

Food Freedom 5: End the Guilt (and Downward Eating Spiral) – Insatiable Season 10, Episode 6

[INTRO]

Welcome to Insatiable Season 10: Research-Based Weight Loss: Rebuild Your Biology + Psychology Feedback Loop

Have you ever read about the past and thought, I can't believe people actually believed that? In the 19th century, doctors thought that "bloodletting" could cure illnesses and Dr. Joseph Lister was shunned for his thesis and early research proving that bacteria caused disease. While Dr. Lister was being denigrated, Charles Darwin was being celebrated, falsely claiming that women were less intelligent than men. In Darwin's time women rarely went to advanced schooling, they needed to preserve their limited energy for baby-making. The 20th century wasn't immune from junk science and outrageous claims, Domino's sugar advertised a sugar diet as a way to lose weight touting that it had less calories per gram than fat. Cigarettes were also marketed as healthy.

It sounds laughable to most of us now. But only because brave, curious thinkers were willing to question, test, and disprove the status quo and limited thinking.

In Season 10 of Insatiable, Research-Based Weight Loss: Rebuild Your Biology and Psychology Feedback Loop, we'll explore emerging research and viewpoints, now on the periphery, that will make the current mainstream thinking of weight loss as willpower and calorie-cutting look just as misguided as soothing babies and colds with morphine syrup (which was a medically endorsed thing in the Victorian era).



We will explore how taking the steps towards weight loss individually and societally can be a form of resistance against the toxicity and industrialization of our food supply. We'll question the convenience of telling women that weight loss is giving into the patriarchy and male gaze—and how this silences deeper questioning about why we all have gained so much weight and what other consequences come with this physically and mentally.

We will do this by taking an integrated and holistic look at the biological and psychological feedback loop that goes into maintaining a natural weight and how our industrialized society has disrupted it.

We'll discuss how what you eat informs how you feel and your habits which in turn influence what you eat as a constantly self-reinforcing infinity loop.

We'll examine how our culture and thus education and medical systems are not holistic, and results in a siloed view of human biology and health which allows the public and experts to continue to frame weight loss as about willpower and only about food.... and how very convenient this is for those who set and profit from our industrialized agriculture policy.

We laugh about Domino's sugar diet, but the same reasoning still informs our modern dietary guidelines. Even the mainstream is noting that "The Sugar Research Foundation" with the help of three handsomely compensated Harvard scientists in 1967 handpicked studies placing the blame on fat rather than sugar for heart disease. In 1977 one of these researchers would become the Head of Nutrition for the USDA and outline nutrition guidelines, enabling the low-fat weight-loss craze to become a thing, and we'd all get fatter, sicker, and more depressed in the years to come.

If in your gut, you feel there are more important (and potentially revolutionary) root causes to your weight battle or if you want to learn the viewpoint that people will likely have 50 years



now— that willpower and a simple view of calorie counting as the key to weight loss makes about as much sense as giving morphine to babies—this season is for you.

[EPISODE]

In today's episode, we are going to talk about how to enjoy your favorite indulgences and end the guilt with your food so that one piece of dessert or pizza doesn't turn into "well the day is ruined, let's keep going".

Guilt comes from the idea that we made a wrong choice.

Shame is I'm wrong, guilt is "I did the wrong thing". Doing the wrong thing sounds like "I ate badly" or "I'm off track".

And good and bad, right or wrong, isn't the only way we think about supposed wrong choices that make us feel guilty. With exercise, it's what counts and doesn't count. It's what's natural medicine and what isn't.

Anytime we take a binary, black and white approach to life, we are setting ourselves up for guilt. Because if we can be right, we can also be wrong.

The other day I had a killer headache and took Aleve and felt guilty about it because Aleve isn't natural. This is the second time in my life I've taken an Aleve so the guilt didn't last long. But when we consistently feel guilty for our food choices, we need to revise HOW we are defining wrong or bad with food and in our story.

We judge food and ourselves as "Good" or "Bad" because we are judging them from one perspective, usually internalized diet culture and patriarchy, with diet culture being a nesting



doll of patriarchy, racism and capitalism. We're good if we are losing weight, bad if we aren't, good if we are working hard, bad if we are resting and thus, being lazy.

So dessert is always bad or "off track" because it's setting us back calorically. Or packaged foods are always bad because they are processed rather than understanding processed foods are on a continuum and some processed foods are better than others and sometimes you need them because it's better than ordering out!

Truce with Food is about a neutral approach to food and life so we can learn the value of context, nuance and what food and life path works best for us as individuals in this gray area versus trying to conform to pre-packaged ideas of good and bad!

