

## Food, Conception + Birth: Safety Origins with Stacey Ramsower – Insatiable Season 13, Episode 1

[INTRODUCTION]

**[00:00:05] AS:** You 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 inter-web 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, binging 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.

Hello, Insatiable listeners. We are back, and we're going deep right out of the gate here. This season's theme is food safety. Each episode this season represents one pillar in my truth coaching process. The first module or session involves connecting how thinking about food, the mental food gymnastics of, "I want to eat this, but I shouldn't eat this," happens when you feel unsafe. And when we make this connection of how this shows up in our individual lives in truce with food, understanding the universal truth of how food and safety are intimately connected from the very beginning is super helpful to make this paradigm shifting understanding.

To do this, I brought on my friend, kindred soul and colleague, Stacey Ramsower. Stacey's an Ayurvedic doula who works with preconception, loss and postpartum. She's also a somatic sex educator. And she's currently getting her PhD in Clinical Psychology. And she really understands the power of adult development psychology. And so, I wanted to have her on to discuss food, conception, birth and safety origins through this common language we share and often discuss on Insatiable. Stacey's also personally struggled with food, alcohol and relationships.

So, let me ask you, have you ever thought about your birth, and I mean, beyond the story you were told about your birth? Because if you're like most people, you probably have no idea. And yet, as Stacey shares, according to Ayurvedic's Sankhya philosophy, 25% of who we are comes from our conception and birth. This makes safety and food intimately connected and tangled from before we even make our Earth side entrance.

Now, if you're a mama listening, we know birth is wild and unpredictable. We emphasize in this episode there is always repair. So, this isn't about irreversible damage to our children based on pregnancy and birth. And it's not to put one more thing on mothers, but rather emphasize the need to have our culture center mothers, which ours is here in America actually undermines mothers and all parents constantly.

And if I were you, I'd pay particular attention to our discussion on how overeating isn't always in reaction to restriction, but rather anticipation of not having enough food or other forms of safety. In other words when we anticipate deprivation based on our earliest experiences of food, touch, love and comfort.

All right, let's get into today's episode for a new way forward. Here's Stacey.

[INTERVIEW]

**[00:05:31] AS:** Welcome back, Insatiable listeners. It's been more than a hot minute. So much has transpired in the world, which seems to be kind of what we're dealing with from here on out. So, I'm so happy today to be with my friend, Stacey. Welcome, Stacey.

**[00:05:49] SR:** Thank you.

**[00:05:50] AS:** Stacey and I met I think, yeah, in a business strategy group about last year. And I was just so impressed with her knowledge. And she's really familiar with developmental psychology. And she's an amazing somatic practitioner, who also has an incredible personal story. So, I'm really excited to kick off season 13 with Stacey, who I think is going to really be able to ground us into a lot of what we're talking about this season, which is food safety and the concept of stace – Of safety. Not Stacey.

So, Stacey, before we get into your area of expertise, I just want to know, when I say the word safety, what does that mean to you?

**[00:06:35] SR:** I registered in my body first, and it feels like stability. Like, I can actually feel my tailbone kind of drop down and I feel a little more organized internally. I also think and experience that word in terms of relationship, too. So, safety is in relationship to our environment. What is holding us, and being in right relationship to that.

**[00:07:13] AS:** I love that you said that. Because I think most of us, especially if we are American and have internalized the individual, healing is up to you, personal responsibility, do everything yourself. I don't think we think about being in relationship. And how our sense of safety, whether we're aware of it or not, is in relationship. So, I love that you brought that out. Like, just coming out of the gate with, "Pow! Pow! Pow!"

**[00:07:44] SR:** Yeah, for sure.

**[00:07:46] AS:** Wonderful. I love that. Yeah, I'm just taking that in myself right now. So, thank you. You have a very tumultuous relationship with food. That's one of the things that I also love, not only to kind of your Swiss army knife of academics, personal experience, and then client experience. Can you tell us about that? And what was your way into discover, really, that food was not about willpower and discipline? But what was the root of the issue you discovered?

**[00:08:16] SR:** Yeah, it was a very long journey with steps. There were many steps along the way. And I'm saying steps like that, in topographical terms, where on my journey, I found many inroads to understanding why food felt like such a – something I was "out of control around".

And I'll just give a little bit of background to how it started, so people have an understanding of what my road was with food. In the very midst of puberty, I became obsessed with my body,

and the way I looked, and weight, and all of that. And I remember having like these fights with my mom, because I would just like throw a fit about what we were eating.

And I started this diet. It's so bizarre to think about now. I started this diet, which essentially was a tremendous restriction diet. And I was 15 or so. So, like, it's just a really rough time to be restricting calories, restricting certain types of foods, and follow that to the letter for several years and developed a lot of anxiety. Didn't really understand the relationship between my anxiety and starving myself. And then it developed into purging. I started purging first, and then the binging followed that. And this was over several years. through high school in college.

And I remember going – I had been practicing yoga at that time. I was kind of an odd kid, and that I found yoga on my own at about 14. And I was a dancer. And so, I really love – There was something about yoga that just instantly appealed to me. And I would do it on a VHS tape by myself after school.

**[00:10:24] AS:** Do you want to tell the kids what a VHS tape is? I'm just kidding.

**[00:10:27] SR:** Right? They're massive. Now, I see these things and I'm like, "Holy hell!" And we have a whole box of beta tapes, which we're going to get converted. I'm excited about that.

So, I went to college. And I had had some experience with a nutritional counselor when I was 18. And this – I'll just name this, because I think it's really funny. This woman was like trying to tell me about nutritional content of food. And I was like, "Lady, if you think I don't know the nutritional content of every food everywhere on this planet Earth, you're out of your mind." And it proved to be not so supportive, because it was about food. And it wasn't about the deeper issues.

And so, some part of me just knew, like, this isn't helpful. But I didn't know what I needed. And I was getting – My family couldn't hold what was going on. It was pretty severe by the end of

high school. And I went to college, and I found this yoga studio. And the woman who I found is also a somatic experiencing practitioner.

And having this experience of getting to move my body – I was a dancer. So, like that was always really home for me. But coming into a space where it was more about like, “What is my experience of this?” As opposed to, “What does this look like? Is this good enough? Do I measure up to the person next to me in terms of how flexible I am and how –” You know, all the dance things was radical. And she was implementing somatic experiencing practices into the yoga practice. And I started to experience a shift in my own nervous system.

So, first, what I experienced actually was like a heightened emotional state. But then it evolved to – Like, it got me to a different relationship with food. And she at that time was very much into – It was LA in the early 2000s. So, like, lots of raw food, things going on. But without it being so fixated on that, I just learned how to have a different relationship with food in my relationship to her. She taught me about setting boundaries with other people in order to protect my health and self-care. And it wasn't perfect. And I was still doing lots of self-sabotagey things with other substances and in other ways. But it really did open my eyes to, “Oh, there's something else going on here.”

And when I finished college, I was in a pretty bad place mentally. Living in LA, having a history of disordered eating, going up – I was an actor. That was my vocation at that time. And so, you can imagine all the critique and heightened awareness on body and appearance and measuring up. So, I was not in a great place. Then I started attending Overeaters Anonymous meetings. And I did that pretty consistently for about two years. And that was a huge step. Because for me, that's what brought in the relational aspects of being in relationship to myself, taking responsibility for my behavior, and also engaging the ways that my relationships to other people were impacting my behavior. Sort of beliefs about myself and the trappings of certain relationships, specifically familial relationships and, like, the roles that we all play and how that drove for me some pretty compulsive behavior and a feeling of like – To bring it back to safety.

If you don't perform in this way, you're not going to belong here to this family. That was overtly stated, but as we all internalize the subtler messaging of our family of origin. That was part of my experience.

And I think Overeaters Anonymous was arguably the most significant eye-opener. And it wasn't my long-term thing. 12 Steps wasn't my long-term place for healing, but it was a huge launching pad for, I think, myself recovery process after that.

