

The Art of Falling Apart with Serena Ryder

– Insatiable Season 12, Episode 5

[INTRODUCTION]

[00:00:09] AS: Went vegetarian, then paleo. You stopped restricting. You're trying to love yourself more, but nothing seems to be working fully, and you might 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 these stories we have, they 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 bio hack. 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 in 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 behavioral change science and true whole health.

But 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]

[00:02:44] AS: Hey, everybody. Welcome to season 12 episode 5, The Art of Falling Apart with Serena Ryder. Before I tell you a little bit about Serena in our episode today, I want to let a couple of things. One, is I'm dropping this around the holidays. Serena and I talk a lot about the soul satisfaction. She's just a soulful person. I think, the conversation was very soulful. I hope this sets you up for a really, really soulful holiday season. We've all been through a lot. I know, I personally feel like I am coming out of the two-year underworld descent that motherhood brought on, as well as menopause.

I'm starting to feel a lot of lightness. I know not everyone is in that place. I know a lot of us are going to be with their families for the first time in a while, or resume some normal rituals. That's great. There's also a lot of opportunity for change, if that's what's necessary. I hope this episode will help you with that. Also, Serena is going to sing a little bit, because we – well, at least I definitely agreed that I'm not the person to discuss how her lyrics often apply to the lessons that she's talking about. Really great treat on that today.

Then lastly, I just want to let you know about two workshops coming up. Serena and I today, we're going to talk about how the Truce with Food story work, fundamentally changed her relationship with food after decades. If you're interested in that transformation for yourself, and working with me and you think 2022 is your year to do that, Truce with Food will be open for registration on December 6th, and there is a great early bird special this year, from

December 6th through December 31st. If you're American and have an FSA or HSA account, chances are you can apply the money you have from 2021, any leftover, or what's left, or even in 2020 towards Truce with Food. I want to let you know that.

I'm going to be offering a free two-part masterclass series on Truce with Food, December 1st and December 8th at 12 pm Eastern Standard Time. You can sign up at alishapiro.com/masterclass. It'll be a mix of coaching and teaching. I don't think a lot of us need a lot more content at this point in the game, but we do need a lot of integration and reflection and to center ourselves. I'm hoping that these workshops will do that.

All right, on to today's episode with Serena. Before we get to it, I just want to give you a little bit of background about her. Serena Ryder is a Toronto-based vocal powerhouse, and she's a platinum selling artist adored by fans, peers and critics alike, in part, due to her raw and earnest songwriting and beautifully, electric, live performances.

She has received numerous accolades, including the prestigious Canada's Walk of Fame, Allen Slate Music Impact Honor, six Juno Awards, a Much Music Video Award for Best Rock Video, and a Canadian screen award for achievement in music, ongoing – music original song. And advocate for mental wellness, Serena has also been awarded the Margaret Trudeau Mental Health Advocacy Award. She is also an amazing humanitarian. She's an inspiration, and she's one of my dear friends. I hope that you get as much out of our conversation today, as I hope you are for this season. I'm sending you all the light and the necessary darkness in this holiday season, as we talk about what that means in today's episode with Serena. Enjoy.

[INTERVIEW]

[00:06:16] AS: Welcome to the pod, Serena.

[00:06:19] SR: Ali Shapiro.



[00:06:22] AS: You're already singing. Awesome.

[00:06:26] SR: [Inaudible 00:06:26] for you.

[00:06:27] AS: Yeah. We did an Instagram Live back in March, and it was super fun. I wanted to have you on the podcast for multiple reasons. One is, you can just speak to things on such a soul level. This season is about satiation. I wanted to do one on the soul level. I was like, "I have to bring Serena on." I feel like, your new album, well, it's still new. Falling apart, speaks to so much of what soul satisfaction really is. All the things came aligned, and we're going to talk about that today.

[00:07:00] SR: I'm so excited.

[00:07:01] AS: Before we get started, what does satiation mean to you?

[00:07:05] SR: Satiation is a hard word to say, first. Let's say that. Satiation. Say she ate all of the pizza, would she be satiated? That's a whole one. For me, it means peace. What that peacefulness that being in a place of maybe not perfection, but not wanting anything to change. Be really grateful for the process and where you're at, where you're at, wherever that is. That's what satiation means to me.

[00:07:46] AS: I love that, too. Because especially as an artist, that creative tension is probably what drives you crazy, but it's also what you love.

[00:07:53] SR: 100%. That whole idea of not wanting more, but when you receive more, being able to accept it, if it's good for you, that's another line, right? Where it's like, satiated would be good with not having more. You can always make space not being too full to not accept it.

[00:08:15] SR: I like that, especially as a total tangent. I was just reading somewhere that someone was saying, to receive is to be open to life. I wish, I could remember. It wasn't a direct quote. It was a concept. I was like, "Oh, that's so vulnerable." Am I going to get enough? Am I getting it too much? What will I be received, versus, it's so much easier to give, because you're the one in control, or receiving is –

[00:08:42] SR: Yeah, it's true. It's like the mystery, right? The mystery of life, and being able to be okay with it, whatever comes your way. I do think receiving is a lot harder than people think. Because in our society, we're told that the most amazing thing you can possibly do is give, give, give and be selfless and it's like, being selfless. I don't know.

[00:09:09] AS: Yeah. That's the patriarchy's definition for women, right?

[00:09:12] SR: Exactly. Be selfless. It's like, well, there's none of me. What am I supposed to give?

[00:09:17] AS: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Oh, man. Now that's another podcast.

[00:09:23] SR: Yeah, exactly. Then actually rhymed and then get that done.

[00:09:28] AS: Yeah. Well, you can listen to the show.

[00:09:30] SR: Oh, yeah, yeah. It's true.

[00:09:33] AS: I want us to ground us into with a definition of the soul, and that I think is going to be true and pertinent to our discussion today and your story. It comes from Dr. Marion Woodman, who was Canadian, I believe, like yourself. She said, "My soul is the bridge between spirit and body. As such, it's a uniter of opposites. Without soul at center, I would either transcend into spirit, or become meared in matter." What do you think of that?