In previous episodes of this season, I talked a lot about the what, what we are eating and what we are doing in our stories. And last episode, we started to get into the HOW, specifically how all-or-nothing eating is HOW we think about things, not what we are thinking about.

As I said in last week's episode, this HOW goes one step further than Cognitive Behavioral Theory [CBT] because in my work, we are also focused on how we judge the outcomes of our choices and also, that food isn't usually about the food so reframing our negative thoughts around food only take us so far. For those of you not familiar with this, cognitive behavioral therapy is a form of talk therapy that helps you become aware of inaccurate or negative thinking so you can view challenging situations more clearly and respond to them in a more effective way.

We usually judge them in a black or white, "good" or "bad" way rather than evaluating choices more contextually. For example, eating cake for your birthday if that's your thing. Yeah, celebratory. Eating the leftovers from that same cake in large amounts during a binge, probably not what you want to be doing. But birthday cake isn't inherently a choice to feel guilty about.



Or exercise: what counts and doesn't count in terms of short-term weight loss (long-term weight loss is a bigger mystery). You might feel like walking your dog in nature doesn't count and thus, feel guilty when in reality, this might be what your body needs that day, especially if you are in the later phase of your menstrual cycle.

When we can be in the middle and replace judgement with discernment with any choice - food or the ones in our story - we can end the guilt around food because we realize no choice is wrong or permanent destiny, rather it's all research to learn how to further align ourselves with our values. And alignment is a process, not a "thing" and so there's lots of room to experiment and succeed.

So today we are going to talk about HOW we can eat so we don't feel guilty about our favorite treats and HOW we are in our story that keeps us feeling guilty.

For me with my food, it was a revelation to realize that I could be moderate with desserts and still keep my depression away, my skin clear and not gain weight.

In other words, I didn't have to be what I thought of as "totally good" to get results. I wasn't able to see this at first because I wasn't able to be moderate! I just felt guilty when I ate the desserts I really wanted instead of the healthy desserts like WW desserts that were 2 points but if I'm honest, kind of gross, oh especially their bars.

Nor did I realize my emotional health was just as important as what I was eating in my ability to be moderate. And my emotional health included expanding what my ideas of "good" were, which I'll get to in the second half of today's episode.

For starters, I first needed to tune into when I really wanted dessert or salty carbs like chips, pretzels and pizza and when I was eating because of my story. This enabled me to see that



about 80% of the time, I wanted to eat because of my story. I didn't love food as much as I thought I did.

But what would happen, and happens with a lot of my clients is going on automatic pilot of my own "on" and "off" day food rules. "On" was eating perfectly, avoiding junk food, and going to the gym. "Off" was anything that strayed from my plan, skipping the gym or having a binge that seemed to come out of nowhere.

As a few clients have described feeling "on track", it's like a balance beam they feel like they could fall off at any moment. What they are saying here is their ideas of "good" are so narrow and "bad" is so vast!

The kind of food freedom worth working towards rests on dissolving the track that there is an "on" or "off" day or "good" and "bad" foods.

There's two eating keys to help you start to dissolve on and off or good or bad thinking, which is code for I made the right or wrong choice.

First, it's important to recognize what often causes the downward spiral is telling ourselves this what's the point, we are going to keep going (because in the past, we did do this) or we decide after a stressful work day, we are going to stop at the grocery store and to the bulk food section and get the chocolate covered almonds.

In other words, we are deciding how we are going to eat based on the intensity of our emotions at that moment. We can begin to prevent this downward spiral by not deciding how we are going to eat in the future ahead of time.

Because when we are battling food, part of HOW we react is quickly and automatically to make a judgement, including that we made the wrong choice and are "bad".



Part of HOW you can slow down your spiral and guilt is not deciding ahead of time how you will eat for the rest of the day or week.

You can totally not go to the gym tonight because you are too tired and how about checking in with how you feel after work and seeing if you do want to maybe do some restorative yoga to release a lot of the tension from the day?

You can have dessert after dinner. And, how about you check-in with yourself for a few nights to see what else you might want or need?

What we are doing here is SLOWING down and getting present to what is instead of our predetermined thinking...we are actually sinking in to how we are feeling.

And by tuning into what we need or want to choose later on, when we actually do get home for example, we start to become more aware and clear on our needs and how they change!

