

Guilt-Free Strategies to Increase Food Satisfaction

– Insatiable Season 12, Episode 1

[INTRODUCTION]

[0:00:00] AS: You went vegetarian. Then Paleo. You stopped restricting. You've tried loving yourself more. But nothing is working. You feel hopeless about ever feeling good in your body. And every time you fail, you trust yourself less. As the larger world feels increasingly in peril, caring about how you feel in your body may feel frivolous and even more hopeless.

We are at a time when our individual and collective stories about what to do for our bodies, health, and the world are crumbling...because the stories we have aren't working for how our bodies or our world actually works. And I believe centering our bodies - all bodies, not just thin, white or "good" bodies - and what all of our bodies need to thrive will help orient us in a better direction.

There's no one-size-fits-all diet, exercise or way to biohack. Good health is much less about willpower or discipline and more a complex interweb of our societal structures, food choices, emotional history, environmental exposures, and privilege.

There is a great loss of certainty and safety when we initially have to face what is real versus the half-truths we've been fed. But the loss of these stories creates an opening. If this opening is pursued with curiosity and discernment, we can discover our awe-inspiring ability to create and embody a new body story for our physical and political bodies, and the Earth.

I'm Ali Shapiro and I host the Insatiable podcast so we engage in the type of conversations that will lead us to radically new body stories for ourselves, each other and the Earth.



To do that, we discuss a more truthful approach to freedom from cravings, emotional eating, bingeing, and being all-or-nothing. We explore the hidden aspects of fighting our food, our weight and our bodies and dive deep into nutrition and behavior change science, and true, whole health.

Fair warning: *This is *NOT* your parents' health-care or the conspiratorial crazy of the wellness world. *This is* a big rebel gathering... to those who want to hold nuance, context and complexity in order to lead the way to a healthier future for all because our lust for life is truly insatiable.

[EPISODE]

Hello everyone. It's been awhile. About a year and a half since I did an Insatiable season, which was on Sugar Rehab. With how much has happened both in my internal world, specifically becoming a parent, struggling with insomnia and perimenopause and the external world, from COVID to the undeniable reality of our climate crisis, it feels like a lifetime ago.

Before I get to today's episode, a few housekeeping items, a personal update and then our first episode of the season!

This season, episodes will be released every other Wednesday. I'm learning to slow down and this is one way this is showing up. So expect a new episode every other Wednesday instead of every week.

I will be returning to my IG lives the weeks the podcast doesn't come out to discuss whatever questions you have from the episode. DM me your Qs on Instagram. @alimshapiro. Those IG lives will be on Wednesdays when there is no podcast. So I'll be doing an IG live on October 6 related to this podcast and the videos are always recorded if you can't attend live. Think of them as "after the show".



I'll be hosting a free workshop in November. More on that to come.

And lastly, I launched my second round of TWF Certification. Sold out. So excited. By next year at this time, have more people you can work with who are trained in the TWF process! Had many inquiries over the years of people wanting people in person or when I'm booked, someone who has individual openings available and now, that will be possible. Next round next September, 2022. Interested. Get on my list at alishapiro.com.

And I wanted to give you a personal update. A lot of what I've been learning that can help you with your own food, body and health choices and story I'll be sharing throughout this season. Because I am re-learning and learning a lot!

But in a nutshell, I am feeling such relief and joy after two incredibly challenging years. Carlos and I have really turned a corner with starting to feel more stability being parents. Eça is coming up on two years old at the end of October. He started sleeping through the night consistently in August which is huge. At 21 months.

I'm so glad I didn't know it would take this long! He wasn't waking up like a newborn or baby for that long but we didn't feel confident in his sleep as he'd often be up for several hours a night, even after doing a gentle version of sleep training between 7.5-9 months. It definitely improved things but it also fell off the rails, especially March - July. So we are experiencing a massive improvement in our quality of life.

He's also in daycare full time, which feels like a miracle. I love daycare. Such a struggle with childcare, largely from COVID. I'm not too worried about him getting COVID since we all had COVID in February, the research on natural immunity is highly encouraging and he handled COVID really well - slept great through his COVID fever, go figure. And COVID disrupted his life and sleep less than all the sicknesses he was bringing home from daycare when he first started.



Of course you never know but I am fortunate to have more peace of mind than I am sure most parents have right now whose kids are out in the world.

Having kids is already so vulnerable and COVID just adds another layer. If you're a parent with your little one going back to school amongst all this chaos, my heart is with you. I'm a big fan of Dr. Elise Song, who you can find at [healthykids_happykids](#) on Instagram.

She keeps you up to date on all the COVID research. She is evidence-based which is so refreshing. She's points out the sensationalization of some media reports around COVID and that it's untrue that if you only eat and take care of yourself enough, you don't have to be concerned with COVID. She's all about supporting you to build immune resiliency for kids especially.

It's feels really hard to find someone who isn't using COVID to build their business and creating extreme narratives on either side in the wellness space these days so she is refreshing. She has an immune supplement kit for kids and I ordered it for Eça to help support his system as also it sounds like the flu is going to be pretty bad this year. So check her out for yourself and your kiddos.