**[00:15:05] AS:** And it sounds like the yoga teacher who integrated somatic experiencing, it sounded like she was able to give you like, “Hey, you have a choice to put up boundaries.” Right? Like, we often don't even know that we're young. And so, it was – And again, you can correct me if I'm wrong. But it sounded like she gave you the like, “Hey, you can put up boundaries.” And then OA, which is Overeaters Anonymous, was like, “Okay, but you're also part of this equation.” Am I hearing that correctly? So, it was like, “Oh, I got that.”

**[00:15:36] SR:** Yes, that is very accurate. And I'm so glad that you said that about – Her name is Hala. Hala Khouri. She's an amazing teacher continuing to practice and write books. Just check her out. Hala, you changed my life?

**[00:15:53] AS:** Yes, we need to give our teachers all the credit.

**[00:15:56] SR:** [inaudible 00:15:56] I might just say no. You're still on my list of top five most influential people. She taught me really through her example. She was sharing experience with me. And she was also teaching me and showing me that you can set a boundary without being harsh, essentially. It wasn't nonviolent communication, but she was operating from that place of, “This is what I need. And so, this is what I'm going to do. And I would like your support in it.” And being able to experience that differentiation between me and you. I'm still working through the enmeshment. And it was very powerful. But, yes, that distinction between, it's

okay to set up a boundary. And also, “Here's my responsibility in what's happening and how this is playing out.” It was tremendous fuel that I'm still running on.

**[00:16:55] AS:** Yeah. Well, because you and I are both fans of Dr. Robert Kegan's work in developmental psychology. And we come out of that early adulthood, in what's called the socialized mind. And in that socialized mind, your whole sense of identity is formed in relation to other people, right? And that's just a natural development. You can have the healthiest families, the most dysfunctional. Like, it doesn't matter. It's just the way that – So far that we know today, how we develop. Always an asterisk with science, because we're learning.

But I hear when people say you can't care about what other people think. I'm like, “Well, wait a second. When we're in our early 20s and under, like, we literally do not have a sense of self that we can't develop outside.” And what we think is good and bad comes from, obviously, our family and schools and all that stuff. But I think it is in your – And then as we become later into adulthood, we can start to create what Kegan and Lahey call self-authoring. But that's really having an identity outside of yourself. And it sounds like she was the one who like obviously didn't bring in the academics. But to your point, just raised up, like, you can separate. And then recognizing that, “Okay, we are interdependent,” right? Like, I have to like understand – I have to separate and put up boundaries. Then I can start to figure out my own stuff through OA. Then to your point, then it's about coming back into relationship with all of it. But I just think that's important for people to realize, because I feel like so much of the boundary advice – And I'm so glad that you said she wasn't like, “You need boundaries.”

Because people, I think, sometimes, even when they say boundaries, I imagine this like – Most people imagine it's like putting a handout, you know? Like, stay away from me. Instead of, “Oh, then we can be in real intimate relationship because we both know what we need.”

**[00:18:51] SR:** That's what you're describing falls in with the socialized versus self-authoring mind too. If you're still in the socialized mind, and we see this culturally everywhere, the only

way to experience yourself as an individual is to build a wall, right? That's the only way you create safety. As opposed to, "No. Like, there's a strong central channel that connects me to Earth and perhaps something expansive and infinite. And you do you, boo. I'm going to be over here." And of course, there's always the asterisk. We never set ourselves up to be harmed, or we do no harm upon others. And it's a huge part of the maturation process to be able to coexist as distinct individuals with separate interests and needs.

**[00:19:47] AS:** Yes. I'm glad you brought that up, because it's not – And that you have to do – Because of how our education system is set up, our society is, you have to do that work on your own. It's not usually just going to happen if you stay with the flow of life. I mean, unless you hit some sort of what they call optimal conflict, where you're in enough pain, whether through food, or body, or money, or burnout that you're willing to look at like, "Wait, the way that I'm doing things is not working."

So, what I love about this is – And you, I feel, like orient towards the world. Even though we have this common understanding of adult development. I'm so much more like brain-oriented. It sounds like being a dancer, you're much more somatically-oriented. Not that we aren't both. But we have dominant preferences.

So, I love this. So, you're getting this sense that like, "Oh, this isn't –" You don't have the language. But you notice – Or maybe I don't want to put words in your mouth. But, "Oh, when I put up boundaries, when I take responsibility," did you find the food start to get better? Again, it doesn't magically fall into place. But you felt you had a little bit more freedom or agency around it?

**[00:21:02] SR:** Like, I was actually afraid of food. I was so afraid of certain kinds of food. And then I would – You can only hold that line so long. It takes so much effort. That everything would just completely fall apart. So, it started that way where it wasn't so much about – Yeah. I mean, yeah, the food got better, because my sense of safety within myself got better. So, it

wasn't about like I'm only safe if I only eat this many calories a day and only include these things.

Like, to reflect on it. It's crazy. Like, just to sort of achieve this numerical goal, the things that I would put in my body, it's like, "Fuck!" Pardon my language. I just –

**[00:21:58] AS:** Yeah. You're allowed [inaudible 00:21:59] explicit. Yeah, yeah.

**[00:22:03] SR:** So, I think that I – And to be honest, this very acute phase is almost a blur. I really feel the shift now. I mean, things changed the most radically for me following a specific experience in 2016, which we can get into later. But I'll just say this. Like, it was a very deep and subtle process with an Ayurvedic practitioner that my experience of it was almost like it cleared out – It cleared out all of this baggage in one fell swoop. And it was a six-week process. It wasn't like overnight. And it was set up by years of work and continued work. But my experience of my body now is, like, I'm so much more attuned to what this substance is actually doing from the moment I see it to the next step of smelling it, to ingesting it, and then assimilating it. Like, that's my relationship to food now. No. It's just like this understanding this relational spectrum.

**[00:23:22] AS:** Yeah. And I just want to call out, because people here – I have clients who are like, "I hear the podcast episodes so much differently after we work together." So, I understand that you said in the beginning that healing your relationship to food was a long process. And you said, there was a lot of work coming up to the six weeks of doing something. So, I don't want people to hear like, "Oh, that's that six-week thing. And that's going to –" So, I just want to make sure that you realize like, "Stacey said that, and I'm just punctuating it." Or I guess, reiterating that. I mean, let's talk about it now, what it was. And then we can get into our origins of safety that you can now put together.

**[00:24:07] SR:** Well, it dovetails into that.

**[00:24:09] AS:** Perfect. Then fire away.

**[00:24:12] SR:** Because I mentioned it already, I entered OA, Overeaters Anonymous, when I was 21. And I'm 39 now. And I'm feeling the most-free and in right relationship I ever have. So, that's half my life. Like, more than half. I'm just feeling into this timeline, because I also think it's so significant to be clear and honest about the time this takes to reorient. It's ongoing. It's ongoing because it is so intimately related to our sense of safety, that there's a lot to sift through in the process.

My adolescence and 20s, late 20s, even early 30s, although very really, involved a lot of what I'll call disordered and like binge behavior with alcohol. And obvious – Well, for me, that also played a huge role in my relationship to food because of the hangover cravings and just this like ongoing cycle of stimulation and depression of my system and toxicity in the way that my body was able to process things.

So, one evening, I went to a really dark place. And the next day, I emailed my Ayurvedic doctor, and I told her everything that had gone on. And I said, “Will you please help me.” And her response to me – I'm like moved to tears remembering this whole experience. I felt so much shame. And I was sick. I had made myself sick. And she invited me in. It was like the sort of archetypal grandmother or auntie who just like invites you in. Just like, “We're going to give you some soup and water, and we're going to take care of you.”