For example, you might be exhausted because it's the week of your period and so you tune in and decide you need a nap. You take a nap and afterwards, you feel like a light walk. And then the next week, with your energy up because it's the start of your cycle, you tune in and you feel like going to the gym and doing hip hop. The more we can connect being in this gray area to aligned choices for how we want to feel, the more we end up learning what will help us with consistency.

And pro-tip: get more specific beyond "i want to feel good". What does that mean? Rested? Focused? When we are unclear, we fall back on diet culture metrics and those metrics may work for short-term weight loss but I don't know many people who have that as a goal since we know that causes long-term weight gain.



So rather than judging the day already, it's about tuning into what your body needs. Because the body is subtle and our stories are LOUD.

The other key is understanding HOW to eat around foods that could trigger a downward spiral. Eating in a blood sugar balancing way can go a long way in supporting you to not feel guilty simply because it helps you be moderate. And when our blood sugar is on a roller coaster, we lose emotional capacity.

In the Diabetes Journal, there was a fascinating study that showed high levels of blood glucose aka blood sugar compromises our ability to process emotions. Care found that people with type 2 diabetes reported increased feelings of sadness and anxiety during acute hyperglycemia (which is again, elevated blood sugar). And, this is what happens to all of us when we eat excess processed carbs (with diabetics it's usually more chronic and the peaks and valleys can be more dramatic).

In other words, the same way life feels different on 4 hours of sleep versus 8, it also feels different on high or low versus regulated blood sugar. So, how we eat determines how we will feel about things, including feeling overly sad or anxious about the same experience.

Here's a handy rule of thumb I give to clients that is really helpful to start when they are first understanding blood sugar control and how to better balance their meals. And it's important that if we are going to eat foods like desserts, that we eat them with our blood sugar balanced so we don't spiral.

Here's how to first get balanced:

- If you feel tired after a meal or when you want to snack, you probably needed more complex carbs at your meal like a fruit or sweet potato. When people try to go no or low carb, it often backfires. So many clients start to discover as they get clear on their



physical needs and story, they are often turning to food because of being tired! So rather than assuming you always need food, they often discover they need a walk in sunlight or a nap or to get to bed early. This is what I mean about the power of checking in and asking what we need and waiting for an answer before telling your body what you will be doing!

- If you still feel hungry after a meal or when you want a snack, you probably needed more protein at your meal. If you are parasympathetic dominant or equally balanced nervous system wise, you probably need animal protein to quench the hunger (Episode 2 can help you know a starting place of how your nervous system influences what you eat).
- And then if you are craving something sweet or salty carbs, you probably didn't get enough fat at the meal before so it's important to get some fat so you don't further destabilize your blood sugar with sweet or salty treats.

Often these imbalances: tired, hunger or cravings are judged as “bad” or “wrong” when really, the body is trying to get our attention. If we don't pay attention and already judge that “we've eaten too much” or “this amount of carbs is so bad”, recognize that this is more about your ideas of “good” and “bad” and if you can connect these new choices to feeling better and expanding your ideas of health. And the healthier we get, we will have to expand our definition of healthy because as I'll share in my own example, even “not caring at all” about what I ate was good for me during my healing journey.

Even all my failed weight loss attempts brought me to my path! Of course, I wish I would've had a better map and a different narrative, which is why creating what I wish I had is so fulfilling.

Once you go into eating your salty or sweet indulgences balanced, you will realize there is so much nuance about how much nuance there is. Like, there were certain desserts I thought I



loved but the more balanced I became, they would give me a headache. Or, the more I added in whole real flavor to my diet from whole foods, the less super sweet desserts I could tolerate. Or learning that maple syrup and honey didn't send my blood sugar into a tailspin but regular sugar did. So even categories of "natural sweeteners" or not weren't accurate for if they worked with my body. Like I learned if I ordered ice-cream, with real sugar, the fat in it didn't make me crash the way low-fat frozen yogurt with sprinkles did! Or even how eating dessert at night made life easier for me than eating sweets earlier in the day because I was going to bed rather than having to rebalance my blood sugar during the day when I'd crash and not be able to nap so would need more carbs to make up for the crashing.

So on a food level, you need to slow down your automatic eating plans. Give yourself the gift of deciding in the moment. And in that moment, ask yourself the simple question: what do I need? And also wait for a response...sometimes the first "draft" of our intuition isn't our intuition but what's most well-worn in our mind. The more time you give yourself, the more new answers will come. It's like turning on a hose after a long winter. Lots of rust will come out. That's what's been stored up.

I use the hose in winter metaphor with clients. First turn it on in spring, bunch of rust. Wait a bit, clear water. Same with intuition. Episode 4 about Redefine Self-Acceptance will help you understand why it's often hard to hear our intuitive eating signals.