Emotionally, I am trying to hold a new center, especially in my soul. The transition into parenting was really hard on me. I feel like my post-partum period was the last two years and just starting to come out of it.

And all this is happening when I'm much further on the perimenopause continuum towards menopause than I was before being pregnant.

Becoming a parent is a massive identity shift that of course, we don't talk about because it disproportionately affects Mothers. Moreso today Dad's too, especially those who are really involved like Carlos is.



I can hold how much I love Eça and that I am in awe at the miracle of miracles Eça is. And these days, it's mostly non-stop laughs and excitement at all he is learning and his personality coming through. I've only had around five periods since giving birth so we joke Eça was the last train leaving the station!

Having him is one of the best things I've ever done AND I also felt so much loss because of parenthood and the pandemic. Navigating through all that while basically being menopausal is a trip. And I've had so much body stuff on top of recovering from childbirth, pregnancy, perimenopause and insomnia. My breast milk never came in which was devastating to me. Plantar Fasciitis. COVID. Also was so sick in June 2020, thought it was COVID. It wasn't. But I was sicker than I'd been in 20 years. And then still having so much of my pregnancy weight. And that's just the body stuff.

I think like many of you, I've just had a lot of intense challenges in the past two years. A lot of new questions I'm asking myself around what changes need to be made.

There has been so much to grapple with for all of us. And loss everywhere. I know COVID has caused loss for all of us. While we haven't all had equal losses, we must each still individually reckon with our losses if we want to grow and make meaningful changes.

What I've found to be true in my life is that if I don't face the loss and how it can make me more healthy, resilient and whole, it will eat away at me. It used to make my eating out of control. And now, it usually leads to burn out. In both situations, it's always trying to avoid the uncertainty of navigating what is true versus what I thought to be true.

For example, when I was done with my cancer treatments almost 30 years ago, I thought that to be a "strong" survivor, it was best just to move on. And I actually believed I could if I just focused on being positive and grateful that I survived. That was an important piece. AND, grief



and loss stays with us. For many of us, the energy of that pain gets channeled into our eating, weight loss fantasies or our health.

As a teenager, my exercise became obsessive as I literally and metaphorically, ran, ran, ran away from the loss and deep truth of how vulnerable I truly am and how short life truly is. You can't unknow that after going through a life-threatening illness. And perhaps a pandemic.

This set the foundation for my out of control eating and made me focus on the eating instead of the root cause for decades. But you can't out eat your pain or fill your loss with food, no matter how much you binge.

Loss of any kind often brings up some level of disorientation because life wasn't what we thought it was or would be. And I think COVID has disoriented all of us in some way. Especially if we've gone through a major change in our life like becoming a parent, losing or changing a job or ending a relationship.

And remember, loss doesn't always mean a tangible change. It can be the loss of the way you thought your life would go. Of how you thought the world worked.

I felt a tremendous loss when Trump won the election. I had never been a "USA, USA" type of person. And, I didn't realize the degree of rot, racism and sexism that informs the country I call home. And how I was unknowingly participating in it. It's been an eye opening and humbling five years since I started my anti-racism work. And, it's been freeing to see more of the truth. And there's nothing to show you how much your country hates women then when you become a Mother and realize the inadequacy of support for you, even if you have relative privilege like me. This dovetails with my anti-racism work as I'm learning more deeply of how much how I understood feminism is what Koa Beck in her book calls white feminism, which only focuses on the individual and not the collective care we need for mothers, families and children. I highly recommend that book.



How we reorient from loss depends on what we are willing to face, including our role in the loss if applicable. By applicable, something like losing a parent involves loss but there isn't necessarily anything to own. But for example in the case of Trump getting elected, I have to own my part to make sure anti-racism change continues and grows in myself and the collective.

Facing loss and owning our part is an important part of us becoming healthy adults. Especially today, when we need capable, creative, resilient people who have the stamina to lead us with better questions and more creative answers.

This will help us make better choices and have more satisfaction moving forward.

And now is an interesting time to consider what we really need and want because for so many of us, our habits changed dramatically during COVID. Maybe we order our groceries from Amazon now. Or we work-out at home or not at all. Or we rarely get dressed. Or for some of my clients, they're considering having a baby on their own. Some of their careers were radically altered like Serena Ryder, who you will hear from this season who is a literal rock star and my client and her entire life of touring stopped. For others, they ended graduate school or got promoted or turned down promotions because what really matters anymore?

Our habits and most likely what feels meaningful have changed so much. And, we can either continue on with what we had to default to what was forced upon us from quarantine or our past, or we can mindfully consider new choices and changes that will support our bodies and health, including ones that can help us integrate what we've discovered we really want for ourselves and our lives.

If you're new here, you might be thinking this is way deep for a health and wellness podcast. And you are correct. We go deep here. Because the deep end of the ocean is the most full of awe.



I hope this Insatiable season can support you in reorienting in a healthier direction that will have made this pandemic crucible count for something. That it gives you information and inquiry to come out of this making and going for the changes you need and want.

Let's do this!

On to our episode....Guilt-Free Strategies to Increase Food Satisfaction

For our opening episode, I wanted to ground us in what I mean by Trusting Satiation: A Truce with Food secret.

Because if I put myself back into the me when I was still battling food and my body, satiation would have been, "I want all the brownies" and that is bad and there's no way this can be good.