And I sat with her a couple of days later. I think she saw me maybe the next day or the day after. And we set up this whole six-month program to help me get sober and to support my system in healing. And so, the six-week part was something called Panchakarma. And it's a very traditional cleanse protocol in Ayurveda. And it involves a lot of bodywork, and particular herbs and foods, and an eliminatory cleanse, that most cleansing in Ayurveda is food-based. And it engages a lot of principles specific to the five elements. And we can get into more details later if that's relevant. But for this –

**[00:27:16] AS:** Yeah. It's not something you buy off the shelf to do for five days to try to lose weight.

**[00:27:21] SR:** Correct. Because, as our theme for this conversation, the most significant part of this entire process was sitting across from my doctor, her holding my hands in hers and saying, “You're going to come here three days a week every week for the next six weeks. Every time you walk through those doors, I want you to feel how loved you are.”

And one of the most prominent practices in Ayurveda is an oil massage called Abhyanga. And you can do self-Abhyanga, massaging yourself with oil. Or you can receive Abhyanga. And Sneha is the Sanskrit word for oil. And it's also a word that means love. Primary healing practice in this modality is to soak yourself in love. And what that does to your tissues is that enables the innate intelligence to come out. You clear what needs to be cleared. You hold what needs to be held. And three days a week, every week, for six weeks, I was just bathed in loving touch. I was fed after every treatment warm food. And all of this is incredibly significant to this system of medicine. All of this is incredibly significant to the transformation I experienced because of my origin story.

**[00:29:09] AS:** I love that you have the intelligence and the expertise to say that the real healing was that it was about this unconditional love that she was offering.

**[00:29:22] SR:** Yeah, 100%.

**[00:29:24] AS:** Yeah. It was the container, right? I mean, again, all that other stuff. But the intention of it wasn't that you needed to lose weight. That you needed to heal your depression magically. It was like, “No. You are loved.” Right? Like, there is no – It's about the process, I guess, is a way of saying it, versus what it's going to get you. It's just you're here to be loved.

**[00:29:52] SR:** Yes, you're here to be loved. You belong here. There is a place for you here. You specifically are welcome here and whatever condition you enter the door. And this is the medicine that all of us are seeking in our human path. I mean, these are like – These are the origin – The original wounds, right? The disciplines of Ayurveda and pre and perinatal psychology really beautifully dovetail for me. And this was a part of my process as well.

In my study of Ayurveda, there is the cosmology, the overriding philosophy indicates that each of us is here. We've incarnated on purpose. And our karma or the action of our life is built on 25% of our unique soul's intention for being in a body. We have some of that that we're carrying. We have some of our maternal lineage that we're carrying this undigested trauma, ancestral patterns, memory, et cetera. And this is epigenetics. Whatever our people have turned on through lifestyle, practices, processes, beliefs, we carry it forward until we don't.

We carry our own unique gifts, some of our maternal lineage, their gifts and baggage. Some of our paternal lineage, their gifts and baggage. And then 25% of our karma in this life, the things that we're going to have to work out, depends on our experience of gestation. The hormonal cocktail of her mother through the process of digestion. Our experience of birth, and how we were welcomed into this material world. These are the major points of imprinting on our psyche, and our soma, our nervous system.

**[00:32:04] AS:** So, just to be clear. So, it's 25 – And this is the Ayurvedic –

**[00:32:09] SR:** The philosophy is called Sankhya. And this is specifically from that discipline philosophy worldview.

**[00:32:18] AS:** So, it's 25% our soul's karma in this life? Is that how you said it?

**[00:32:23] SR:** Mm-hmm.

**[00:32:24] AS:** Okay, it's 25% of our mother's history and baggage, gifts and baggage. It's 25% of our father's gifts and baggage. And then 25% of gestation and birth. I feel so emotional, because it doesn't feel like birth is supported in the way – And you know this. We all know this, who've gone through birth. And mothers are not supported to honor the profundity of this.

**[00:32:57] SR:** Yeah. I know – Well, and another way of saying it is this is why indigenous systems of medicine do support pregnancy. They protect it. They protect mothers. They protect them after birth with very elaborate protocols, and rituals, and practices.

And in one of the texts on Ayurveda, as soon as a person is pregnant, the texts say they should be treated like a vessel of sacred oil. Undisturbed. Just held in highest esteem. And it's not – I think our culture, we like to take offense to everything, like, “I'm not weak. I'm not feeble. I don't need to – I can do this. I'm just pregnant.” And it's like, “Yeah, but it's a really big fucking deal.” It's a really big fucking deal. It is not business as usual. And that doesn't mean you have to give up everything. And like, we have just a very backwards –

**[00:34:12] AS:** And binary. I can't help but think of the socialized mind and its binary propensity.

**[00:34:18] SR:** And then, of course, the birth process and the way we've quite literally completely manhandled that process and taken it away from women and birthing people. And in the postpartum time, I can't tell you, it's such a strange thing, how this conditioning works, right? Because I can talk till' I'm blue in the face about the significance of rest postpartum, and you need to have these specific types of foods. And you really need to make sure you have a robust support system. And people are like, “Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. So on so it's going to come and help.” And, like, “We got a meal train and this and that.” And then within days giving birth, it's like, “Oh, my God. Nobody's fucking around. I don't know what to do. I'm so overwhelmed. I'm so alone. Nobody seems to care that I've –”

And it's partially the conditioning of our culture, right? But we operate – Those of us who have birth, we operate in that culture. And so, I think there's this very real wound that has to do with, “It's better if you do it yourself.” It means something about you if you do it yourself. That's better. And this just doesn't happen in isolation. It just actually physiologically cannot happen in isolation.

**[00:35:49] AS:** So, your area of expertise is somatic birth and motherhood. And what you've given us with this Ayurvedic framework, indigenous understanding. And I think – And again, as someone who works with people around safety, like how much of this stuff sometimes clients can start to identify, “Oh, my God. This happened because I was separated from my mom when I was born.” I mean, once we get into like all the different ways and in this understanding.

But can you start to explain to us how our sense of safety originates then if birth and the prenatal stages are so important? Like, on a purely physiological level. And I know that we divide physiology and psychology, but they're much more of an infinity loop in my mind of how they like inform each other. Like, can you describe how our sense of safety in the world? And again, how you kind of kicked off with like that felt sense of safety, right? Not intellectual. But how does that originate?

**[00:36:49] SR:** Well, the first sense to develop embryologically is touch. That's the first sense we develop. And it is foundational to our survival. And we know that from studies and the work of Ashley Montague. The significance of touch on the human system is foundational. It is essential. And so, there's many ways that gestation contributes to that, because there's the just the fact of the way that the womb works. And it's like all babies experience that touch.

And the hormonal component of it, like, is there – Are the hormones balanced? Are babies getting a balanced experience of what they need? Is it all high cortisol all the time? That is another kind of touch. It's like the holding environment. It's not only the walls, but what's happening inside those walls. Does that make sense?

**[00:37:57] AS:** Yeah. No. I love that you clarified. Because when you were talking about touch, my initial thought was – Well, I mean, as we're growing in the womb. But now I see what you mean, right? By the cortisol, but also held in the fluid, is what you're saying? Right? Yeah.

**[00:38:14] SR:** Yes. Quite literally, the sense that against the baby's developing skin of like being held. That's there. But then the hormones and the – I mean, it really is the hormones, because all of that is feeding. All of that is going to the baby. Everything is filtered back and forth, in and out, with the help of the placenta and how food is being digested. And then, of course, what foods are being chosen? And if sleep is happening. And there's all sorts of factors. So, I don't say any of this to give anyone the feeling or the fear that like one more thing that we have to try to control and be perfect at. But also, to be aware of the fact that, during pregnancy, we are inextricably connected to this other being's well-being. And if that's something hard for us to manage for ourselves, then there's already something – There's already a dynamic playing out. And I want to say this. I'm leaping ahead a little bit. But something that is true based on somatic science, healing can happen at any time. Spoiler alert.