First couple of times or even weeks, you still might want the food as a way to balance out restriction. You might not. Be curious. And make life easier for yourself by balancing your blood sugar, including with desserts, that won't decrease your emotional resilience. Experiment with my rule of thumb to potentially shift some ideas of what a "good" amount of fat or carbs are!

This can help us work through our stories more calmly. Because HOW we are in our stories is quite the opposite.



Part of the guilt is in HOW we are making meaning in that moment.

First it's important to clarify the difference between the HOW and traditional emotional eating techniques, which tells you to "feel your feelings."

The HOW is a vitally important part of ending our food battle and it's different than traditional emotional eating advice. Traditional emotional eating advice will tell you to "feel your feelings". This is certainly a part of it. And I see the fact go around that an emotion only takes 90 seconds and if you can be with that emotion for 90 seconds, your emotional eating will go down or disappear.

This can be true AND the whole truth is that if your emotion contains a story, which is what a feeling is, so these feelings are actually chronic and hanging over our heads so we feel food and our weight controls us.

Think about if you are feeling "sad"...you might feel better after a work-out. It was a temporary state.

But if you are feeling "fat" or "addicted to sugar", these are more chronic states. Right? Fat isn't a feeling, rather it's a story about what we believe is "good" or "bad" based on our weight. Or "addicted to sugar" is something we believe so much about ourselves that it becomes an identity.

This is why I address stories because these chronic feelings or HOW we feel about food and weight feels all consuming because it's part of our identity and what we think of as "good" or "bad".

Dr. Antonio D'Amasio describes how we feel about things the "background feelings" which he postulates affects us more than those waves of feelings that emotional eating journals ask us to



capture. I agree with him, hence why I cite his research! These background feelings are more chronic and so harder to grasp because they've been normalized for as long as we've been conscious of our weight.

This is the "on a track, off a track", balance beam we could fall off any moment". This is HOW they feel about food not specifically what they are feeling that drives them to eat.

This balance beam feeling is also HOW we feel about other areas of our life where we've historically struggled too - areas where we haven't had immediate success, practice or a lot of what feels like "bad luck" like dating or finances.

And a key residue of trauma, which birthed our stories, is being all-or-nothing or black and white or rigid ideas of good and bad. When you are under threat or there is a chronic threat to your well-being, there is no time to be discerning. All or nothing thinking protects you. The challenge now is that in our stories today, the majority of the time, we aren't under threat. But we prepare to be.

Side note: I often get asked about how we can know our stories or resources. It's really challenging because it's the water we are swimming in. The healing process is to see you have a story rather than the story having you or controlling you. Often you need an expert to guide you through the process.

I also recommend the book Immunity to Change. It's one of the foundational frameworks I adapted in Truce with Food, the book uses organizational examples but is still informative and relevant to the individual. They applied their theory to conventional weight loss ideas about eating less and moving more and wrote a book Right Weight, Right Mind...I don't think it goes deep enough nor does it address the physical and food pieces to cravings and health yet it might still be helpful so give it a read.



Another way to identify at the very least, “hey, I’m in a story” is HOW we are.

It’s HOW we are feeling about something rather than what we are feeling.

What we are feeling might be lonely or like a failure.

But HOW we are feeling about that is different.

We may feel like a failure or anxious around work or food because “how we are feeling” is the balance beam and there’s no room for error. If we don’t hit our routine perfectly we lose and everything falls apart. In our mind we’re thinking, it’s so hard to get it right and so easy to get it wrong, or it’s so much effort to lose weight and we can gain it all back with one slip. While gaining weight in our environment is much easier than losing weight and while one presentation, one deal or one case at work may be very important, the success and failure curve isn’t as dramatic as we think.

For example, I’ve been the same weight, probably give or take a few pounds, before pregnancy for six years without paying attention to it because I know what foods work for me and owned and healed my story that sent me off track. Whereas when I was battling food, I would lose say a few pounds in a few weeks and then one week of falling off track I probably gained all that back plus a few more.

But the reason it can feel “it’s so easy to fall off track” is because we have a very “tiny” definition of good and everything else is bad. Hence why the balance beam imagery is very true.

Think about it: you probably have a more narrow idea of what foods are “good” versus bad. Or what exercise counts and what doesn’t. Or you can only date at a certain weight range. Or how much time you can take for yourself before you feel selfish. Or how hard you have to work to enjoy the success you want.



All of these are very balance beam ways of BEING...

Good is the balance beam and bad is everything else.