Or, what I really want is to not exercise and that will never work because you have to exercise to lose weight and be healthy.

Or, I want to lose weight to feel like the real me, who is a risk taker and is actually pretty confident in my smarts and personality, just not my body.

What I couldn't understand or put language to at the time is that I wanted all the brownies, bread and weight loss because I wasn't satisfied on several levels.

And my idea of satisfaction was skewed because I was coming from such a holistically deprived place. And so then I would balance through extremes and feel guilty for overeating and bingeing. Or, I thought that I couldn't just eat one of something for the same reasons.

I want to repeat this: for most of us, we can't trust our ideas of feeling satisfied from food because we are coming from such a holistically deprived place.



What helped me get my eating under control, at its essence, was trusting satiation or satisfaction.

This was not a familiar feeling to me.

Part of it was from dieting. Most of us can remember the “nothing tastes as good as thin feels” mantras I learned at my WW meetings or we grew up in families where our parents struggled with their weight and were taught to “grin and bear it” when we felt hungry or or as my Dad always said he was “running from the fat man”, implying food required guilt.

Within these statements is an implication that feeling satisfied came from “giving in” or we are to be made guilty for it, not understanding these ideas are half-baked. #foodpun intentional!

Or I thought I was healthy because I had narrowly defined healthy as being cancer-free. But being only 23, I had been struggling with antibiotic and Accutane resistant acne, asthma, allergies, IBS, binge eating and depression. Living in my body was far from comfortable, let alone satisfying but there were very low expectations on how to move through this. And for me, all the medication I tried eventually failed and so there was this expectation of the best we can do is symptom management instead of resolution.

Many of my clients struggling with health stuff have been gaslighted or dismissed by the medical system that says, “you’re fine” when you’re not. We have to know we can challenge these unsatisfying answers.

Or I exercised religiously and consistently but it was mostly out of fear of not burning off my calories. As a result, I had a very unsatisfying idea of what exercise “counted”, let alone how movement could make me feel more satisfied from food, instead of using food as a reward for my exercise.



Because the only thing I really enjoyed about the gym was the people I knew there and going with my sister (Philly friends: we would go to the Sporting Club and meet at 21 and 20th and Locust every am as I lived at 21 and Locust, she lived at 19 and Pine and we'd meet at 6 am. Her before law school, me before I'd drive to the Burbs for work).

Many of my clients go in fits and starts with exercise because "Exercise that counts" often requires "Gearing up" when you're exhausted from a demanding career or another thing to fit in that they can't get to.

Or I was living alone and traveling a lot for work at the time. I would try to avoid eating with others because I feared I'd "cave" and go off my diet, so I was deprived of the deep satisfaction that comes from sharing a great meal with people you care about or the fun of being adventurous with food.

I still remember working in Paris and was invited out to lunch and said no because I had bought rice cakes and peanut butter for my lunch. I remember the French women coming over and looking at me like I was a mice in a scientific study, fascinated by this colorless, not very tasty thing being considered a meal, let alone a good meal.

I know COVID has prevented us from eating with others. And many of my clients feel a variety of pressure around eating in social situations. Either because they want to be healthy and their family is not or they don't want to feel like they are missing out for example. So what could be a deep source of satisfaction, enjoying a meal with people we care about, often doesn't happen. And because we are wired for social connection, we eventually do go out with friends and "go crazy" because we assume most of the fun is in the food.

And this is just the physical level. We will address two other levels, emotional and soul, in later episodes this season.



Because satisfaction isn't often a consideration in our lives, we often balance through extremes.

I think about this on a flavor level alone. Two extreme flavors we have in our foods is salty and sweet. Most of us go on a see-saw of these flavors. But when you add in astringent, bitter and sour, you don't crave salty and sweet as much and your food gets much more flavorful.

In Episode 2, we will discuss how to make cooking simpler to be more satisfying and what flavors, textures and smells contribute to food satiation.

In today's episode, I'll provide the four foundations of how to feel more physically satisfied from your food.

The right macros for your body.

To kick us off, I want to share a recent study I shared in my Insatiable Membership Community published in The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition. The study basically found that obesity wasn't about calories in, calories out or the "energy model of food" but rather, how the quality of food influences our hormones which changes our metabolism, which they are calling the carbohydrate-insulin model.

The carbohydrate-insulin model claims: overeating isn't the main cause of obesity. Instead, it's about the excessive consumption of foods with a high glycemic load: in particular, processed, rapidly digestible carbohydrates. These foods cause hormonal responses that fundamentally change our metabolism, driving fat storage, weight gain, and obesity.

According to Dr. Ludwig who was part of the study, "reducing consumption of the rapidly digestible carbohydrates that flooded the food supply during the low-fat diet era lessens the underlying drive to store body fat. As a result, people may lose weight with less hunger and struggle." This is because your blood sugar will be better balanced.



One of my clients chimed in about how when she is eating junk food, she feels like it's harder to get back on track the more she eats that stuff. And she now knows this isn't laziness but blood sugar deregulation from lesser food quality and this study confirmed what she was experiencing.