**[00:39:27] AS:** Spoiler alert. Nature has redundant processes. Yeah, I'm so glad you said that. Like, there's always a chance to – Nothing is permanent, for better or for worse, right?

**[00:39:40] SR:** There's always the opportunity for repair.

**[00:39:42] AS:** Yes. I'm so glad you said – Oh, Stacey! Thank you. And I just want to point out, when you're talking about everything's with the hormones, I have noticed that the conversation around hormones, people sometimes are now trying to fix their hormones, but realize that the hormones come from, as Stacey was saying – Your hormones, whether you have a lot, or a little, or the quality comes from the food you eat. It comes from the air you breathe. The hormones are not – They're not the root cause, I guess is what – They are kind of a symptom of – I don't want to say the word status, especially as health has become such a moral thing. But do you know what I mean? Like, it's not that like I had – When I had my insomnia, and I did the

Dutch test, my sleep coach was like, “Your hormones are lower than someone who is even postmenopausal.” And it was because of the stress I was under. So, it wasn't about adding more hormones. It was like I needed to get sleep, which was like the paradox, because my hormones were out of whack from my –

But we didn't focus on my hormones. We focused on my gut health, and getting myself the right amount of protein, and lowering my stress. So, I just want people to understand that. Because now that hormones have become more top of mind, I don't think people often understand that they're not the root cause. They're like the symptom.

**[00:40:58] SR:** Yeah, in so many things, perception of a threat impacts our hormones. If you feel unsafe in your relationship to your health provider, your practitioner, if you have an ongoing – More and more people are working right up until they deliver their baby. And if that's really hectic – And there's not a sense of – There's not value given to rest. And we're in this phase of talking about it a lot. Like we give a lot more lip service to rest and the value of rest. But like who amongst us knows how to do that? Where it feels like it's safe to actually?

There's a lot of reckoning in the process of changing our patterns and habits. It doesn't always feel good. It's not like, “Oh, suddenly, there's this relief.” No. It's usually like, “Oh, this is kind of terrible.”

I've watched something on social media yesterday, this great little video. She's like, “Sometimes learning to rest, or starting to rest, it can feel like withdrawal.” Like, “Oh, my God. Yeah.”

**[00:42:09] AS:** Yeah, the adrenaline, the intensity of it is your withdrawing –

**[00:42:13] SR:** Because it shows you right there that there is something going on physiologically. That is, it's that chicken-egg relationship. Like I heard you saying with your

insomnia, it's like your hormones are messed up because of your sleep, and your sleep is messed up because of your hormones.

**[00:42:29] AS:** Yes, yeah.

**[00:42:31] SR:** Just finding some sense of – I think here's where it comes back to safety, a clear sense of container or holding. And so, our sense of touch, right? Is also this subtler experience of touch, which is like my environment. What is holding me on an energetic level? An emotional level? A spiritual level? Do you have a sense of spiritual connection? Is that a part of your experience of your body at all? Because there are a lot of ways to get medicine. There are a lot of ways to start the process of grounding down again. And, of course, food is the grounding force, right? That's what literally gives substance and structure to our physical existence. When there is a lack of felt sense, emotional sense, spiritual sense of grounding or foundation, the first thing we would logically reach for is that which gives us substance.

**[00:43:45] AS:** Which is food.

**[00:43:46] SR:** Which is with food.

**[00:43:49] AS:** So, I want people to take that in and let that – I'm working with one client. Land and expand. Let things land and expand. But really, when you can sense that you aren't being held by your relationships, your environment, your routine, your home, even if you can't consciously – And, Stacey, correct me if I'm wrong. Even if you can't consciously articulate it, that felt sense will lead us to want to eat because it provides that substance. That is a non-negotiable. Like, you're not going to find a way to hack that, right? As far as I know.

**[00:44:26] SR:** Totally. And something, a little nuance –

**[00:44:29] AS:** Yes. We love nuance here. Bring it all.

**[00:44:33] SR:** Threat or being unsafe is primarily about perception, but there's obvious overt. But every day, each of us is perceiving threat based on what we're watching on the news, based on a belief we have about ourselves, based on a pattern that was ingrained in our family of origin about how you talk to people or how you don't talk to people. The perception of – I'm going to be really explicit here. It's like, in a marriage, like, “Oh, they must be thinking this about me.” However long we allow ourselves to go through time in a relationship of like, “Oh, they're really mad at me. They're thinking this. They're thinking that.” Instead of just asking the fucking question.

**[00:45:22] AS:** Yeah. No. I love that you bring this up, because this is what we spend most of Truce with Food on, is like, is the risk perceived or real? Because our stories and our nervous system will recreate past threats. And again, it's not bad. It's like your body's trying to do its job, right?

**[00:45:41] SR:** This is foundational to pre and perinatal psychology, the process of recapitulation of a past experience of threat when you did not have the capacity to establish your boundaries to get your needs met on your terms. And so, this initial experience of coming into the world, when like nothing is on our terms, is so significant. It is so critical.

And the way that we – Over time, I think the tides are turning a little bit now. But like, there was such a long period in history when it's like don't trust your baby, and don't let them boss you around. It's like, “What?” How did we allow ourselves to be convinced that you shouldn't listen to a child's cries for help, and attention, and holding, and stability? Like, they have no means of establishing that for themselves.

**[00:46:43] AS:** Yeah. And before we even get there, because I want to talk about this initial imprint of conception, preparation, action, birth and integration, which is how we're brought into the world, which is – And how, even with conception, and preparation, and action, there isn't a lot of differentiation between what our mothers are feeling and what's ours. Is that

correct? I mean, I'm not as somatic expert, but that's kind of what I picked up on from reading. Can you talk a little bit about that in sense that how that five initial – Because, I think, again, I love a good framework, because I love structure. Helps me orient. But how this is the first – these first five stages. Because you keep saying perinatal and postnatal, and I think for most people if they think of these stages, and that's what it really is. And they start to think about how they were brought into this world. How that affects – How that original imprint, which is a transition, affects people maybe in beginning and perhaps even with transitions to this day? Because a lot of people eat during transitions. And by transition, I mean, it's Friday into the weekend. It's work to home. Work to daycare. It's, like, I have to switch tasks, right? And I'm going to go to the fridge. And again, nothing is ever one thing, everyone. But this is something that I think is really interesting, especially – And I'll explain why. I'll give the example of my son once you explain it to help bring it home. But can you talk about that, and our sense of safety within these five pre-natal stages?

**[00:48:22] SR:** There's not a lot – Like, starting with conception and moving through all the stages. As I mentioned before, there's not a lot of –

**[00:48:34] AS:** Differentiation? Or I don't want to put words in your mouth.

**[00:48:36] SR:** There's not a lot of differentiation, but the word I'm looking for is kind of eluding me. I'll use I language. I'm not able to get my needs met directly. It's all relational.

**[00:48:52] AS:** Mm-hmm. Great, yeah.

**[00:48:56] SR:** And there is a kind of like waiting and wondering. We develop psychological patterns, nervous system patterns, physical movement, gestural patterns for from the beginning of like, “How am I going to get attention to get this need met?”

And I think that there is some very deep – I believe in the deep innate intelligence of everybody. And when we have maladapted to any scenario, if our needs haven't been met at the basic level, we adapt our behavior, our body language, our gesture, our – Everything. And I think our system knows this is a mal-adaption. And so, it starts to go to work in other areas. So, we're queued up with signals.

But I think this like baseline sort of eking by on the bare minimum, getting our needs met, leads to a tendency to over indulge or to like take whatever we can get later. And this is my theory. This is not – I'm not pointing to a book or another author to tell you this. But this is my theory based on my own experience and inquiry into my experience coming into the world, and how I've related to food. Like, for most of us here listening, food is readily available. And I think we act out a little bit of, like, "I'm going to do it how I want to. I want this now, and I get to have it." Defiant behavior with food. And it's something that's like, "Well, it is a grounding action." And it's something that when, in transitions, there's a sense of uncertainty. And the primary mode is movement. And food, again, helps us establish a felt sense of structure.