And “good” is often based on diet culture. But diet culture is built on it’s fair share of junk science and advertising-friendly simplistic thinking and messaging. Corporations often fund science and so much of it is disproven decades after damage has been done.

Look at sugar! Three Harvard scientists were tasked with redirecting the focus from sugar to fat as a culprit for health issues. One of those scientists eventually became head of the USDA which helped to write the FDA guidelines, which encouraged all these grains and low-fat foods for so long, which are the highest profit margin, with the longest shelf-life and the easiest to distribute.

Or we can go back even further about how medicine became standardized in the first place because of the Flexner report, which shut down more natural medicine which is where women, indigenous and people of color were practicing and wasn’t “scalable” the way standardizing medical education could be.

I’m digressing, but for an important point: our narrow ideas of “good” have come from systems that marginalize most people and ideas that aren’t profit seeking.

From a psychological safety perspective, which is what we are seeking in our stories, it’s the same deal. We have very narrow ideas of what is good to be: usually it’s some version of hard-working, responsible, productive and “nice”. And even those of us who identify as rebels, have a “good” way to be a rebel!

“Good” here in America has its roots in what land-owning, white wealthy Christian men thought was “good”. They constructed ideas of “virginity”, a “good woman”, even race (people used to



be identified by their country because race isn't a real thing. Tangent yet really important: Seeing White podcast out of Duke University...if you want to understand how America was really designed, listen to that series).

And even if you aren't Christian, these constructs shape our culture today. For example, virginity isn't really a thing but they made it one! How we define sex is truly on a continuum too. So is gender, sexual attraction...yet we were conditioned to believe we could all be put into a "good" and "bad" box.

Bad is based on what we learned would put us at risk for unbelonging based on what we learned in our families, churches and media, which got their ideas from these big systemic structures of patriarchy, racism and capitalism. The more marginalized you are based on sex, class, religion and race, the less real safety you have.

Ok, now that we understand it's not "self-limiting" beliefs that created our "good" and "bad" buckets but rather systems, if we have enough privilege, we can choose if we want to digest these pre-packaged ideas or do we want to find out who we are organically and welcome back the "bad" parts that aren't really bad, yet left during trauma often because of what our families or communities identified as "good" or "bad".

Let's zoom back in on how this affects the weight conversation.

Exercise is an example of this and often where our story is active because most of us who struggle with food also struggle with exercise. And we have rigid ideas of what counts and what doesn't count. In many ways capitalism has helped make exercise "a thing" and the limited the frame we bring to it in the process. And our Capitalistic culture can profit when something is a "thing". Look at yoga or detoxing in the US!



The more we make something a thing, the more it gets built up, the more consumer and profit opportunities there are for it, and the more we believe we have to literally and figuratively “gear up”! For instance, Goop labs featured being out in the cold. Guess what? If we dress less warmly in winter, sleep with heat off and take colder showers, we can get daily benefits.

The more we build something up whether it’s an expensive spin class that requires rigid timing and the right clothes instead of a rigorous bike ride outside or banging away at a treadmill at a fancy gym in lululemon running clothes versus a restorative walk or jog outside, the more we internalize capitalistic ideas of health and wellness and our balance beam of “good” gets narrower and narrower.

If we don't interrupt this pattern, it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy, we lose the advantage of all of our small gains and get further away from nature, and ultimately need more medical interventions.

For example, I firmly believe walking my dog in the a.m. to get sunlight and then making more of my work-outs casual longer walks with Coffee (our dog) outdoors in Frick Park, a giant forest we have in Pittsburgh here, helped me get pregnant. But the old me would’ve never done this or if I did, dismissed that it “counted” because it’s free, simple and I enjoyed it so much versus it having to be so hard like those miserable 5 mile runs I used to do (a Puritainical belief that is glorified in the United States at least)! Being open to this, I discovered research on how lighter exercise and moving differently can be good for conception whereas some people may think they are being healthy and therefore optimizing their fertility with extreme exercise.

So when we believe a lot to be bad and very little to be good, HOW we are in our story is scattered, spinning, ungrounded... basically how it feels when we are in a trauma response. We over-analyze, spin, go on automatic pilot or feel overwhelmed. All four of these terms are how my clients have described their internal state of HOW they are in their story.



Basically they feel “on guard” which is why we always feel we need to “gear up”. And we do this when we are on a diet. But we also do this with exercise and often unconsciously in the life areas our story is active. It’s been sufficiently normalized, that we often aren’t even aware we are doing it. So many clients are shocked at how much more energy and calm they have even while working through their story because they’ve lived so much in “gearing up” mode or “crash” mode.