But if you don't know this, you might assume you have no discipline rather than how your body is physiologically designed to work. And this is also why I love the end goal of Intuitive Eating but just allowing yourself to eat all forbidden foods can change your physiology dramatically and make it actually harder to hear your body's natural cues. These foods are designed - literally billions spent - to hijack your sense of satiety.

I think this is an unconsidered risk with Intuitive Eating and why I teach blood-sugar regulation in *Truce with Food*. Blood-sugar regulates how fast food breaks down and thus, how much glucose and insulin is in your body. Your blood sugar control is a major influence on feeling satisfied from food. Clients usually realize about 50% of their emotional eating was actually blood sugar deregulation, which can increase feelings of anxiety, cravings and hunger.

Now, you might be thinking, "I don't eat a lot of processed carbs." I don't either. However, think of this study on a continuum with obesity being on the extreme end of what happens. And I'll be getting into 3 other factors that will influence your blood sugar sensitivity that have nothing to do with food shortly that were affecting me in this season of my life that have led to blood sugar sensitivity.

What's important to take away from this study is that it underscores the need to keep your blood sugar balanced and how hard it can be if you don't understand how blood sugar works.

And we know from other research that the one-size-fits-all glycemic index many people might reference to try and figure it out is inaccurate because there is no one diet that works for



everyone. In other words, we could each eat a banana or “NANA” as Eça says and all have different blood sugar reactions to it.

Now this carbohydrate-insulin model isn't new. But it is one of the more comprehensive studies on this theory. In other words, it has a lot more proof and evidence to back it up. Science is a process, not a destination.

The most impactful way I've found to start to begin to address the insulin-carbohydrate model or blood sugar balance is knowing what macros work for your body. The macronutrients are fat, protein and carbs.

Often we aren't eating the right % of macro nutrients for what our body requires, which deregulates our blood sugar, makes us feel unsatisfied from our food and then we:

Crave ALL the bread or pasta because we've deprived ourselves of the complex carbohydrates our body needs.

Or we crave salty carbs or sweets from not enough fat. Often clients are craving potato chips or peanut butter cups in part because of needing the fat. The cravings get aggregated because you're at such a deficit.

Or as a friend was saying how she had done this detox where I think she was eating like 800 calories a day and she said it “triggered” old eating habits because then she binged on so much food after the cleanse. And I said, you could see it as triggered or your body was trying to protect you because it thought you were in a famine and so amped up your hunger so you would go find food.

Remember: our bodies evolution hasn't caught up with food being available 24/7 and in such concentrated amounts. Our bodies hear excess food in the case of the carbohydrate-insulin



model or not enough food as “FAMINE” and fat storage increases, which is exactly what this study showed.

Now, in Season 10, Episode 2 of Insatiable, Food Freedom 1: Stop Monitoring Yourself around Food, we dive deep into the framework I use to guide clients to figure out what macro percentages they need for their unique bodies.

I also have a free breakfast experiment to start to make this real for you, which you can find at alishapiro.com/breakfast-experiment (will also link to in show notes). So that episode dives deep into the various %. I’ll link to that episode in the shown notes.

The important thing I want to address in this episode and underscore is from what I’ve seen, most people don’t know the right macros for their bodies or realize they are not eating the macros they think they are.

And it’s natural to not know this because we are taught to only view food from a calories perspective because of the old paradigm about energy in, energy out instead of food being information to the body.

AND, we aren’t taught to connect food with satisfaction. That often feels dangerous as maybe you think you won’t be able to stop or it makes you feel guilty.

Satisfaction to our bodies feels like consistent energy, focus, stable moods and an absence of cravings, anxiety (or decreased anxiety) and hunger.

Satiation is not feeling “Juice cleanse high” amazing where you almost feel a “high”. That is often pure adrenaline + high blood sugar from usually a lot of carbs from juicing in this case and not eating enough of the right macros. My friend who had done this “whole foods” detox said she felt amazing, which was part of the adrenaline and cortisol her body was producing so she’d go find food!



Physical satiation to me is a gentle lightness that leads me feeling grounded. It's a tension of opposites. And it's not so low or full or stuffed you feel dragged down.

I want you to think back to a favorite or memorable meal, one where the food was good, the company and atmosphere was great and you found yourself naturally eating healthfully and moderately.

Where do you feel that satisfaction in your body?

What does it feel like? Images, colors, metaphors - all language of the body so don't think you only have to describe in words.

This is your initial starting point to know what satisfaction feels like in your body.

When we don't know how to eat to feel this, we can get very confused and overwhelmed listening to experts like trainers or NY Times Best selling diet book authors.

There is a learning curve at first to figuring it out for your body but overtime, you develop a confidence in your body's cues and signals. I know its PC to tell people not to monitor their food and this can lead to hyper-vigilance, especially if it's connected to weight loss. And if you're in that space, I get it. This is where knowing where you are in your food journey is important. If tracking doesn't feel helpful to you, honor that. And if you start and it's making you crazy, just stop.

However, if like me, you found the more you ate whatever you wanted, the more you ate whatever you wanted, the initial monitoring of the macros and connecting it to how you feel (instead of weight loss) often leads to less monitoring in the long-run as you develop an intuitive sense of what works for you and your blood sugar.



This is another unpopular truth: Intuitive eating isn't as natural as it sounds.