And so, if there's not kind of – I'm doing early childhood education through the Waldorf School with my kids. And it's all about transitions. How do you support kids in their emotional experience transitioning from one thing to the next? It's rhythm, consistency, and physical presence. Like, I am the container. I help provide that sense of containment, and boundary, and structure, along with this song that we always sing when we go from snack time to bath time, or whatever it is.

And there's so much emotion wrapped up in food. There's so much memory wrapped up in food. It's like one way also that we can kind of bring a sense of that, which we long for into the moment where in, where there's maybe uncertainty, or disconnect. Or if we're talking about the transitions and a busy day, just like kind of overriding what we would choose to be doing because we have to do this other thing.

**[00:52:15] AS:** So, are you saying don't override?

**[00:52:18] SR:** No. In the moments of transition on any person's day, a lot of times we are just overriding in order to follow the schedule, in order to do the thing, in order to achieve the tasks. And so, I think we're often looking for whatever Touchstone we can to bring a sense of comfort and grounding is like the number one thing, at least for me.

**[00:52:48] AS:** Yeah, I noticed, especially when daycare was closed so often, and we would like drop Essa us off on Monday, and we walked back, which was like helped me like kind of decompress from the weekend. But I remember, I mean, I made it a kind of a joke, but I do it now. And I tried to do it before I pick him up. But like, I just lay on my office floor for like five minutes. And I'm just like, "What just happened?" You know what I mean? I mean, it's so much – He's almost three. It's a lot easier now. But I found I really like legs up the wall. Like, that helps me like almost gather my energy, prepare that I have to like switch on. I'm no longer like getting to be intellectual and creative in my work. And I'm like entering – Like, to your point, like, I'm trying to do that unconditional parenting. Like, I'm going to go get Essa. I don't know how he's going to be feeling. But I want to show up for him. But I just need that legs up the wall to kind of like help me, I guess what you're saying, provide that sense of structure and stability of mentally putting on a different identity. At least that's how I'm thinking of it now.

**[00:53:56] SR:** Yeah. And that transitions too. It's like it's a lot of mental and emotional energy. And that requires actual fuel. Like, I think it's normal to feel like we need to feed ourselves or eat. But what you're describing with legs up the wall, it's like, in yoga, it's called The Great Rejuvenator.

**[00:54:19] AS:** Oh, my God! It is. I cannot recommend it enough to people.

**[00:54:24] SR:** It's stabilizing to the nervous system to have like pressure against – It can be. I'll say it that way. That's a better way of saying it. To establish like even pressure on the back of

the pelvis, and sacrum, to let the legs descend into the pelvis. It's like weight in that area of the body that is responsible for locomotion and all of our going, you sort of de-mobilize it, create some stability and actually putting your body up against the earth. It's like, "All right."

**[00:55:01] AS:** Yeah. Yeah. I'm held, right? Like, because the mamas need help too, right? By the great mother.

**[00:55:06] SR:** Big time.

**[00:55:08] AS:** Well, and I want to circle back to this, and then I want to move on to your origin story and stuff. But I've read, and I've had some somatic practitioners in Truce with Food. And they've talked about how that – Again, those – Especially, I think, around birth being that transition, how that can influence our sense of safety. Because birth is the first transition. And I think about today, how that helps us transition emotionally. Because for my birth, I was 41. So, I was able to like have them kind of normally at standard induction at 39 weeks. But I was able to hold off until about almost 41 weeks. And then I was induced with a Foley – How do you say? Foley bulb, I think?

**[00:55:51] SR:** Yeah.

**[00:55:52] AS:** And I know, those are sometimes – That kind of concept, it's not Pitocin. But it's still speeding up the process. And then the midwife just intuitively was like, "I'm going to break your water." And it turned out I had so much water. Like, they only caught it at the end. But it turns out, I like had had it all along. But as his heart rate dropped, because the difference of going from so much water to so little. And then it stabilized. And then the birth was "smooth". I mean, I did an unmedicated, it was fucking tough.

But, I mean, I don't want to say – Like, I mean, I was talking about this with someone who – I mean, I would not say it was a natural birth. But when we think of natural birth, we think of

unmedicated. And I'm like people have this version of nature as like – Because we're in this purity culture that nature is like pristine. And I saw someone write an article about like sad, white, beige, and like all the Montessori like mom influencers. I'm going totally tangential. But I'm like, “If anyone has seen like “natural birth”, it is like bloody, it's poopy. It's like all – It's not this like – Yeah.

But I notice – And again, because Essa is only three, that when he has – I know kids in general have trouble with transitions, but he gets really upset at first. And then once I say, “I know, bud. It's so hard to like stop doing what you love.” Or now his new thing is like, “Two more minutes.” I'm like, “Okay, two more minutes, and then we're going.” So, that's kind of our routine. But then once he's through that initial upset, it's like he's fine. And I'm like, “This mirrors his birth.” Like, I don't think he was ready to come out. But because of certain things, he was induced. And it wasn't a more mild way, but he was still induced. And then that change of environment. To your point, that sense of touch of how he was held, he has this outburst, and then everything goes the way that I had hoped it would. So, am I seeing that because I've read that and putting that framework on it? Or is there something to that?

**[00:57:52] SR:** I think there's something to that. I led a free workshop a couple of years ago called Sex, Birth and Boundaries. And linking together the experience of being born, our experience of being born and the imprints of that, and our capacity to set boundaries. And particularly in the arena of sex, which is such a heightened nervous system state.

And there were lots of really wonderful and interesting reflections that came through following that class. But I do think that it's something very interesting to inquire about in terms of like how much induction happens? How we set this time limit on how long birth can go without it being like, “There's something wrong.” How many Caesarean births are performed without a medical need? And the impact on that child and that mother's sense of being attuned to their needs, their limits and being able to adapt to, like you're saying, a transition, which is a normal thing, a necessary thing that's happening all the time. But our capacity to adapt to nature's

rhythms when we have been imprinted with a kind of, well, a violation or an interruption of nature's rhythms.

**[00:59:24] AS:** Yeah.

**[00:59:26] SR:** And to the earlier point of healing can happen at any time, just having the information is such a huge part of repairing the boundary rupture or resetting a pattern. Having the awareness of like, “Oh, at the earliest moment possible, I learned or interpreted that I was going to have to hurry up,” or just things of that nature. I think that there's a lot of medicine in knowing our birth stories to understand better how we engage, change of any kind, relationship of any kind, and also our general worldview. Like, how am I going to survive this world? What am I going to have to do in order to be met with care here?

There's a long time – I think, to get big picture, consider the generation of people running Congress right now, other aspects of our country. And like, how many of them were likely born through Twilight sleep and had zero connection, whatsoever, to their mother during and after they were born? And again, I'm not saying this is why, or this is like a one-to-one thing that we should take literally. But it's just a consideration. Like, consider how many people have had this foundational interruption to their sense of belonging and then how that recapitulates through their life.

**[01:01:19] AS:** Andy by twilight, do you mean an epidural? Not necessarily like midnight or –

**[01:01:24] SR:** No. I mean, the twilight sleep. Like, women being completely knocked out.

**[01:01:29] AS:** Oh, okay, okay. Anyone giving birth in like the 40s, 50s was completely knocked out unconscious to give birth.

**[01:01:39] SR:** Oh, my God.

**[01:01:42] AS:** Okay, I'm glad you clarified that. I didn't even – I think my grandma actually was. I mean, she had nine kids.

**[01:01:48] SR:** And not everybody. It's a little bit like – Just the medical protocol is like they're very popular in some cities. Whatever.