[00:10:02] SR: Can you read it again?

[00:10:03] AS: Yeah. “My soul is the bridge between spirit and body. As such, as a uniter of opposites. Without soul at center, I would either transcend into spirit, or become meared in matter.”

[00:10:20] SR: Yeah. Well, for me, that's what it is to have the gift of being human. For me, I was talking about this with one of my friends last night, actually. Saying like, “Wow, all of the things that we don't know in this world are our gifts.” I feel like, if you're on either side of the spectrum too much, you don't really have that gift of balance and being able to receive from both ends of the spectrum. I feel like, the soul is the receiver. We're talking about being selfless, or giving versus receiving. It's like, the soul to me is the place where you are able to – it's the receiver in between the two polarities.

Being at center in your soul, it's like, that's satiation. Being right in the middle, right there. Because I feel like, with a lot of our definitions, it's like, we were constantly trying to polarize to make sense of, is it this? Or is it this? Well, maybe being in the center and being balanced and being in the middle in a lot of ways, I grew up thinking, “Oh, that's boring.” I grew up thinking, “Oh, balance and center and the gray area, where black and white meet and become gray.” It's like, well, that's all of the colors. That's both of them together. It's a balance.

It's like, you're able to receive so much more if you're at home in your soul, whatever that means to you. That place, that receiver, your soul is your receiver. It's like, plug into that. I love that. That's a great quote.

[00:12:05] AS: Yeah. Well, it reminds me of holding that we can hold the and, and when we're receiving, we're also giving in a way, right? I think about you giving so much of your art talent to the world, but we're all receiving it, but you're also receiving the meaning from developing your

talent and skills, because I think, people – people think like, “Oh, it just happens. But I know how hard you work.”

[00:12:32] SR: I love that idea. When we're giving, that we're receiving at the same time, because – When we're receiving, we're giving. Because when it's actually real giving, like that writing of the helping, fixing, serving that you sent to me that is so life-changing and everyone needs to read that if they haven't, helping, fixing, serving if they just Google it, but where it's being of service is the same thing as really giving and really receiving, because it is cyclical and life is cyclical. Even the science of life is cyclical. The seasons, all of those things. It's like, when you are giving away, you are receiving because it's coming out of you. If you're not receiving while you're giving, you're depleting and you're essentially dying, a part of you. It's pretty amazing when you actually give, how much really does come back to you?

[00:13:32] AS: Yeah. If you're giving, I think from a place that is genuinely of your center, instead of – Because one of the things I wanted to talk to you about is in your new album is, you were out of balance. That was part of your healing was coming back to that. I thought that you echo Dr. Woodman's quote in one of your song better now, and I want you to sing it. It says, “You can't chase the dark.” You're going to sing. We made an agreement that I'm not the one to repeat those lyrics.

[00:14:07] SR: You can't chase the darkness with a bite by light. Because the sunshine burns you up when you get too high. You can't cure loneliness with company. If you really knew yourself, you'd never get lonely.

[00:14:29] AS: Oh, my God. I want to cry. I'm so emotionally – Those lyrics to me is that is what that's about. So many of us are trying to balance through extremes, instead of being in that center of like, when you said, you can't be lonely if you really know yourself, right?

[00:14:49] SR: Yeah, it's very true.

[00:14:50] AS: Yeah. Will you tell everyone what inspired this album and how you were out of balance?

[00:14:57] SR: Mm-hmm. This album actually started out not as an album. It started out as a keynote speech called The Art of Falling Apart, that I wrote with a dear friend of mine. She helped me write it. She followed me around for three days, and just wrote down everything that I was saying. Her name's Casey Baker. She has this thing called Woman's, which is helping women to find their voices and be able to tell their stories. It's quite amazing work that she does. I was terrified of public speaking, actually. That's why I asked her if she would help me just really take all of my thoughts and just put them all down. Because I can speak. I can just tell a story. I can have a conversation. When it comes to thinking about making something formal, it terrifies me.

It's like, make a keynote speech. Put it into a package. Anyways, I created this keynote speech called The Art of Falling Apart. It chronicles a part of my journey, my mental wellness journey, which has been since birth, like everybody's. A lot of it for me was based on the hardest parts and the breakdowns, and the breakthroughs happened. The breakdowns happened, because I was trying to find balance through extremes, for sure, where it's like, okay, so I'm all the way over here, and I want to – I'm going to go all the way over here, in order to try and find balance.

Where it doesn't really work that way. Where it's like, if you're all the way over here, the balance is actually just right here. Moving it all the way over here, it's going to pull you back, where for me, I was touring a lot, and on the road, and I'm a musician that's been touring for 20 years. I've signed to many different major record label deals and traveling around the world. I mean, if that's not a life of extremes, I don't know what is. I have always been a really, really sensitive human since I was young.

I remember when I first started holding in my tears, I used to cry so much. I started holding in my tears when I was maybe around 10. 9, 10, 11. That's also when I started disordered eating

patterns. Because I wasn't allowing my emotions to come through, I had to find something to push them down. Food, TV. Then once I was in my early teens, like 15, 16, it was alcohol, drugs. That just kept shifting my energy from one spectrum to the other. I was always on one end of the spectrum. I went through so many, so many hard times, and went to lots of different –

I had, I don't know, 16 or 17 different therapists and trying to figure out what was wrong with me, and how I could fix myself and all of these things, where it was really about allowing myself to really fall apart that I was able to transform. This is a very tiny little piece of my story, right? I'll be 39 in December. It's like, that's – I feel like, I've lived a lot of different lifetimes. The one thing, like truth is always the truth. The truth is always the truth.

You can say it in a lot of different ways, but it's always very simple. When it comes to allowing yourself to find balance, and have transformation, falling apart is such a huge and important and integral part of it, because that's how transformation happens. I tell that story of the butterfly, where it's like, butterfly has to fall apart inside of its cocoon in order to become a butterfly. It has to change from that caterpillar. It's like, you can't stop that and you can't help that and there's all these people in your life that want to help that, because they see you struggling and they see you. They love you and they want you to be okay, but what is okay?