When I was battling my food and body, it took me awhile to develop an intuitive sense that I actually needed more of a Paleo diet. I had so many cravings and was so tired and moody, I didn't even believe I could feel an absence of these things. And this is because intuition around any topic is usually built on pattern recognition. If you don't know how to eat for your body, you have to start making the various connections of what feels good and what doesn't.

Having a legitimate "gut" instinct usually happens from past experience. Especially when most of our food supply is designed to interfere with satiety. I did an episode on the pros and cons of Intuitive Eating I'll link to in the show notes if you're interested on diving into that topic more.

And what we are looking for with blood-sugar control is not one food but rather, the relationship of fat, protein and carbs, which can make this challenging. If we take the banana example, you might find that makes you more hungry after you eat it. However, if you add some nut butter, you might find it satisfying.

If you know what macros work for you but are struggling with cravings or have other health issues like sleep challenges, you might be thinking you're eating a certain way but aren't. COVID has disrupted our routines which probably changed our eating habits in some ways.

This has been my current journey after the major life change of having a baby. I was in such survival mode the first nine months that we were doing a lot more pre-packaged more healthy yet still processed food. However, because I'm gluten-free, that leads to a lot of almond flour products.

And at first I was tracking my food for my post-pregnancy weight loss and then when I had to track my sleep stuff, I realized I was accidentally eating keto again. Both times!



And because I am so fully in perimenopause, my blood sugar is much more sensitive because of the hormonal shift and degree of a drop. Our menstrual cycle makes our blood sugar more sensitive the week before and during our periods. And perimenopause is like an exaggeration hormonally of these weeks. So our macros become even more important to get right.

And remember all women are on a continuum of perimenopause to menopause starting around age 35 and usually through early 50s. I happen to be in it way early, most likely from my cancer treatments.

So if you are in perimenopause or menopausal, your blood sugar will be more sensitive and it probably is affecting your macros and food satisfaction.

If you're feeling fine, carry on. But if you're having more cravings, energy issues or in my case, sleep and energy issues it could be like me, 1) you aren't eating how you think you are and 2) your macros have shifted.

Now like I said before, if tracking triggers you, please don't do it. It's not at all for me so it's super helpful as I'm still recognizing how much more protein and carbs I need to get.

Here's some questions that can support everyone in finding their macro baseline that don't require tracking:

1. Which macros - protein, fat and carbs - do you deprive yourself of and then find yourself "feeling tempted by"? Where can you experiment adding in more of these macros to your meals to see if you feel more satisfied?
2. Where and what does satiation feel like in your body? Remember the question I posed above: Think back to a favorite meal that you ate just enough of. Where do you feel that



in your body and what does it feel like? Use that as a starting point for what satiation you can trust feels like for you.

3. When you felt your best, not necessarily looked your best but internally felt really great, how were you eating? Consider starting there and then tweaking.

And again, if you want to shorten the learning curve for yourself, try my breakfast experiment too.

Also, no affiliate but I like the Loselt app. You can get a free week trial I think. You scan the UPC code on Loselt and the food comes up! Even easier. And it's starting to show me patterns like when I get enough protein, I eat less. It reconfirms for me I need to figure out this protein situation because I am trying to lose more of my pregnancy weight.

Getting the right macronutrients has a major influence on our food satisfaction. In Episode 2, we will also be going into how textures, aromas and smells affect our satisfaction from food.

SLEEP is the next foundation that affects our food satiation.

And what's complicated about food and sleep is balancing your blood sugar with the right macros affects sleep and then sleep affects how satiated you feel from food and thus, whether or not you balance your blood sugar or not!

The good and bad news is everything is connected, right? This is why I'm a big fan of root-cause resolution. It's more work up front and it pays dividends in the far reaching impact of results.

Sleep sends our food satisfaction hormones in opposite directions than we want. Ghrelin, which I remember as a hunger hormone because of GRRR...I'm hangry! Ghrelin increases the less sleep we get. In other words, we get hungrier the less sleep we get. Evolutionarily, it's



because we need more energy right if we aren't sleeping? Like what else were you doing if you weren't sleeping out in the Tundra? Maybe inspired and doing some cave art by the full moon? That does require more energy!

And when we don't sleep enough, the satiation hormone, called leptin, decreases. When levels of leptin are low, the brain tells you to eat more, as it thinks that there isn't enough fat stored in the body. In other words, not sleeping enough, even a few nights, makes us feel less satisfied from our food. In perimenopause and menopause, our drop in estrogen makes us less sensitive to leptin.

So getting enough sleep is critical to feeling satisfied from food and supporting our leptin production and sensitivity, even more so if we're going through perimenopause or in menopause. Most of us need 7-9 hours a day, fluctuating in my experience with the seasons.

Trouble sleeping? Few tips:

Major life changes, like COVID, having a baby, starting a new job, retiring, can affect our sleep and cause insomnia. But then we start getting into all these bad habits because we are so sleep deprived. This was important for me to realize.

So here's the things I read about but didn't actually do until my sleep coach explained to me why they help:

1. Go to bed the same time every night, within a half hour is working for me, and wake up within an hour the same time. I've found I can actually wake up naturally whenever, probably bc I have so much sleep to catch up on.