**[01:01:56] AS:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah, no, it's – Yeah. Yeah, that's really fascinating, considering – It feels like –

**[01:02:01] SR:** It's not always like – There's not always malice at the root of it. To me, this is another sort of qualification that I find really important. It's not that there's malice at the root of all of it. And it's really – To me this is – Well, this is an area of passion. And it's personal, as we'll get into. But birth really matters. And repair can happen at any time. But repair can't happen if we don't acknowledge what happened.

**[01:02:36] AS:** Yeah. Yeah. I'm so glad you said that about malice, because I think there's been a lot of conspiracy or assumption that the world is more organized than it is. When, really, it's just highly disorganized. Like, that's the problem.

**[01:02:53] SR:** My husband is in the military. And I'm like, “You know, nobody's organized enough for this to be a concerted effort.”

**[01:03:02] AS:** I know. My sister is always like, “Have you ever tried to get someone to put up a blog post? Do you know everything that goes wrong and you just try to get someone to do a blog post?” I'm like, “Good point. Good point.” Like, it's just these forces of capitalism, right? Or white supremacy or patriarchy that are just carrying all of this along. You can't point to one thing. It's just not that simple.

And again, this is kind of a selfish question for me. So, it's like if I were to want to help Essa correct this imprint now, but there's times where like he never wants to leave the park, right? So, it's like, does his imprint say, "Well, I'm always being rushed, even when I'm like, "Okay, but I gave you two minutes. I gave you one minute." And it's also important for you to know that I'm holding a boundary and I've been charged, because you'll feel unsafe if you're in charge. So, how do you do that kind of healing for those of us who may be thinking about our own birth or have kids who we want to try to correct or heal? Repair? Repair is a healthier word.

**[01:04:05] SR:** Repair. I think the one of the most significant things is to not internalize or take personally that tantrum or the resistance.

**[01:04:15] AS:** Oh, yeah.

**[01:04:16] SR:** Really hold a loving space for it to exist. And as there – I have two children, a three-year-old son and an 18-month-old daughter. And there's a huge difference between attending to my three-year-old versus my 18-month-old purely because of verbal capacity. And inviting that expression of like, "I know what you described, I love so much. I know that you're disappointed. It's very difficult to leave when we're having such a good time. I hear you. Can you tell me how it makes you feel? Is there something you would like me to know? What could we do when we get home that might be fun for?" You know, like welcoming the experience that they're having, and also supporting them in moving past it.

**[01:05:12] AS:** Yeah. And I almost think people can ask themselves that, right? Like, if they're struggling with when they come home. And like, I know this is hard. You've worked all day. You're depleted. And what kind of support do you need right now? Do you need to do legs up the wall? It takes five minutes, people. It's tremendous.

**[01:05:33] SR:** Feel really good to your body, to your heart right now. What's one thing we could do that would feel really nourishing and fun? Whatever the thing is, the feeling that we're sad, we have to leave. Or the thing that's coming to an end.

Kimberly Johnson talks about transitions and endings a lot in a really lovely way. And I think just holding the fullness of the experience and being able to acknowledge the full spectrum of feelings that are often brought up by transitions and practicing that shift of mindset about certain feelings being allowed and others not being allowed is a big one.

**[01:06:12] AS:** I was just thinking, even for people to acknowledge that they're struggling, right? In our puritanical Protestant culture, it's like, "Buckle up –" It's like stiff upper lip. And acknowledging those feelings often how – I had lovely parents. And that generation was still like – I remember one time complaining to my parents, and they were like, "You want us to call Child Youth Services? Here's the number." It was like, "Okay." Like, there was not this acknowledgement of our emotions, you know? And again, my parents did a great job. And that generation, it was all like you got to try rewards, punishments type of – I think. I think. I don't know.

**[01:06:54] SR:** And what we know now about emotions – And this is also somatic. Like, there are waves that rise and fall. And the more we try to keep them at bay, the more momentum and charge that builds. Actually, generating more chaos, more disorganization, more disruption by not allowing the thing to come out and be spoken or felt. And there's a way to do that.

One of my favorite practices and tools that I use in my marriage, sometimes skillfully, sometimes less so, is nonviolent communication. It's important to my sense of safety to feel what I feel. And there's a big difference between saying – Between screaming at my husband and saying, "I'm feeling really angry right now. And I could use some time alone. Could I have 10 minutes to myself where you take the kids, please?"

**[01:08:04] AS:** Yeah, what a healthy boundary.

**[01:08:07] SR:** I mean, like I said, sometimes yes, sometimes less so.

**[01:08:12] AS:** Girl, or woman, I know. I know. I know.

**[01:08:21] SR:** But something sort of like the simple acknowledgement. I've worked with pre and perinatal psychologist on some imprints with my daughter. And she sort of – This was when my daughter was very, very small. And it was very beautiful. And each practitioner works slightly differently. But what I was amazed by is her sort of intuitive connection to my daughter, which really lovingly, and in a very curious voice, just sort of narrated my daughter's movements, and actions, and sounds, and reflected back to her. Like, “Oh, I see you doing this.” And just that when we are met with unconditional positive regard, whatever state we're in, that completely transforms the moment, the need to be seen, held, known. That doesn't mean that like, suddenly, everything switches and it's all roses. The discomfort might continue. And for a very small child who doesn't really have a lot of that – They don't have the top-down capacity. Thank goodness, right? There's this learning of like how to self-regulate, but we need support in doing that.

Like, I see this – What I often find myself saying to my son a lot if he's happy thing a very big experience is, “I'm here. And you're safe.” And I'm going to stay here until you're ready for me to help you. I'm going to stay right here. I know, it makes me cry. I wish somebody had said that to me.

**[01:10:18] AS:** Yeah. Isn't that, like, one of the ways we heal, is we give to people what we didn't have? I mean, it's so beautiful. I mean, I wish you had it as well. I don't want to take that away. I don't want to glorify pain. But –

**[01:10:33] SR:** Yeah. Yeah, it's just such a tender thing to be a human.

**[01:10:38] AS:** I know. I know. Well, and when you were saying, seen how to know, it made me think of when we have that substance, that structure, it's like, then we don't need food. We don't need to turn to food. But that being seen, we have to see ourselves first being held. We have to know how to get our needs met, and then being recognized in a safe space with all of that. It's like, "How did that get so hard?"

**[01:11:06] SR:** Yeah. I think as I just kind of feel this flow of the inquiry and the emotions that accompany the inquiry, one big topic, something I have been reflecting on a lot in particular and in relationship to this conversation, we can get there in a little bit, but isolation. Living in isolation, operating in isolation, over-compartmentalization of our experience in order to be a quote "good employee," or this or that. Like, this is very significant disruption between our social nervous system, the way that we operate in this world from the first moments of our existence in a body, and to how we've been told that life is going to be from now on.

It makes sense to me that most of us would be having what feel like – Because of our culture's disdain for it, like immature or childlike emotional experiences, because we are healing these generations' old childhood wounds. And my kid, like, literally every day, as soon as the door opens – We open the front door to take our dirty diapers right out to the garbage can, "Mom, I want to go outside. I want to go outside. I want to go outside." Goes outside. He goes across the street to daycare. He plays outside all of the day. And then we get home, and he jumps out of his stroller, "Mom, I want to play in the dirt." Like, the coregulation with like dirt, and sky, and textures, and smells is so fascinating to me. And I have been grieving the amount of time I spend indoors. I might spend with like a synthetic floorboards and whatever else.

Our healing process, this restoration of a sense of safety, it is dependent on being in right relationship. And that's not just to – It's so layered, that that first relationship is to Earth. Our mother is Earth to us. And then there is the actual physical earth. And then there is the other creatures on this earth or other rhythms of the Earth, the seasons on this earth, the food that grows from this earth. And there's so many interruptions we've all experienced to that

foundational relationship. And I just see and feel sense how tender a process this is. As we start to peel back a layer, it's like feeling that disappointment of a child whose only recourse is to wail and reach for comfort, you know?