What if falling apart and coming on down. I was hospitalized. I was on many different kinds of medication. My mental wellness was all over the spectrum. I found that when I just stopped and just allowed myself to naturally fall apart and feel safe enough, or in a safe enough container to do that, my life has just gotten so much more nourishing. Now, I see the ends of the spectrum and the intense emotions and the falling apart and the whatever you want to put names on if you want to pathologize it, like depression, anxiety symptoms of what this, this, this and this and this different mental health issue. It's like, those are messages from inside that are telling you things about yourself that need to be allowed to be there.

[00:20:24] AS: Yeah. Well, I think about the big story that we worked on together was like, if I'm wrong, I have to fix it. It's in me. You remember, when you were saying it started with food, do you remember sharing with me how you went to one of the corner stores, and the cashier was like, "You're always crying." You were going to buy ice cream, because you were so upset, and he was like, "You're always crying." I think about, if you would have been allowed to fall apart from a 10-year-old perspective and really be safe in that, and there are reasons that you couldn't, that were brilliant at the time to not fall apart and that. I think about how we get it from all angles, about how falling apart. It starts with that cashier person, who is just like, "You're always crying." As if that's a bad thing.

[00:21:12] SR: A bad thing. Yeah. That's the thing, where it's like, so much of our natural, innate wisdom and medicine, that naturally is happening inside of us. That's there for a reason. It's like, once we start shutting down that innate wisdom, and we do it at such a young age, and then we – the stories that we end up telling ourselves, our narrative of this is the person I am, this is the kind of things that I do.

You start doing them for certain reasons when you're young. Then you almost – you tell yourself so many stories throughout your life that you forget how those pieces connected, and got you where you are. There's a part of you that never really grows up. Because that innate wisdom that you had, is the same healing and the same, whatever you need to be doing now. You need to be doing that, and the same thing you were doing then, which is the crying for me, that's a huge part of it.

I learned through Kelly Brogan about tears and how there's healing hormones in tears. When you allow those to release, you're actually – it's more powerful than any antidepressant, or any line of blow, or any bottle of wine, or any relationship. It's more healing than anything, and it's something that you naturally do. Your body naturally does it. I feel like, it's really about getting back to your natural state. The nature of you.

[00:22:58] AS: Yeah. I'm also thinking about how tears are a parasympathetic release. When we're in our stories, a lot of us go into freeze, and just the feeling of immobilization. If we could cry, that would help mobilize us. It's happening on a physiological level and psychological. It's compounded. I loved how you said that. If we could just go back to what we originally needed to do and almost complete that cycle and learn that skill.

[00:23:28] SR: 100%. If you think about water, too. You think about bodies of water in nature, and you think about how does that water keep fresh and keep –

[00:23:37] AS: I like that.

[00:23:39] SR: It moves. It moves. Any stagnant pool of water becomes unhealthy, because every medicine can turn to poison. Every medicine can turn to poison. When you cry, you have to really think about it as like, that's your river. That's your cleansing. That's how you're giving and receiving as well.

[00:24:03] AS: Oh, my God. I just got chills.

[00:24:06] SR: I'm just trying it back into the beginning.

[00:24:08] AS: I love order and structure. Damn, I love it. Well, and one thing that also occurred to me that you were saying about it being the caterpillar and the butterfly, and you being checked into the mental hospital. You had a breakdown. It wasn't a mental hospital. You ended up in the hospital.

[00:24:24] SR: It was a mental hospital for sure.

[00:24:27] AS: Oh, okay. I don't know how it works in Canada, but it makes me think about how the caterpillar doesn't –

[00:24:33] SR: Mental health facility, like that.

[00:24:37] AS: On America, the mental health facility is sometimes non-existent. I'm thinking about how the butterfly, or the caterpillar doesn't know that it's breaking down. I think, it's a death. It is a death in a way. It's interesting, because I'm raising a son right now and I'm reading these books that are the purpose of childhood is not to prepare kids for adulthood. It's to be a child. When they develop that social and emotional intelligence, and seek sense of safety, they can be then an effective adult.

It makes me think about you were having this to the outside world, and probably to yourself at the time, there was this death that was happening, but it was looking at as a breakdown, but it was the death of the way of the world that you knew it at that time. Because to your point, you have been trying all these other self-medicating things. I think, that's important for anyone who's in the eye of the storm right now. You're not going into it being like, "Oh, this is my metamorphosis." It feels like a crisis.

[00:25:38] SR: Yeah. There's no way that you can – I was definitely not aware of it at the time. I feel like, the first time that it happens in a really, really big way, there's no way to be aware. Because when you are present in that moment, in order for a transformation to happen, and real death to happen, for a new life to happen, that you can't know. It's like, "Oh, this is going to be over soon. It's fine." It's like, you need that sense, but it's terrifying. In the middle of it, it's terrifying.

There's nothing anyone can say, or do to explain to you what your transformative path is going to be. You're the only person that has that innate knowing, but also in not consciously knowing it. That is what's going to help you really fall apart, so that you can transform. That whole idea of when I was going through it, all I wanted was hope and someone to show me that it was going to be okay in the light. If I would have had someone like that, or some sense of hope, I wouldn't have had that death that I needed to, wouldn't it?

[00:26:59] AS: Yeah. Well, and it gets the obstacle is the path, right? If we're talking about finding your center, again, it's like, you have to be the one to discover it. I loved how you said, it's your own innate wisdom. No one else has the acorn becomes the oak tree. Someone can't tell it how to be an oak tree. Or someone can't tell the caterpillar how to be a butterfly. It's there and it's actually about removing the obstacles that are in the way, not getting more things, or ideas. It's removing obstacles.

[00:27:28] SR: Yeah. It's like, you can tell a caterpillar, "Hey, you're going to be a butterfly one day." Actually, that would be a lie. Because the caterpillar is going to not be a caterpillar anymore. It's not about it consciously knowing a part of the journey. It's like, the butterfly is going to be a butterfly. The caterpillar is going to be a caterpillar.

