'm just kidding. But thank you for being here.

**[1:05:05.0] BS:** Well thank you, it's been a pleasure and just knowing the two of you has been wonderful. I'm so glad that you've stayed in touch.

**[1:05:12.1] AS:** Of course, thank you.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

**[0:56:00] JB:** Thank you so much for listening to the Insatiable Podcast. We hope you enjoy today's episode. You can connect with us on social media. Follow me on Twitter and Instagram @julietunite and Ali @alimshapiro, M stand for Marie. Please feel free to also e-mail us any questions. We would love to hear from all of our listeners. You can reach us on [ali@alishapiro.com](mailto:ali@alishapiro.com) and [juliet@unitefitness.com](mailto:juliet@unitefitness.com). We'll see you next time.

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