This is because of the emerging field of chronobiology. Our body works on a rhythmic clock and going to sleep at all different times stresses the body and will make you feel



more tired. Jet lag is an extreme version of this. I know the importance of chronobiology because of how it affects ideal meal times to eat so it clicked easily for me.

2. Push your bedtime back to 8 hours before you want to wake up. For me that is 10 pm. I was falling asleep at 8:45 or 9 because I was so tired. But then I'd wake up a few hours later and be up for four hours because I didn't have a strong enough sleep drive to take me through the night. It's seriously exactly like learning how to support a baby to sleep through the night. My body thought I was napping from 9-11 or 9-12 am.
3. Don't nap past 3 pm and only for 30 minutes or around 7 hours before your bedtime. Adults are just like babies and toddlers. We need to build our sleep drive.
4. Keep the temperature under 70. Cold temps help produce melatonin.
5. AM Sunlight. It helps with melatonin regulation. I have been doing this since Trump got elected and my sleep first started going off the rails.
6. Get out of bed if in bed longer than 15 minutes. Trying to only associate bedroom with sleep and sex. This is a move of connecting stimulus and response and making your body know bedroom = sleep instead of tossing and turning and anxiety. I sometimes wait an hour and it still helps. I can feel a difference as I used to go into my bedroom and feel like "OH Jesus. How is tonight going to go?" and now I feel safer and thus more relaxed there.
7. For me, I need to eat a snack before bed to stabilize my blood sugar. I actually had to do this during pregnancy and seems like it's still needed. I do some protein + fat + complex carbs. Right now I'm doing organic turkey breast + a few nuts + grapes. Not everyone will need this AND we've all heard "Don't eat 3 hours before bed." And, context and nuance mean there are never absolutes for any dietary or body advice. The nights I've



tried to skip this, I wake up. If you're in perimenopause, you may need it too. You might not AND if you are waking up hungry in the middle of the night, try it and see if it helps.

8. Take more breaks throughout the day so you are unwinding your body and mind instead of thinking you can go from 100 to 0.

I assumed because my life is quite intentional and consciously chosen that I wasn't go-go-going. But my life these days is just non-stop. Get up. Get Eça. Get us breakfast. Walk to daycare (Go to gym or work. Work. Eat. Work. Get Eça. Play with him. Eat dinner. Get him to bed. Get ready for the next day. All begins again. Even my sense of time is speeding up. It's BANANAS.

9. I don't check my phone after 7 pm and if I do, I turn on the red light so as not to get the blue light that keeps you up. My sleep coach told me not to watch any screens an hour before bed but that's the only time Carlos and I can watch TV. So I wear the blue-blocker glasses I use for when I'm working at my computer and that seems to be working for me as most of the times I'm still waking up, eating more of the same bedtime snack gets me to bed in less than 30 minutes.

There's also some gut stuff we discovered and that is a bit too much of a tangent for this episode. But if you're curious, I can talk about how the lab work I did with my sleep coach revealed a gut infection and how that is contributing to my sleep issues and how gut health influences sleep on my IG live next Wednesday.

Many of us developed different sleep habits during COVID and it's really important to return to sleep foundations for food and life satisfaction.

Next, Relationships.



Do you remember when I asked you to remember your favorite meal and who was with you? This is for a couple of different physical reasons:

First, when we have people around us we feel safe to be ourselves, our social nervous system relaxes and we digest better. Because you aren't what you eat, you are what you absorb and metabolize.

And when our SNS is activated, we will either not digest our food well OR digestion slows A LOT, decreasing the felt sense of satisfaction we have. I had one client realize she could eat dairy without any stomach problems when she was with people she loved versus at work, it made her bloated and gave her heartburn. Pretty, neat right?

Also, being with other people creates the natural pleasure chemical of oxytocin. Oxytocin is often associated with baby-mother bonding or cuddling.

We need pleasure chemicals like oxytocin, endorphins, and serotonin. And if we don't get these, we will go for more intense pleasure chemicals like dopamine because again, coming from a deficit of pleasure chemicals.

This is what social media, gambling and processed foods are all about: dopamine hits. We'll get to that in a second.

Stanford University scientists published a study in the journal Science where they found that bursts of oxytocin coincide with positive social interactions and our brains are overwhelmed with a feeling of reward.



Relating this to food satisfaction, we will feel more satisfied in our body from eating with great company because of the oxytocin flooding our system. If there's an absence of social satisfaction in our meals and life, we will feel less internally satisfied or uplifted in our bodies.

If you think about all the social satisfaction COVID took away from our lives, part of it was it took away an important source of pleasure chemicals.

When I work with clients, they can often connect that portion control is easy when the conversation and company is nourishing.

Pleasure chemicals are integral to the body. They are evolutionary because we are social animals and our body is incentivizing us to be with people. Our immune systems get stronger...so many downstream effects of being with others.

If we don't get these pleasure chemicals, think oxytocin from being with others or from touch or endorphins from exercise, we will find other sources.

And where do you think we can easily access those? Junk food. The official scientific term is hyper palatable—sugary, starchy, fatty and salty foods.