[00:27:48] AS: Yeah. Yeah, and it's almost like you said, I've had so many lifetimes. I think, we can all feel that way. Even we know biologically, all our cells turn over every seven years. We're technically not the same person.

[00:28:01] SR: Yeah.

[MESSAGE]

[00:28:04] AS: Hey. It's Ali here, taking a brief break from our podcast episode, to let you know about a free two-part workshop series, which is the Truce with Food Masterclass, coming up on December 1st and 8th this year from 12 to 1:30 pm, Eastern Standard Time. The workshop is I want to want to be healthy. It's about how to end the care, but not care eating cycle. If healthy eating is important to you, but you feel you have little motivation to cook, or make healthy choices, if you want to eat better, and also want to watch Netflix with a Costco-sized bag of kettle corn on the couch, if the last couple of COVID years showed you the importance of being in good shape, yet it worsened your eating habits, this workshop is for you.

Because to the untrained eye, these competing desires are a willpower and discipline problem. When you understand the root causes of battling food, you can unlock powerful energy and motivation to eat well, and like it. I'm going to show you how in this workshop.

In the first workshop, we'll get to the root causes of our food battle, and you'll walk away with a clear understanding of why nothing else you've tried has worked long-term. A complete mindset shift around the real and true necessary work for food freedom, and the very first step to having a truce with food.

Then our second workshop, I'm going to show you how to have a truce with food. You'll learn how to stop using food for emotional safety, the three physical stress reactions that need to be honored, so we can respond versus react with old patterns in our stories. The three psychological stress reactions that distort the degree of safety we perceive and make our stories come true. The story revision tools and practices to feel more in control of our lives and interrupt the food self-sabotage cycle in that process.

You'll walk away from that workshop with actionable tools to begin through you, write your story to have a truce with food. No willpower or white-knuckling required. You can sign up for that at alishapiro.com/masterclass. This is also a free sneak peek at my Truce with Food Program, which is open for registration from December 6th through December 31st. We begin in January. There'll be lots of teaching and coaching. It's going to be a mix of both. You're going to get tremendous value, whether you decide to continue on or not. I hope you'll make it. We'd love to see as many of you there. Now, back to our episode.

[INTERVIEW CONTINUED]

[00:30:41] AS: You were in the mental institution, which was your biggest fear. How did you decide to, if you had always had disordered eating, how did you decide to then use food to help with your mental health journey? What did that look like?

[00:30:56] SR: Well, for me, my biggest fear since I was a child was losing my mind. Biggest fear since I was a child. I used food as my medication. From the time I was very young, like 9, 10, 11 is when I started. I knew that was the medicine that turned to poison was food for me. I kept it with me my whole life. I started listening to your podcast, through an interview with Dr. Kelly Brogan, who really helped me on my mental wellness journey. Because she was saying all of the same things that I believed about mental wellness, where it was like, I always have believed it's so important to fall apart in order to transform. That is a huge part of what she does.

I just kept listening to you. I was like, "I got to work with this woman." I really connected. You know, even when you hear the sound of someone's voice, you're just like, "Oh, yeah. That's my people." Then I reached out to you on your site, because I had – There was so many things that I had worked on with healing, like I said. I'd been in therapy, since I was 17. I've had 16, 17 different therapists. I've always really wanted to find peace within myself, and there was a missing piece, which was – Missing piece of the cake was the cake, dealing with eating. Because also, just so many ups and downs in my life emotionally, but also, physically.

I've gone up and down and weighed 80 pounds constantly, up and down years and years and years. It was a pattern. It was something that was really deeply ingrained in me. It wasn't about the food at all. Not one bit. I made it about the food for so long, where it's like, "If I just was this." It was the whole thing of the yo-yo of going like, "Okay, I'm at this end of the spectrum, I'll go way onto this other side of the spectrum to find balance." I was just really sick of it.

When I found you, and I found the Truce with Food, I was like "Okay, this is huge." Then when we started working together, I was like, "Oh, it isn't about the food. It's about where I – my very first stories of who I believed I was in the world." That first initial sessions that we did, where it was like, well, what's your story? What's your actual belief? For me, it was like, if it's broken, I need to fix it. If I don't fix it, then I'm wrong. Then I'm bad.

Being in that position consistently, it's exhausting. So exhausting and it perpetuates itself. All these stories perpetuate themselves. It translates. It's like, how I love this and I think, one of my teachers who just recently passed away, Guru Jagat said, "How you do one thing is how you do everything." You can find your healing. Your issues are your healing. Your issues are your opportunity for healing. They're not the things you need to get rid. They're the things that you need to discover, and take off the layers off, and see what wisdom is inside of those for you. That is what your healing is.

Because for me, and I say this all the time, it's like, your medicine turns to poison. When your medicine turns to poison, it's your poison that has your medicine in it. That's where I came to you and have found – I was telling you earlier, like we were chatting before, it's like, I, for the first time in my life, I am so at peace. With my relationship with food, I have had a truce with food. I completely have. I never thought that I would ever.

I thought, because also, food is the hardest thing, I feel like, in a lot of ways to have a truce with, because it's such a complex relationship. We have to eat it. It's also, not dangerous, and not edgy. People, where it's like, "Oh, I have a food addiction." It's just like, "Ooh, just stop then." I've like, "Oh, I have a heroin addiction." Or, "Oh, I have a sex addiction." It's just like, "Oh, that's so intense. Are you okay?" It's like, "Oh, I have a food addiction." I think, it's one of the hardest ones to deal with, because it's always going to be there.

[00:36:18] AS: On a symbolic level, it's about attachment. We need to attach in the world, right?

[00:36:23] SR: We do. We need to.

[00:36:25] AS: In your story of like, I have to fix it, you were detaching from so many of your needs. There was moments when you were trying to fix and rescue other things and people and

that stuff. It's like, you can't keep doing that. That's why it's also hard, because we need each other and we need meaning, like all the things.