So HOW are we when we feel like there’s a balance beam of good and everything else is bad is, we:

Judge quickly or “close the story loop” as we say in Truce with Food: Easily triggered to be judgemental of ourselves and others: what we eat, this is bad! I didn’t get to the gym: bad.

With food, we judge every food choice, meal or each day rather than understanding trends, including what amount of desserts if you’re like me, I could have. We judge in the moment rather than over time.

In our story, we judge ourselves and only see black and white choices. This is the only exercise that counts. I have to do this at work. I should do X. What’s the point of trying Y? Most of our “have tos”, “Should” or “musts” are based on pre-packaged ideas of “Good” or “bad” choices/behaviors.

React quickly: Part of why we judge so quickly is because our nervous system is involved and it makes us feel like time is running out or we have to do “something” because we feel misunderstood or don’t want to be misunderstood or angry or something very uncomfortable. We react quickly to release the tension with an action that we perceive, reduces our risk (and again here is the kicker that in present day, we often aren’t at any risk at all). By putting ourselves into all-or-nothing thinking, we can’t see any other choices besides “good” or “bad”. Also if we judge something too quickly as “so hard”, our reaction can be a decision of non-



action, a decision to avoid.. Reacting quickly isn't always or solely a time measurement but more often a matter of, did you stay open to all the information you needed to get before you reacted?

“Super Size” Nutrition and Life Choices: with the stakes perceived as being so high, we assume with all the work to stay “good”, there must be immediate success or failure, love or rejection, etc. So we fantasize when we are being “good” and catastrophize when being “bad” to try and protect ourselves from all angles. Fantasizing and catastrophizing are two sides of the same coin. This includes building up what we think will happen when we lose weight or building up how much nutrition counts in our healing! My clients and I laugh because we do work on the food and I’m totally chill about the nutrition because I know often, the emotional healing is more important and the food will fall into place eventually. Whether it’s food, exercise or any one tool, it all feels more important than each tool is on their own.

Scarcity: when we have abandoned parts of ourselves to try to be “good” for others, we will feel “not enough” and we will project that onto the world.

Now, first of all, our social systems have created real scarcity. And capitalism is creating genuine scarcity of fresh water, clean air and nutritious soil. And the less economic means you have, the more scarce these natural medicines are.

This is not all in your head. And part of why we have the scarcity is all of us think we need more than we really do because we are missing our wholeness. I’ve found with myself and my clients, the more we heal, the more we want “the simple things” like time in nature, to be of service to others, express ourselves creatively and to enjoy real, fresh food. The more parts of ourselves we have access to, the more resilience, creativity and wholeness, all of our true natures or sense of home we feel and so don’t need to fill ourselves with food or other things.



An example of this is thinking there aren't enough good partners out there and all the good ones want skinny people! Or only some people can do work they love. Again, based on your privilege, this is partially true AND more of us listening to podcasts can if we know the full range of how capable we are.

And the neat thing about what we want most with a desire for weight loss - which is to belong and be recognized for our talents and gifts - is actually the opposite of scarcity. More belonging creates more belonging. More emotional intimacy creates more intimacy.

You can really see this with newborns: the more a mother breast feeds, the more milk the body produces. The more sleep infants get, the more they want. Mother Nature is inherently abundant: look at the beauty alone she has created! So there is a truth to scarcity AND the more we heal ourselves, the more abundant we all will feel. And I do believe we have to start with ourselves because the more healed we are, the more healed solutions we will come up with.

So these four ways of being is how we see things when we are in our story. And without being aware of what's happening, we often create a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Once we get out of our black and white story and see there is so much more room to experiment in life, the balance beam dissolves.

Ok, so once we know we are experimenting, there are four new ways we practice being when we are choosing differently in our story and reorienting from trying not to lose to playing to win (i.e. get what we need and want):

Evaluate with New Metrics Instead of Judge:



Most of our ideas of “Good” and “bad” are based on diet culture, Western medicine’s “war on the body” mentality or Capitalism (i.e. funded research by companies with vested profit interests and thus research outcomes is the tip of the iceberg here).

When we learn to evaluate based on metrics that matter to us, mainly what we value, we find a fluid structure that works for us.