Because hyperpalatables hijack our brain's reward system and give us incredible hits of dopamine, a very powerful pleasure chemical. Think of it like eating these foods as a casino win in your body.

Dopamine also signals to your brain to take notice of what's happening so you can get more of the things that bring you pleasure. So then you become more aware of these kinds of foods and seek them out as dopamine motivates us to seek rewards too! It's sometimes the reason we "look forward" to these foods, especially after a stressful day as your body has intuitive



experience of the pleasure chemicals you need. Stress produces adrenaline and cortisol, which are stress chemicals.

The body however, pairs stress and pleasure chemicals together in a nice balance. For example, we feel adrenaline when attracted to someone. The body then balances this out with an orgasm and the pleasure chemicals of dopamine and oxytocin. Or if you have adrenaline as you try to accomplish something. And it's actually the thrill of not knowing if you will - that's the intermittent rewards social media is designed around - that when you do accomplish the thing, you get the pleasure chemicals of dopamine too and whatever other pleasure chemicals are involved. I had an unmedicated birth and so after all the adrenaline and cortisol, my body produced a natural rush of oxytocin.

I'm providing these examples so you can see how the body is designed for stress and pleasure seeking in order for the species to continue on.

But when we are getting the pleasure from concentrated dopamine, which these foods provide, it isn't a sustainable source. Because another part of this vicious cycle is like what happens with most other addictions: you need more and more to get you the high as the dopamine receptors in our body become more desensitized to these hyperpalatable foods the longer we eat them.

If you're someone who has eliminated a lot of these foods in your life, you might find they are too sweet for you now and this is partly why. So many of my clients are like "I never thought I'd say this but it's too sweet for me".

This is from not eating as much sugar AND increasing pleasure chemicals, often from the stress reduction and emotional fulfillment that comes from rewriting their story which we will get to in Episode 4 of this season.



I don't know if anyone remembers that book Potatoes Not Prozac, I read it in high school, which was like 25 years ago. It was a lot about this, relating the sugar and depression connection and it was focused on serotonin too (hence why you'd eat potatoes as complex carbs release serotonin). It included the same idea about feeding the body in a way that forced it to grow more receptors and become more sensitive to those receptors.

Ok, back to social connection. Let's think about the social connection we lost over COVID. Including the touch that comes from oxytocin. Think about if you've ever had a really good massage, where there was lots of touch, and feeling so relaxed. You probably aren't craving something super junky after it.

High-sugar and High-fat foods are often the solution to the problem of lack of social connection because they initially fill in the gap of pleasure chemicals yet their satisfaction yields over time.

One client was telling me as she was uncovering stuff in Truce with Food, that she realized she could effortlessly eat a normal portion of pasta if it was part of a larger experience with friends and they were either cooking it all together or out to eat catching up, versus when she was by herself at lunch, eating at her desk.

So TL:DR: we will feel more satisfied from our food when we have other people we feel really safe and seen with around. As we learn to navigate COVID, I really hope you'll make it a priority to safely get back in touch with people, literally. And have a great meal with them. Or maybe mending some fences if necessary and is safe to do so.

This pleasure chemical understanding is important to recognize when it comes to how exercise can make us more satisfied from our food too.

Exercise is our fourth foundational pillar.



And part of that overall relationship to movement can be enhanced when we understand pleasure and stress chemicals and how muscle building makes us more sensitive to insulin and thus more satisfied with our food based on the carbohydrate-insulin model I share above. Again, our bodies require a balance of stress and pleasure chemicals. When it comes to exercise, adrenaline and cortisol (stress chemicals produced when we exercise) lead to serotonin and endorphins. So when you understand this bigger holistic checkbook you need to balance of stress and pleasure chemicals, so many more forms of exercise actually “count”.

And if we have an excess of adrenaline and cortisol, say from overexercising, especially when we are already stressed, we are more likely to seek out pleasure from food to create that balance. Especially because exercise and food have a strongly connected relationship.

Excess exercise will be different for everyone. It depends on how in shape you are. For example, I was super active during my pregnancy and for the first year, walked Eça everywhere. Voted most walked baby of our neighborhood by two different neighbors!

But I had lost my core, lots of muscle from perimenopause especially and cardiac abilities. I had to ease into working out again beyond walking instead of going 1-100 to make sure there wasn't more adrenaline and cortisol or stress on my body than endorphins. And now that I've lost some weight, gained some muscle and am sleeping, I can push myself further. Pushing myself when I was first getting back to the gym was showing up to do something other than walking. I can feel so many more endorphins lately as my energy has returned and it's safe to push myself to a new, different level.

The more we overdo it with exercise, including not leaving enough recovery time or with excess cardio especially (because that produces a lot more adrenaline and cortisol than lifting weights or barre), the more pleasure chemicals we need to balance our checkbook metaphor I'm using.

And then we come to dread exercise because it isn't creating a natural feedback loop movement was designed to do. I remember there was a type of exercise I was doing in Philly



that I would need a nap from. I thought that was good, not that my body was saying, “THAT IS TOO MUCH.”

And again, there’s so much to untangle with only doing exercise to eat more or not gain weight. And, I find understanding how our physiology plays into all of this motivating to make changes.