One of the things that struck me is you were saying, our medicine can also turn to poison. I think, what a lot of people will relate to who listen to this podcast is, you had used food tremendously well in your mental health journey. When you came to me, I don't know if you remember, the real affliction the way that I saw it was the binary – the rigidity of you're like, “I get up and meditate. I'm in bed by this time. I know, I have to eat this way.” Because you also have endometriosis.

I think, your story is so inspiring because it's complex. It's like, it wasn't just about, I don't want to turn to food anymore. It's like, I need this for my mental health. I also have this really debilitating condition on top of all of it. That adds pressure to “be good.” I don't even know if you remember when we first started working together, even your self-care routine was so stressful in some ways, because there felt like, there was so much riding on it, which there is. To me, the real issue that so many people come to me is getting out of that binary, good and bad and starting to see in the academic framework, it's called, from going to the socialized mind, where we learn from other authorities to becoming our own inner authority based on lived experience and our own values.

You in our work together, not only do we work on your story, but you also were really willing to practice not being so rigid, which we're also told to do; with food, our mental health. So many people come to me after they can't keep up the functional medicine, like that healing protocols, or whatever. The obstacle, or the challenge is really the rigidity of that. Can you speak to a little bit about how from your perspective, like I knew what was happening to you developmentally?

[00:38:33] SR: Yeah. From my perspective, when I had a psychotic episode, and I had basically been in my worst fear, and my worst fear came true. I took all that I had inside of me every single morsel of my being, and I put it towards getting better and fixing myself in a different

way than I had done it before. Which was really based on, like when I had found Kelly Brogan's protocol, and a certain way to eat gluten, dairy, sugar-free.

It also helped me see that the falling apart was actually a really good thing. There was that balance. It's funny, because there was this rigidity. It came to how to eat and what to do. Then, there was this balance, though, because there's so many layers to healing, and so many different things of mental, physical, spiritual, emotional, and those are all different things. Emotionally, mentally, spiritually. I had come to a place where, "Oh, it's okay to not be okay. It's okay to fall apart. It's okay to feel these things." There was a balance there.

Then, I really felt like, in order to be balanced and okay, physically, I had to stick to this protocol. Actually, it gave me the opportunity. It's only a 40-day protocol that it was, but I ended up doing it for a year.

[00:40:15] AS: You over-functioned.

[00:40:16] SR: I over-functioned.

[00:40:18] AS: That's part of the noble way that you protected you and your soul. You're like, "I'm an old soul. I can do this." I don't know if you remember, we talked about that.

[00:40:25] SR: Oh, yeah. Sure, sure. Since then too, the thing that I've learned about being an old soul, is actually means that you have had a traumatized childhood, and you didn't actually get to be a child long enough. That's what an old soul is. When you meet someone, it's like, yeah. Where it's like, "Wow, you're so mature. You're so, wow." Well, it's because you fucking had to be. You had to be, to deal with what was going on in your life.

I feel like, at this point in my life, I feel so grateful knowing that too, because it's like, I get to be a kid again. Like you were saying before, it's like, when you're a child, you're not a child to

prepare to be an adult. You're a child to be a child. That child never goes away, though. That's always inside of us.

[00:41:27] AS: That's the good news.

[00:41:29] SR: That's the good news. That's the good news. The child, children have an innate wisdom and innate balance to the mind. It's like, when they feel an emotion, they cry. It comes out. When they're angry, they scream. It comes out. Five minutes later, it's gone. Why? Because they let it out. It's not still there. They're not holding on to all this shit.

[00:41:52] AS: Yeah. An important part of that, especially because [inaudible 00:41:52]. In a lot of emotional eating, or that therapy, or they say like, "Oh, wait 90 seconds, and the emotion will pass." If we can do that, as kids, it does. We're telling Esa, we're setting limits all the time. He melts down. Then 90 seconds later, he's like, "Ha, ha, ha, ha." You're like – As adults, what happens is if we attach a story to that, that feeling lasts, and it's often mixed with shame. That's why we have to look at the story level.

[00:42:27] SR: 100%.

[00:42:29] AS: Because that feeling, that emotion, to your point, you said it earlier. I say it as self-fulfilling prophecy, but it ends up becoming what we most fear, because it's now a story about us, rather than, "Oh, I wasn't allowed to feel," and it makes sense why I wasn't. I took that on as my problem, instead of the context of your childhood, I guess. When we're developing as children, we don't actually have that capacity to have that perspective, usually. We also can't blame ourselves for having it. It's just how we develop.

I love that you talked about what you realize also is now, because so much of rewriting our stories is expanding the definition of in this of our identities. In your case, it's old soul. It's like, okay, because I had to grow up too quickly. I'm also going to be an old soul that has had the

benefit of being an old soul is all the wisdom. I'm going to be wise and tend to my inner child and get to be good a kid and circle back.

[00:43:33] SR: Yeah. Even that story of my food when I first started working with you, that's a part of the long story that I had been telling myself. When you when I first started working with you, without an awareness of the initial beginning of my story of the – if something's wrong, I need to fix it. If I don't fix it, then I'm wrong, and I'm bad. You almost need to trust yourself, so much. Like people ask me what I think mental health is, mental wellnesses. It means that I trust myself. That's what that means. Even in this journey, and when I first started working with you, my intensity about sticking to this certain way of eating, which was really intense and stressful, but it was also a knowing that I knew I needed to do that. It was the pendulum needed to swing the very, very opposite side.

It's like, if you have this much, but if something sways to the other side, you have this force behind you. You almost have to let that pendulum swing to the other side. Then, it'll slowly stop and go to the middle, where it needs to be. It's like, there's a part of it where it's like, that long story that you end up telling yourself, that could have been 90 seconds when you're a kid can turn into 90 years.

[00:45:00] AS: Damn, that's a quote.

[00:45:02] SR: Right? It can. I feel that part of just being very, very rigid with myself was almost the beginning of a new story for me, where I had pulled myself here, and I pulled myself here, and on the very, very other side of the spectrum with food, and then it's that letting go where it's been now, I'm seeing it, like it's really close to this area. I really like this area, and it's taken me since I was 13-years-old, 12-years-old. I'll be 39 soon. It's like, stick to me that long. My medicine was in my poison. I wouldn't have found out all of these things about myself, if I didn't have an instrument, or a place that it's put

Because we put all of our issues into certain things, if it's food, if it's a relationship, if it's how we deal with this. All of those things, if there's issues in our lives, there's so much more wisdom in that little nugget than we could possibly imagine.