**[01:14:38] AS:** Yeah. I think this is a segue to – You've alluded it to your origin story and kind of our only – How do I have to be in the world, right? And I thought was interesting when you said we're told. And I think what Stacey's really communicating is, in this – From gestation, to conception, to birth, to the first several months. And you can correct me if it might be years, Stacey, we're told through our senses. It's not an intellectual thing. And we learned through those senses in relationship. Your birth mom had a planned adoption. And you spent the first few weeks of your life in foster care. And so, what do you think that told you about your safety and how that influenced your relationship to food?

**[01:15:26] SR:** Just you asking the question, the way that you did, has given me even more clarity. And coming through this conversation to this question now feels really significant. I've been working with this for a long time. It's been my lifelong companion, this fact of my adoption. And I grew up knowing that. I always put it in air quotes. It's like however much – I always say, or I say to people, I've always known I was adopted. And maybe there's some layers to that, too. Like, my parents told me that as early as I could theoretically understand. But I think I also always knew that at a deeper level.

But when I attuned to it, and I've done some guided work, and I've done my own process work around this. But when I attuned to this, especially since having given birth myself, like, there's such a frantic feeling in my body. And you posing the question just now, I think I attuned to safety, comfort food, as like you better take it when you can get it, which definitely set me up for this like binge purge, star reward cycle.

It's even like that with money. That's a whole other podcast, Ali. We'll talk about that later. I'd love to dig into that conversation with you. But certainly, this feeling is like I don't know when

someone is coming to hold me. I'm looking for something that's not coming. And I better just like take what I can get and cling to it. See if I can make it last a little bit longer. And this played out in my intimate relationships too, you know? Like, this sense of being deeply infatuated and then like utterly devastated when that relationship dissolved, or the level of interest wasn't matching. And it all felt very immature, if I'm honest. But it is this like deep imprints about being held and this sort of frantic, disorganized attachment to it.

And knowing that, I've experienced in my process – And I think this is a universal piece of healing, reckoning with the grief that I have to give this to myself. Or I'm going to have to ask for this. It's not going to just be met. And I wish more than anything, that someone would just know what I need and give it to me. But like, that's not coming.

And so, part of this maturation process is also very, very tender and vulnerable. It's not just like, “Oh, now, I cognitively get it. And so, let's do it and move on. And it's going to be fine.” No, I've got to reckon with the part of me that is in that newborn's state that needs that level of soothing that is – I think this is probably why I'm so somatically driven, honestly. Because my system really, really requires a high level of holding that that newborn me did not get. Even the holding on a subtle level.

My mom – My birth mother, I should say, knew that she was going to give me up for adoption pretty much immediately. The entire gestational process was like disconnected. That's a huge part of my karma and my work in the world, my experience that I'm filtering the world through. And I don't mean to speak to this in a way that anyone else feels like this is the standard experience for someone who was given up for adoption or anything like that. This really is my years' long process and inquiry.

And I think that that in and of itself is – I mean, this is self-authorship. This is my experience of what happened to me and what I'm discovering about my needs and the boundaries I have to hold in order to feel well, to feel safe. I require a lot of holding.

**[01:20:23] AS:** Well, and I think this actually circles back to like the perception, right? So, it's like if we have a story that we won't be held, or a felt sense, right? It's like, then we go into a situation, like, armored, right?

**[01:20:39] SR:** Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

**[01:20:38] AS:** Like, I got to do this all myself. I'm not going to be held here.

**[01:20:43] SR:** And as soon as there's any – For me, as soon as there was any indication of like holding available, I was all over that.

**[01:20:54] AS:** Right. Right. Well, and that, I mean, metaphorically feeds into what you said about I got to take it while I can get it.

**[01:21:01] SR:** Mm-hmm. Yes, yes.

**[01:21:02] AS:** And I think it's such a – Like, I'm thinking about, it's such a matrix too. Because our culture in general does not lean in to hold people when they're struggling. So, then you have all the proof that this orientation makes sense, right. Until you have to find those pockets and people that know how to lean in. And in a healthy way, right? A balanced way.

**[01:21:28] SR:** Yeah, a balanced way. And it's like finding the things that really – And this is sort of a side note, but something that I really love about Ayurveda. It's like, of course, the healing modalities get more intensive, all the way up to surgery. Like, ancient texts, 5000 years old, give instructions for surgical procedures. So, it can be very invasive medicine also. And the primary prescription is a personalized, unique to you, daily rhythm, daily routine, that establishes your relationship to your body and your environment in a season-appropriate way. And that's not

only like summer, fall, winter, spring, but the season of your life. We adapt our protocols to give the whole person a sense of grounding and orientation.

**[01:22:29] AS:** I love that. And I love – For people listening, being oriented is a way of being grounded. I think that's important for people to realize. That's why I love structure so much. It helps me orient. I'm like, "All right, where are we going?"

And I love that you're speaking in terms of like this is what I've decided – Like, I'm self-authoring. This is my story. And I think that's so important. Because the more self-authoring we become, the more nuance and complexity we can hold. And the more we can see, "Well, this is my experience. It's not necessarily everyone's. Instead of like, "Everyone's this way. I'm this way," which is we get stuck into when we're in that socialized – I say, just coming off the conveyor belt in our 20s, right? We all get plopped there.

So, what do you think is important for us to know about those first few years of life and our relationship to food and safety? If you were to think of, like, what are the few essential things that people need to marinate? We love food puns here, Stacey. You need to marinate in?

**[01:23:34] SR:** Well, I really love the way that you articulated the fact of sensory input as being of primary significance and keeping that balanced. It's like lots and lots of – I know, I'm certain you've shared about this and spoken to this, but like the equation between – Or the parallel between highly processed foods, sugar, and technology, and the overstimulation of a system.

And so, taking in to consideration all the ways that we ingest information and nourishment, and keeping that as balanced and as rooted in love as possible. And this is something that I honestly struggle with. Because my relationship to mothering – And I feel you and I have talked about this. Like, I like to work. I like my job. I like being in the world. And I have zero interest in homeschooling my kids. And sometimes I wonder.

And this has made a huge difference in how I consider, like, who's going to be with my children? Where are they going to spend time if not with me? In order to ensure that they are having the sort of like full spectrum experience of being fed in a healthy way on every level. Like, they're being fed consistently with time outside in their body socializing with other kind of children in a safe enough environment. They are getting stories. They are getting imagination. They are getting love. They are getting rest. They are – All those things that contribute to a healthy functioning, nervous system, digestive system immune system. We set the tone in our childhood.

And a wonderful ayurvedic doctor, practitioner and teacher is a woman named Dr. Claudia Welch. I took a course with her about healthy hormones. And she talked about each of us is born with a particular constitution in the system of medicine. They speak in terms of constitution, or dosha. And then we also develop imbalances. And that's what we're treating generally in terms of like applying remedies. We treat the imbalance, not the root foundation. Or, sorry. The root constitution.

And when we're in childhood, we're like wet cement. And we're taking in all of this information, and building patterns, and habits. And those can get solidified into looking like our foundation, looking like our root. Because it's such a permeable time of life. And the only way – I love this so much. And it might be like our perfect clothes. But she talked about, the only way to change those patterns, those patterns that have become hardened like cement, is love, is oxytocin. Oxytocin as the means of softening are hardened patterns. Which means, if there are hardened patterns around food, more rigidity is not going to help. Compassion, and kindness, and an environment that feels loving and joyful.

Going into my healing journey after that Panchakarma treatment, I hired a personal trainer. And I went to her and I said, "I am not getting on the scale. You are not taking my body measurements. I do not give a shit. I want you to tell me I'm doing a great job and to be my cheerleader. And I will show up every time."

And I had like a radical transformation in terms of that level of my health. Like, I got so strong, so fast, and I was so motivated to show up. And that's what I needed. I needed someone to be happy to see me when I showed up at the gym. And not like comparing, contrasting with what I did last time. Like, just meet me here. Tell me I'm doing a great job. Pat me on the back. And like, that's what I need in order to thrive.