When at one point I worked with an imagery therapist Bob to heal my trauma from childhood cancer (more on him in podcast _____), our work together actually led to me gaining 10 pounds over the year and a half. I was so depressed and tired, I actually stopped eating that much. I was living by myself since my husband was at a graduate program in Iowa and had zero motivation to fix meals. I could also barely exercise. I just didn’t care. The old me would’ve judged my food and exercise unraveling as “bad” and the new me realized that this was work I needed to do. I needed to be with these feelings and so that was my new metric. Could I stay with this intensity? Could I really do the work, which was going to the appointments and trusting the process? Those became my new metrics because I wanted to get to the root of my depression this time. Before it had been a physical and emotional imbalance. This time it was soul level work.

Once you have metrics outside of diet culture, so many more possibilities open up.

In our stories, our metrics are about minimizing risk instead of what we really want and so it’s defining what we really want and then evaluating from there how to get that!

Give Yourself Space: giving ourselves space, in terms of time, or waves of emotion to pass, talking it through or journaling with the right questions, whatever works for you, gives you distance and the ability to respond instead of react and see new possibilities.

In my work with Bob, I really “got” the importance of time and letting things settle to integrate in a deeper way. I knew from the issues I had healed before that my pattern was to rush things.



And yet this layer of healing asked me to trust for a whole year and half of what felt like everything unraveling. But what was really happening was I was finding and integrating the deep hidden parts of my soul.

I find that at each level of healing, the dark night of the soul might be a little bit longer as metaphorically, it takes more time to be in the dark the deeper those hidden parts are. This might not be universally true. And when we are having golden nights of the soul, when we are reclaiming the powerful parts of ourselves we have disowned to be safe in our culture, which looking back, I felt I did with my infertility diagnosis, that took me about the same time to trust the process...about a whole year. It wasn't as intense as the dark night and yet, it still involved letting time, which is a form of space, be a healing tool.

It can be challenging to make sure your time is well spent...and you aren't avoiding!

But you can experiment with space. The next time you feel like you need to react to an email or request, let it sit. See how you feel about that same email the next day. That's the power of space...it enables us to see more clearly, without our emotional state or story interpreting it.

“Right Size”: we have to see how we are building things up because we assume immediate success or failure, recognition or rejection. Weight loss itself doesn't grant us immediate access to any of this. It might appear that way because of thin privilege but even the hot girl at the bar who gets all the male attention still will have to work on a healthy relationship.

A good example of the nuance of thin privilege and that it is actually a thing (and not in your head) but maybe not as much of a thing as you think is from Virgie Tova's blog, Virgie is one of the nation's leading experts and lecturers on fat discrimination and body image. Virgie states that “the idea that fatness is universally undesirable is also patently false and a delusion of fatphobia. There's also pretty good evidence that fat women have sex at similar rates to their



thin counterparts, but are less likely to have meaningful romantic relationships than their thin counterparts because of stigma.”

This is important because what I’m trying to show is the nuance of weight and fighting food and that often some of what we believe is partially true but not the whole truth. So for example, she is saying it is harder for fat women to have meaningful romantic relationships because of the stigma of fatness. I’m not an expert on fat phobia so I am not sure the way out of this (is it understanding that marriage is also a patriarchal idea that keeps us isolated?)..not sure...AND I know that weight loss alone won’t give us the tools for a healthy relationship.

And if we are building up our weight and not realizing the lines between something that makes life harder because of stigma and a complete golden ticket, we also are building up other areas of our lives where we feel vulnerability. Some ways this comes out in the health and wellness space:

We think:

- “this doctor’s appointment” will give us “the answer” rather than more information we need to learn to synthesize.
- “this way of eating” is my answer rather than how to discern what works best for our bodies and addressing underlying causes and emotional healing.
- our bingeing, overeating, or depression is who we are rather than a symptom and our emotional and physical cries for help.

We need to be able to recognize how we are building things up and making them a “thing” in the first place. I remember with my work with Bob, it was such a new way of healing that I was



worried about “doing it right”, which was the obstacle and path, to realize there was no right or wrong,

Anyway, I had to settle in for however long it was going to take and trying to get it right was only adding unproductive pressure. Again, this was such a new way of being for me because I had always felt like pressure or “gearing up” was necessary for success. It is sometimes and not always! Eventually I surrendered and it took me awhile too! As they say in Taoism, go slow to go fast.

I often see the over emphasis on diet and exercise for depression, endometriosis...pretty much all “diagnosis”. But the further we go on our healing path, the more we realize how much emotional health and in from my point of view, healing our story and trauma matters too. This is often hard to hear if you are in say, a ton of physical pain from endometriosis. But often we can use food and exercise to alleviate enough of the physical pain that we can start to hear the more subtle, invisible emotional pain or realize that if we are having trouble being consistent with what we know makes us feel good, our inconsistency is a symptom that even more relief and freedom are available to us.