[00:46:12] AS: Yeah. When also, for people who are listening, they can't see you doing the pendulum. It reminds me of the phrase. The phrase that many of us here and I think can relate to, is what got you here isn't going to get you where you want to go. It's like, that rigidity was necessary for a while to show you what was possible. I think, with soul, soul satiation and everything, and you've said this several times, there's layers.

The more that we can attach into trust, I think the – I always say, the deeper we root, the more we can rise, but it's holding that tension. You needed to be, I think, that rigid for a while. Then what got you there wasn't going to get you to the next level of wellness that you wanted, especially if we were relating to the endometriosis, and to keep that and increase your mental health, because the rigidity can take away from mental health as well.

I also want to just like, that was your path and that's what you needed to do. It's the same with like, I had to be rigid for a while when I was getting over my IBS and depression. Then it was like, okay, this is what I have to work on now is the rigidity, because context, nuance. It's like, "Okay. That's not the medicine anymore. It's turning into the poison."

Can you talk a little bit about some of the stuff that you've found in this new healthy center, because we also – we talked about sometimes what in Truce with Food, we call your noble inner protector, which was your old soul self. Then we had the other inner protector, and I thought was really great about your story, something, I think, a lot of people can relate to is one of the things we worked on was like, "Oh, I'm being gentle with myself by getting Uber Eats and watching Netflix." You realized, that was the other protector telling you that, but it was in relation to the over-functioning. I just want people to see, that's why addressing the all or

nothing, or the good/bad mindset, because in your story, you were so driven to fix that, like you said, it was exhausted.

Then, you had this extreme way of being gentle with yourself, rather than moderate middle of like, what really takes – what really is being gentle with myself, shifted for you. Can you talk a little bit about that? Because I think, a lot of people say that to themselves, because – and they don't realize it's because they're over-functioning. They just think it's because they're weak, or they just want Uber Eats, but it's deeper than that. Can you talk about some of the things that are nourishing your center, I guess, that you found new ways as a result of changing your perspective on serving life, your people, your business, rather than trying to fix and all that stuff?

[00:49:04] SR: Yeah, it was so funny breaking down those the layers of the truths that – the things that you tell yourself that you believe so wholeheartedly to be true, based on patterns and habits where it's like, that being gentle with myself. What does that mean? Is being gentle with yourself actually – Because there's this whole idea of like, “Oh, I'm just going to splurge.” Or, “Oh, I'm just going to – and I'm going to treat myself.” Even that whole idea of treat yourself. Treat yourself what? Treat yourself like shit? That's usually what treat yourself means.

Somebody was like, “I'm going to treat myself,” where it's like, you either buy too much, or you eat too much, or you sleep too much, or you drink too much. It's like, that balance, where it's like, what's actually – What actually do you want? What do you actually – What does your soul want, that place in the middle?” Where is your actual central resource? What do you need?

[00:50:14] AS: Will you sing a little bit of back to myself, with that, I think, exemplifies this little truth, big lie.

[00:50:21] SR: Yeah. Okay. Little truth, big lie, living in the middle of O' high, saying you can heal the sick, when you're just trying to get rich. Take a drug, take a pill, pay a \$1,000 bills. What

you're going to do if it don't work, or the side effects make it worse? When you're living in hell, you'll try anything that helps you. Even if it hurts. Where it's like, when you're living in hell, you'll try anything that helps you even if it hurts. The figuring out what helps you, it's like, even in that in that song, too, where it's like, even green things grow underneath a blanket of snow. I'm at my best, when I'm at my worst. I've got my hands down in the dirt.

In the pressure and the noise, I can hear a tiny voice trying to do its best to guide me to a future that I can't see yet. That is to me, it's being in that place of patience, right? Just being able to sit and know, in those moments where you feel you need to treat yourself, or to be gentle with yourself actually doing that, taking that space. You were even saying that 90 seconds of – I actually don't even need to do that anymore, which is so cool. I remember in that process, when I was coming out of disordered eating patterns and things, up until a year ago, and I've been doing this work now for a couple years with you. Whoo!

[00:52:06] AS: Woohoo! We barely even meet anymore.

[00:52:09] SR: I know.

[00:52:10] AS: Except, just for fun.

[00:52:11] SR: Exactly. Just to hang out and catch up, because [inaudible 00:52:13]. Yeah. It's like, taking that 90 seconds and being like, "Oh, do I need a little dance? Do I need to maybe just turn on a song and move for a second?" Then a lot of the times where it's like, you're feeling that loneliness in that spot that just needs to be filled up. A lot of the time, that's what it is. It's like, the sadness, and this loneliness. It's this pain, because it's like, when we're a child, a lot of disordered eating comes from abuse and different things too, right? Where it's like, some people just didn't have what they needed.

They go to the food, and it's so important just to for those 90 seconds be like, "Okay." When I would turn on a song, and just start moving, and sometimes I would even start crying while I was dancing, because things can get moved around in your body. Your body has sense memory from way, way, way back. Things need to move around, and that river needs to flow. Moving, having a bath, having a cry, and then see, what do you want to eat after that?

[00:53:32] AS: What are the real unmet needs there?

[00:53:34] SR: What are the real – Yeah. Are you even hungry anymore?

[00:53:40] AS: Yeah. Yeah. One of the things I want to talk about is, so yeah, you feel at peace with food. You haven't binged in probably –

[00:53:51] SR: Over a year. Over a year and a bit, at all. I haven't binged, not to say I haven't eaten junk food. Fully, I actually have found a place where it's like, "Oh, I feel like eating pizza."

[00:54:06] AS: And I don't need to fix it. It's not wrong.

[00:54:08] SR: I don't need to fix it and it's not wrong. I'll order a personal pizza. That's a normal size for a meal, and a dessert and a side of fries and a drink. Maybe not even eat it all, and go like, "Okay, cool," and not feel complete crap.