Just like we need the consistent drip of oxytocin that comes from healthy social relationships, we can get serotonin from something like walking and both serotonin and endorphins from something like HIIT work-outs that don’t produce excess adrenaline and cortisol.

And we can use something like walking or dancing or really anything pleasurable after a stressful experience to help balance our physiology which gives us more physical agility to make healthy choices. It feels like less cravings and more satisfaction from less intense high-fat, high-sugar food because we aren’t looking for as many pleasure chemicals to balance the stress-pleasure chemical checkbook.

We recently switched Eça’s daycare to one we can walk to. I can’t believe the difference in his evenings because we now walk home instead of driving. I often head there feeling tired/stagnant from working/sitting all day and it’s a brisk 10 minute walk there because we’re always running late and it’s a slow 45 minute casual walk home because Eça loves to explore. Go into dinner feeling so much more uplifted and relaxed.

Research shows even a 15 minute walk after a meal can bring insulin levels down, which will make you feel more satisfied from your food. Bringing insulin down by helping ushering glucose into your cells is critical for food satisfaction.

And this is also why strength training is particularly important to incorporate as it builds muscle and makes you more insulin sensitive, meaning your body will hear your food better and be able to absorb it more. When we becoming insulin resistant, from too much inflammation and



certain types of fat in the body, it's like our cells put headphones on and can't hear the food and so it doesn't get absorbed as efficiently or as much into your body. What doesn't get used gets stored as fat. This is part of what the carbohydrate-insulin model showed why excess people gained weight. It wasn't from a certain amount of energy or calories, it was from a certain type of energy, which was a rush of it that comes when our blood sugar isn't regulated.

Also an important note: you can't tell by someone's body shape if they are insulin-resistant or not. Many thin or thinner people are metabolically unsound. So please remember that for understanding if you are at risk or not.

And given I'm basically in menopause based on my recent lab work with my sleep coach, I can tell you that we women tend to lose a lot of lean body mass in perimenopause and are much more insulin sensitive because of the hormonal changes. We are normally more insulin sensitive the week before and during our period and the closer we get from 35-52ish, the typical range of perimenopause, the more insulin sensitive we will be overall from the change in our hormones. So strength training becomes really critical to feeling more satisfied from your food so you feel more insulin-sensitive and to help with our weight and bone health.

So exercise and everyday movement influences how satisfied we feel from food via the mechanisms above. And if you aren't getting enough exercise, you are missing out on serotonin and endorphins which you might find yourself turning to food for that "lift".

The best way I can tell you to gauge that is you should feel energized and "up" after a work-out, not dead and dreading it next time. Often our bodies are making intuitive connections even if we aren't and then we think we're lazy when our bodies are saying, WE NEED A REST!

COVID really changed how most of us work-out. As we move out into the world again, see what worked for you during quarantine, what you missed and perhaps, what makes sense now that



you know more about the body and how exercise influences food satisfaction from this episode.

Ok, a quick RECAP because this episode is LONG!

We often think what is most satisfying is when we are coming from a place of deprivation. The suggestions I have for you today will help you stay in the happy medium or middle. As I say, moderation is the new radical!

Macros: know where you sit on the vegetarian to Med to Paleo spectrum in terms of your macros. Help dramatically with food satisfaction. I have a breakfast experiment.

Alishapiro.com/breakfast-experiment. Also in the show notes.

Sleep: Get 7-9 hours of sleep to keep ghrelin and leptin balanced in the way you want them, to feel a healthy hunger and satisfied from your food.

Relationships: eat great food with great people and stay in touch to fill your pleasure chemical bank so you don't need hyperpalatable foods to light up your dopamine reward centers at meal time or more holistically.

Exercise: move your body in a way that feels good and don't over or under do exercise so you get a nice balance of adrenaline, cortisol and endorphins and serotonin. Think of what exercise and timing is its own reward so you get the serotonin and endorphins.

One thing I didn't focus on is how where we source our food can influence food satisfaction. We will touch on this next episode since this was an important inquiry for myself after I found myself leaving Costco with all these snacks for Eça. They were organic and "healthy" yet processed. And I wondered how I ended up there buying food in a warehouse when I used to love farmer's market shopping and now I barely cook.



I'll share how I got back into cooking more, enough so that Eça still has some Costco snacks and he has more whole foods snacks in the next episode. Megan Telpner will be my guest as her approach to keeping cooking simple and her recipes helped me bridge where I was to where I wanted to go. So stay tuned for that episode in two weeks.

Thanks for joining me here. I appreciate you staying with me on my longer than expected podcasting pause. And remember if you have any questions about the episode, DM me on Instagram at alimshapiro and I'll answer them on my IG live next Wednesday, October 6. We will try a noon time and see how that goes. If you can't join me live, recording will be on my feed!

Have a wonderful week.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

Thank you, health rebels, and visionary story tellers, for tuning in today! If you know someone who would benefit from this episode, please share it with them. Remember we have transcripts of our episodes at alishapiro.com/podcast for your non-audio friends and family.

And if you can, I'd love it if you'd leave a review on Apple podcast. Both actions help us change the cultural narrative around food, weight and our bodies. Thanks for engaging in a different kind of conversation.

....And remember – always - Your Body Truths are Unique, Discoverable, Profound, and *liberating*.

[END]