**[01:28:35] AS:** And that's very –

**[01:28:36] SR:** A lot of self-awareness, you know?

**[01:28:38] AS:** Yeah. Well, I was going to say, that's so self-authoring. Because that is not – I think most trainers, at least the gym I go to, would fucking love to hear that. But the norm is people are like, “All right, I want to know my measurements. It's like you got to do what the client wants.” For you to do that I think is amazing, and I think a testament to your healing, right? Of like, “Wait a second. This is what I'm actually here for.” And understanding that the connection between when we feel that physical strength that we can hold ourselves, right? That we have another type of strength that that's important.

I love that you said this could be part of our clothes. And I think what I want to end on is this – And I know it's kind of a big question. But I think it speaks to what is possible when we develop the sense of safety that can hold us much better than food. Food is great when we're hungry and when we want to connect a ritual. I mean, we can use food. And I always say when it's in alignment with our goals and our choices. Clients are like laughing at me because I'm like, “You're the only nutrition who's like, “So, you ate brownies?” So, what?” Like, “That's what you wanted to do.” The important thing is that you're in choice.

And, though, I think this speaks to when you don't just – When you aim – And again, I'm going to say truce with food, because this is like my framework that I think things through. When you

develop a sense of safety, that is what you really need, there's this level of healing that I think not only do you get the freedom and peace with food, and you can start to inhabit your body rather than kind of pick it apart. But there is just – I've seen so many mysterious things with my clients. And one of the things that you said I – As you're doing all this work, right? Realizing it's not about the food. It's not about the alcohol. It's not about the infatuating relationships. It's like I need to be seen, held and known in this way. And here's how I get in my own way. Here's the grief. All of this, like, hope and healing, you end up meeting with your birth mother and really working through that experience. And then you got pregnant for the first time after that. So, I want to end with this kind of awe, of you started with saying repair is always possible. And I think this story speaks to that. And so, would you share that with us before – I mean, take as much time. But I want to end on that.

**[01:31:17] SR:** Thank you, Ali, for giving me space to share this and to be in the inquiry myself about this connection that it arose through talking to you. I had had plenty of years of not being the most careful when it comes to sexual partnership. And I wouldn't say it doesn't matter. I'm not even going to go there. And I had never gotten pregnant to my knowledge. And I met my birth mother in 2015. And I ended the relationship I was in a few months later.

Through meeting my birth mother, it was like this – I was reflecting on some emails pretty recently. This initial email exchange, it was just like a little bit of disbelief, and so much excitement. And now I can read in there like the huge expectations that we both had.

And after we met, it was like an attic door was opened. And all of this grief and rage that I did not know I was carrying just started dumping out of me. And I worked through that for many, many months. And that might have been my first experience of setting a boundary, honestly. A healthy boundary. My birth mother was really keen to have – Now, it's like, “Now, we're in relationship. And now you're back in my life.” And I felt pretty violated, actually. So, I set a boundary. These are the terms of our relationship. And I had to do a lot of emotion processing in an ongoing way. And that became sort of the focus of my personal work.

That's when I got sober, and was doing a lot of expressive art therapy, and allowing all of these feelings of pain, abandonment, mistrust in myself, shame. I was getting all of that out through expressive arts practice, and self-study, and working with a mentor.

And within a year of that, I met my now husband. And it was a longer time, because he went out of the country on a deployment. But when he got back – Pretty much as soon as he got back, I got pregnant. And my first pregnancy was a pregnancy loss. And I had gotten pregnant for the first time ever in my life. And I was 35. And that pregnancy loss only deepened my awareness of the significance of pregnancy, and birth, and postpartum. And I dove headlong into postpartum care, somatic sex education, and started doing this whole deeper level of healing. And it was explicitly womb healing.

There's a lot of nuance in there in terms of what I was doing and what those practices looked like. But almost exactly a year later, I got pregnant with my son. Very straightforward pregnancy and birth experience. Pretty straightforward healing experience. Nine months later, I was pregnant with my daughter. Again, pretty straightforward. Had a couple of hiccups with her pregnancy. But my sense of the connection here, is that by entering into relationship with my birth mother, like I said, it opened up this vault of emotion, and subtle even, subconscious beliefs that I didn't know I was carrying. And that gave me the opportunity to deal with that, to even attempt to digest it, to assimilate that experience of this very big rupture so early on in my life about belonging and being safe.

And to do that healing process, to come out the other side with a pregnancy, even though it ended in a loss. To me, it was like this – I don't know. It was like a light went on in a part of my body that I didn't even know had been offline, or like disconnected from the grid.

After my pregnancy loss, I went to this retreat training in Canada. And we were doing a practice called the body poem. And I have the poem that came out of it. It was my first experience ever

in my life having the felt sense. Being able to sense and even see in my mind's eye my reproductive organs. It had always been like theoretical before. Always. I was like, "Oh, my God! There they are. I see them."

It was this new level of attunement to the fact of my body that was so profound, so clear. And within five months of that training, I was pregnant with my son. And I just – Like, it's emotional. But, I mean, the biggest silliest grin on my face right now thinking about this. The potency of our body's intelligence, the subtle kind of intelligence. We are here in this specific body, in this specific life, given these specific conditions at this particular time in history in order to help us evolve. That is the foundational teaching of Sankhya philosophy, this idea of karma, and how we come into this body. It's built on this belief that it's all on purpose, and it's functional. And it's not to say that, like, it's good, and you should be so grateful. But that there is a depth to it. An unseen intelligence working and turning toward our life. Turning toward our body, and all the signals it's giving us, whether they're painful, or, "Oh, this is really working for me." All of that matters. Being able to have the capacity to turn toward ourselves is, I think, the key to true and lasting healing, let alone like evolving as a species.

**[01:38:58] AS:** That's so beautiful. And I always think the most profound healing is when we can choose differently when we weren't able to choose in our past. And I feel like you really turned towards yourself with your birth mother and put up those – Like, you saw, held and knew yourself and were able to choose differently. And that ushered in just so much. And I just – Like, deep bow to you. Because as someone who's different path, but I know how much work it takes to get to that point.

**[01:39:34] SR:** Thank you. Thank you so much, Ali. That question. All of your questions. I love the contrast and the connection in the way that our minds work. It's just such a pleasure. I could spend hours and hours and hours talking to you.

**[01:39:53] AS:** Yeah. Thank you so much for your time, your story, the thoughtfulness and skill that you bring to your work and how you're revolutionizing how we approach birth, and conception, and postnatal. The whole – I forgot the official term. Pre and perinatal. Or wait, peri to postnatal post-natal continuum. I would say it's God's work, and God being the mother too. Not the –

**[01:40:25] SR:** Hell, yes.

**[01:40:25] AS:** Not the way we think of God tends to be. Because I think God's in the body. So, I appreciate that. Where can people find more of you, Stacey, and your lovely, lovely, intensity? I want more of it.

**[01:40:39] SR:** Thank you so much. I am online. My website is my name, [Staceyramsower.com](http://Staceyramsower.com). I do primarily virtual work with folks. I live in Tucson. So, a few people get hands on work with me. You can also find me on Instagram, which is the primary platform that I use, and it is [sacredbody\\_staceyramsower](https://www.instagram.com/sacredbody_staceyramsower). And I share most of what I'm up to in terms of classes, and workshops, and things of that nature there. But you can get on my newsletter through my website.

**[01:41:13] AS:** Yeah. And we'll have links in the show notes. And Stacey is also teaching The Truce Coaching Certifications and somatic skills. And I'm hoping she will also agree to teach in the Truce with Food group as well. So, if you're going to join that in January, you'll get Stacey there too, once I work it out with her.

Stacey, thank you so much.

**[01:41:37] SR:** Take care, Ali. Thank you so much.

[OUTRO]



**[01:41:41] AS:** 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](https://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]