[00:54:28] AS: Your mental health is better than ever. I think, that's the important part is that, again, you needed to be rigid for a while to see what was possible. Then, start to expand the definition, including how we relate to our food and in that.

[00:54:43] SR: Yeah, and for two years, my weight was completely stabilized. It was stable at a weight that was very high for my body.

[00:54:51] AS: Remember, when you were a little down about that, I was like, but you're not gaining and your body is getting this signal of safety that were through the pendulums. We're not doing that anymore.

[00:55:01] SR: Yeah. I was above 200 pounds for two years. 215 pounds or something. I remember being completely the same weight for a year and a half. I did feel a sense of safety about that, because it was like, my body felt safe and felt like, it didn't have to go from one side to the other, to the other. Then just recently, has been a time where I've actually been losing weight. Because I've been working with a geneticist to heal my endometriosis, which has been something that I've had since I was 13-years-old, and really severe, debilitating pain in my life every month for the last 26 years.

Anyone that knows about endometriosis knows that it's one of the most under-diagnosed things, because it's not been studied. Women have it. It's women's bodies that have not been studied. It's a lot more women have it than then they even realize. It took me 17 years to get a diagnosis.

[00:56:15] AS: I just had another client who shared with our community, her group, that she had been in debilitating pain. Her story was like, “You're weak. You can't handle this.” She finally had a doctor who was willing to do the diagnosis, like the exploration of –

[00:56:33] SR: A laparoscopy. Yeah.

[00:56:34] AS: Yeah. It came back. It was just – I mean, it's chilling to get the diagnosis. She's like, “Finally, a name for this.” It wasn't me. I told myself so long that I was the weak one, that I couldn't tolerate a lot. When it's like, no, you have a condition that needs support.

[00:56:53] SR: Yeah, 100%.

[00:56:55] AS: You're right in that. I want to talk about that a little bit, because we were chatting, and that's when we're like, "Let's just start the interview," because we were talking about weight loss. Both of us have been losing weight. I've been losing my pregnancy weight very slowly. Again, similar to you, I'm like, but my body needs to feel safe in that. I'm cool with that, because I know that that's a sustainable solution. We were talking about how nuanced weight loss can be. Because the Truce with Food work set you up to be able to actually implement some of the restrictions that the geneticist wants you to do.

Also, weight doesn't always influence health. In your case, your geneticist was helping you connect that the extra fat was producing extra estrogen, which was then escalating the pain. This is a very nuanced, sensitive topic, because I think the pendulum has swung from us being fatphobic, and having fat biases about people's health to the other extreme, where I'm so glad we have health at every size. I'm so glad that we can start to parse away that health and weight aren't always connected.

Yet, I operate in the space of like, I'm not sure. Sometimes it does. Your story is an example of that. Will you share with people that interplay of endometriosis, the food restriction, but it doesn't feel like restriction in the geneticist, and the weight loss has happened. It just help all of that. I want you to explain it. Not me, because it's your story.

[00:58:21] SR: Yeah, for sure. Well, it's the first time in my life, where my weight is actually directly connected to my health.

[00:58:31] AS: Wow.

[00:58:32] SR: Yeah. This is the first time in my life where I've realized, for me personally, my health is directly connected with my weight via my endometriosis, and finding out that extra estrogen is held when you have extra fat on your body. When I was working with my geneticist, and we were talking, I was like, is that why when I was thin, was the only time that I didn't

experience debilitating pain from my endometriosis? Debilitating pain, I mean, everybody, I turn green and puke and get sick for 10 to 16 hours straight. Have to go to the emergency often, because the people that are with me are so concerned, because it really sounds and looks like I'm going to die, every month.

There was just one period of time in my life where I was thinner for a few years and I had no pain. But I didn't put two and two together. This is not the case with everybody with endometriosis. There are a lot of people who are thinner with endometriosis that have really, really severe, intense pain. I think, it's both when you're under and when you're over, there's a balance to find for yeah, for endometriosis.

Yeah. I started working with her. At this point, it's like, I'm doing intermittent fasting, where I skip breakfast. I eat lunch and dinner. I'm just doing it until I get to a point, my pain is getting less and less and less and less. The last four months, my pain has been maybe at a three, or a four max, other than last month where it was a really stressful month. That has not happened to me. Not having severe, severe pain. I'm seeing the results in a way that's completely changing and shifting my life as well.

It shifted my idea of, and the reason for losing weight is completely different now. I feel so grateful that I was able to have a truce with food, before I was M, doing this with my geneticist, and doing a little bit of intermittent fasting, until I get to a place where the pain is less. Then, I'm just going to eat three meals a day. It's not like, I'm going to do this for the rest of my life. It feels really good to be in that place, because I don't have this, "Oh, my God. I have to do this, and I can't. I can't."

It's like, I still have this truce with food, where it's like, I will eat what I want to eat. If I really wanted to have a meal, if I really wanted breakfast, I'll have breakfast. It's like, I'm really seeing the results in such a deep, profound way with my health, that it's inspiring me to stick to it and it's not even an issue.

[01:01:35] AS: I just love that. Because part of also, when people go from the socialized mind to self-authoring with their stories, is we step back in and really define the values that we have. In your case, it's like, the value of weight has gotten transformed into the value of health. Weight is part of that. The more meaningful thing is the pain that's going down.

[01:02:03] AS: Yes. Exactly.

[01:02:06] AS: That doesn't just happen with a thinking exercise. You actually have to do all the feeling, the connection, and the healing in the process. I think, that's just a perfect example. Because the episode before this was talking about how we can – we have to redefine our values and our stories. It doesn't just happen, because you decided, you have to actually have a felt sense. Because how we know something is both our thinking and how we're feeling, or perceiving it.

Your story is a great example. That's also what happened to me, as I went from this value of weight loss and health are connected to totally unlearning that. Then in the process, really deeply valuing my health. Then, the weight loss was a side effect of that. It's a nuanced way of looking at it. I've seen people who are in the anti-diet culture being like, anyone who says weight loss is a side effect, that's just diet culture. I'm like, "I don't agree with that."