And the more we heal, the more you get “this is the thing” isn’t a thing and everything is a tool for you to access your own truth versus “the answer”. This can be disheartening, but it’s also a relief to know that nothing is make or break or permanent. There is lots of room to experiment and play. In the beginning it doesn’t feel like play AND if you stick with it long enough, you’ll get there.

Know That There Is Enough To Go Around: what we all want most, belonging, freedom and to express our truth, isn’t scarce. There is enough to go around. Nature is elegant, and often abundant.



Often we don't even know what "enough" looks like for us. But we can often identify that at thinner weights, we weren't happy enough. Or, it didn't last long "enough" or we still thought we needed to lose 10 more pounds to really be happy. Going one level deeper, we often know what isn't enough but not what is enough. And so the work is also to know what enough is.

As I worked through my work with Bob, the little bit of "on" and "off track" and desire to lose weight was weeded out for good. I wasn't weighing myself at that time and after about a year of our work, I went in for my physical and my doctor told me I had gained ten pounds that year. I remember truly being like, this is what it is. I would eventually lose 5 of those pounds from actually eating more and becoming more active but I think I kept 5 of them on and truly did not care. I remember feeling so much liberation that gaining those 10 pounds did nothing to change how I showed up in the world.

To this day, I get weighed once a year at the doctor's and that's how I know what I weigh. And of course in pregnancy they have you weigh yourself and during that whole process, I didn't freak out or really feel anything except AWE that I was creating or "3D printing" as Alissa Vitti said in our fertility season a human being!!!

I had more of myself back after working with Bob and I truly got that my weight wasn't going to cost me in anyway that mattered to me. Yes in my field I am sure people don't work with me because I don't have a six pack or a size 4 or you look at how supermodels come out with a lifestyle plan and they have huge followings...I get that this is thin privilege and I don't want to be doing work that revolves around getting a six pack or losing weight to lose weight. I'm not wrong and neither are the people doing that, at least that's how I see it...we can all choose to align with our values!

I LOVE the work I do with clients - I love how they learn to integrate the parts of themselves and move forward to offer more integrated and powerful art, leadership and parenting.



Conclusion

To end food and life guilt, we have to grow into a researcher and true scientist, who explores possibilities and is willing to challenge what we think is true.

This way we can work through both the process and the cycles of being reborn. And true scientists know there will always be more questions because the more we learn, the more we realize we don't know.

And to get comfortable with the unknown and know it can be full of nurturing possibility and healing instead of failure, rejection, criticism and unbelonging, is possible if HOW we can be is discerning, the moderate middle between naivety and judgement.

Because what we are looking for most in weight loss or any healing is a sense of home in our bodies, our first homes, to both weather and enjoy life in. And we can do that when we welcome back more of ourselves.

So from an emotional standpoint, you want to take an experimental approach to food and life choices by:

1. Not closing the story loop or judge yourself immediately but rather over time.
2. Giving yourself space and time to look at trends to examine why you ate what you ate or chose what you chose. And know you can learn from it
3. Right sizing what you did. You didn't fall off the balance beam...you discovered more of your story and can fall back to spring forward. And that it's all about learning more - each appointment, each food choice, etc.
4. Remember there is enough belonging, recognition and freedom for all of us. And the more we have this in our lives, the more there is for us and everyone else.



From a food standpoint, Keeping our blood sugar balanced going into eating sweet or salty indulgences is the key to being moderate

We can learn how to do this with our favorite treats by how and when to eat them and by SLOWING down the judgement that today is an “off” day and rather, tuning in as we go to what we need

Remember as a general rule of thumb, if you are genuinely hungry, you probably need more protein, usually animal protein if you are parasympathetic or balance autonomic nervous system. If you are tired, you need a complex carb like a sweet potato or fruit. And if you are craving salty or sweet, more fat.

HOW we are in our stories is what matters as much as the “contents” of our stories

HOW we are is often assuming we are “under attack” and that we need to judge, react, and build things up because there’s a scarcity of safety or belonging and recognition.

We assume we have to be defensive because the “balance beam” of being “on” with our food and life is a narrow definition of “good” and a wide array of what’s “bad”.

By evaluating based on our own metrics, responding, right sizing and remembering what is enough, and balancing our blood sugar so that we have a clearer mind to make these choices, we can heal our ideas of good and bad and give ourselves more freedom to be who we truly are, which is never good or bad, but rather about, finding the space and alignment where we can be safe to be authentic.

[END]