[01:03:00] SR: Yeah. We're all so different. We all have different bodies, and different histories. It all affects everything. It is. It's so nuanced. I feel like, these days, people need to just start speaking from their own experience, about their own selves, and stop trying to give advice, because it's – and even me saying that, it's like, me telling people what to do. It's like, that's what –

[01:03:32] AS: You got that. So meta.

[01:03:35] SR: That's what I've learned myself. It's like, giving advice is not helpful.

[01:03:44] AS: Yeah. In the self-authoring space, we can listen to experts, but we don't think of it as the answer. You're taking what each of us is offering you and you're learning how to integrate it. Your ability to handle more complexity is increasing, which is part of what we need to do developmentally. It's like, Ali doesn't have the answer. Dr. Brogan doesn't have the answer. My geneticist doesn't have the answer. It's all these parts that come together, and I can figure out when to integrate them and how to integrate them.

[01:04:15] SR: Yeah, and what is true for me. Because it's like, we are all connected 100%. We have so much that is the same. So much. We have so much that is different as well. I think, that's just really key and really important. Because there's all this jargon and talk about the polarities of life, where it's like, the spiritual bypassing, or the collective consciousness, where we're all one and we're all the same. Then there's like, no, there's so many nuanced differences between everyone and where everybody comes from and every different culture and every different experience that needs to be placed, and have space to be different, and be in different spots and be recognized and celebrated for the differences.

[01:05:10] AS: That's symbolic of the soul. Because I always say, spirit is about how we're all one and we transcend. The soul is those root chakras. Third, it's how am I unique? How do I attach? The soul loves pleasure, attachment, security, routine, ritual.

[01:05:26] SR: We're human. That's the thing. It's like, we're here for a reason. We're in a human body for a reason. We're in a human body to be human, and have that human experience. Trying to say that we're all one and all the same, that's not human. It's beautiful to have these differences. I'm glad that you pointed that out. I agree, where it's like, I take different things from different people and different wisdoms and things that ring true to my own experience and incorporate them into my life.

[01:06:02] AS: That's the other part of falling apart.

[01:06:05] SR: That's the part. Exactly.

[01:06:10] AS: One thing I was curious, you told me in one of our sessions that this is one of the albums you're still listening to that you've done. I guess, in a light. Because it's still resonating with you. I wonder, at this point, in your journey a couple years after the album has come out, are you hearing different things in the album now that you're at a different place in your journey?

[01:06:31] SR: Yeah. I feel a sense of just relief when I listen to it. Because I do feel it came from – I feel my past self wrote it for my future self, where the things that I was speaking of, and writing about in my journey were the truths of it. The truth is always the truth. Just like any mantra, you say the same thing over and over and over again. When you're in a different place, it has a different meaning, because you've changed.

Me being the change team, and then I am now listening back to this record, that is still true, because if it was true then, that I was authentically sharing my story. It feels like, I'm giving myself advice right now, which is so nice. Because it's the only person that I can really take advice from, or that should you should ever give advice to.

[01:07:33] AS: I love that. I love that. I want to go out on your song, Kid Gloves. I want you to tell us what that was about, because I feel your music in this album and you were giving advice to the self of you today. Often, we want these things. We want to heal. We want to have a truce with food. We want to get out of pain. Yet, it's often about the person that we have to become. Kid Gloves was inspired by Rumi's quote, who we can't think of [inaudible 01:08:03].

[01:08:04] SR: Yeah. For sure. I feel like, that's even in essence, the way of how a truth is a truth is a truth. Through the centuries and through the ages, the Sufi poet has always rung so true to me. I have this Rumi book that when I feel I need some guidance, I use it very much like tarot cards, or people would use the Bible, or people would use whatever, their connection to

creator. This one specific writing of his is transformative for me. It rings true now even. I had it on my fridge forever.

It says, “When I run after what I think I want, my days are a furnace of stress and anxiety. If I sit in my own place of patience, what I need flows to me without any pain. From this, I understand what I want, also wants me, is looking for me and as attracting me.” There is a great secret here for anyone that can grasp it.

[01:09:15] AS: Will you sing a little bit of Kids Gloves? To take us out. Unless, there’s anything else you want to add.

[01:09:22] SR: No, no. It’s perfect.

[01:09:24] AS: Okay.

[01:09:26] SR: Yeah. I wrote the song to pay homage to that Rumi writing. What are you chasing? Is it running away from you? What if you’re waiting and just let it come to you? You know it's right. You know it’s right, when what you want, what you want, it wants you, too.

[01:09:51] AS: I love that. I love that. Where can people find your album, Serena?

[01:09:59] SR: They can find The Art of Falling Apart by Serena Ryder anywhere that they get their music. Apple Music, Spotify. I have videos on YouTube and stuff like that, too. It's everywhere.

[01:10:15] AS: I know. Carlos heard it on Panera and he texted me, and I texted you. You were like, “Oh, my God. That's so cool.” You didn't even know that. Well, thank you so much for your time. Your story is so inspiring. I just can't wait to watch what comes next. Again, no pressure, but it'll be good. It's going to be an art.

[01:10:39] SR: It's going to be an art, whatever it is. Maybe the art of keeping your shit together, or I don't know.

[01:10:47] AS: Once it's falling apart.

[01:10:47] SR: We obviously will build the underway.

[01:10:49] AS: Once you've duct taped it back together.

[01:10:52] SR: Yeah, [inaudible 01:10:52] again.

[01:10:55] AS: Well, thank you so much for your time and for singing for us, because I know everyone's going to enjoy that much more than me reading the lyrics. Thank you.

[01:11:01] SR: I love you, Ali. I love you lots. Thank you for doing this, too.

[01:11:04] AS: I love you too.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[OUTRO]

Thank you, health rebels and visionary storytellers for tuning in today. If you know someone who would benefit from this episode, please share it with them. And 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 can leave a review on Apple Podcasts. It helps more people find the show. And both actions, reviewing and sharing with others helps 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]

