

## Food, Feeling Fat, and Perfectionism: Protection Strategies with Sil Reynolds – Insatiable Season 13, Episode 4

[INTRO]

**[0:00:05] AS:** You went vegetarian, then paleo. You stopped restricting. You're trying to love yourself more, but nothing seems to be working fully. You might feel hopeless about ever feeling good in your body. 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. 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 is no one size fits all diet, exercise, or way to biohack. Good health is much less about willpower, or discipline and more complex interweb of our societal structures, food choices, emotional history, environmental exposures and privilege. There is a great loss of certainty and safety when we initially have to face what is real, versus the half-truths we've been fed. 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.

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.

[OVERVIEW]

**[0:02:46] AS:** Welcome, everybody, to Insatiable Season 13, Episode 4, Using Food as a Protection Strategy with Sil Reynolds.

All right listeners, welcome back. Is this season not amazing? It just feels so good in my body and soul. Speaking of soul, you are in for a soul treat today. It will expand your understanding of the spiritual invitation in your relationship with food. I feel like this episode even helped me come out of the closet about the truth of truce with food, that it is a spiritual initiation.

We have the brilliant and wise Sil Reynolds on to talk about how food and perfectionism are safety strategies around getting our needs met. Get they are temporary. There are other more fulfilling ways to go about receiving our basic safety needs, like emotional support. So far in this season, I've walked you through the first two foundations of truce with food and my truce coaching certification.

In the first episode, we made the holistic and deeply integrated connection about food comes to represent safety. In episode two, I walked you through what stresses make us feel unsafe and turn to food. In essence, we need to answer, what's eating you? Uncover the outdated stories that cause endless stress and that lack of fulfillment. In our third episode, we covered how Protestantism and Puritan values and beliefs that are the dominant influence in how these

religious beliefs have come to create our norms, and how we make meaning, including what is perceived as good or bad about food, how we eat, exercise and bodies.

Once we have these stories, today, we're going to talk about how we try to protect ourselves as a result of these stories. Many of us think we are self-sabotaging, when really, what we're doing is the best to take care of ourselves with the level of awareness we have, especially given the cultural norms they give us, answers like, you have to try harder, or you need more discipline.

Now, each of us will have our own unique, quirky ways to protect ourselves. That is part of the truce process to get clear on this nitty-gritty. Yet, in this episode, I want you to understand how we often use food to abandon ourselves and what we really need when we're in our stories. We cover so much ground from how no one is a perfectionist by nature, but rather perfectionism is a safety strategy and how “bad body image” is also a protection strategy, too.

I was filled with gratitude for someone who could have this depth psychology conversation with me, as not many people understand the roots of body image struggles. This interview satiated my soul for weeks and I think it will for you, too.

Before we get to it, here's a bit more about Sil. Sil brings 40 years' experience to her work as a coach and teacher, experience as a nurse practitioner, psychotherapist, workshop leader, author and a mothering and battering coach. She graduated from Brown University, where she majored in women's studies. She graduated from Marion Woodman's Body Soul Rhythms, training in dreamwork, archetypal psychology and the art and science of listening to the wisdom of the body. Sil explains that Marion Woodman's work reflects a unique Jungian lineage, focusing on bringing the archetypal divine feminine into our embodied earthly lives.

She says, her lineage is my lineage. It is my spiritual mother line. It has been my lifeline during difficult times. I think after today's episode, you'll agree that that during these rapidly changing

times, I think you will find Sil as a wise woman and her work is an anchor we all need in our lives. Enjoy today's conversation.

[INTERVIEW]

**[0:06:50] AS:** Welcome, everybody, to Insatiable today. Today, we have such a special guest. We have Sil Reynolds, who I have wanted to interview for a while. I don't know if you knew that, Sil. I just love your work. It is so applicable to our food as safety series. Also, just food, eating body in general. I think, everyone's going to be prepared to have their minds blown and perspectives expanded today. I just really appreciate you being here.

**[0:07:18] SR:** Oh, it's so my pleasure.

**[0:07:20] AS:** I want to open up with your own personal story. You had said, and this is a quote of yours. "I wanted to experience my body and psyche as my home." I think so many of us can relate to that. What was your story that created this desire, where you, I guess, you felt not at home with your body and psyche?

**[0:07:38] SR:** Yeah, great question. I'm 67-years-old now, so just to put your listeners in context of, I'm in my third chapter. I sometimes call it that. My first chapter, being a girl in the family I grew up, and the young woman, the adolescent coming of age was certainly the time – I mean, I'm a psychotherapist, when patterns gets set, where I'm a Jungian psychologist, where archetypal, and I'll be talking about archetypes a little bit later in this interview, consolidate in our psyche and our psychological, emotional, developmentally, in the family of origin.

In my family of origin, I had a not so great relationship with my mother. That really, eventually turned into not just struggling with our relationship during adolescence, but also now it came to put these pieces together later, I struggle with my relationship with food, and became an emotional eater as a teenager. There's a whole story with that. I'm happy to talk about that.

Even if we don't have that history in our lives, we live in a culture as girls, as women, as young women, or if we identify as being female and female bodies where we're objectified, or we are in my own case, in my "initiation" with my mother was her teaching me how to diet. That was the way that we "connected." One of the ways in which, yeah, it's so sad, but that she passed on to me. Also, all of these wounds or struggles became great ways for me to awaken later in my life and certainly, became the subjects of my work.

I initially was a nurse practitioner in women's health and that was so much about having women have really good experiences with their bodies during a gynecological exam, or in discussion with them about my approach was holistic. Then later, I became a psychotherapist and created a whole body of work with my teenage daughter. One child, a girl who's now almost 32 and actually pregnant.

**[0:10:28] AS:** Oh. I had chills.

**[0:10:35] SR:** When I had a daughter pretty early on, I thought, "Oh, I really need to up my game and figure this out and get more conscious about what happened with my own mother, so I don't repeat some of the same things." Out of that was literally born a body of work, mothering and daughtering. We ended up teaching workshops for mothers and their preteen and teen girls. We wrote a book called *Mothering and Daughtering: Keeping Your Bond Strong Through the Teen Years*. So much of our work was about making peace with our body and our bodies and, and in my work with the mothers, because in the workshops, we'd break into separate groups during parts of the workshop.

Eliza would take the girls and I would be with the mothers. We would talk about, so many of them also struggled with their own mothers and with their own bodies. A lot of mothering, daughtering was about healing the mother line and passing on a lineage of not only connection, but also, a relationship to one's body and to food. Because that's so fraught in our culture, passing that on to our daughters what we might not have received ourselves.

To come back to your original question, it was like, I wanted – My experience of my own body as a teenager was fraught with self-criticism. I was always struggling with my relationship with food and gaining weight and dieting, and my body was enemy territory in the healing process, which began to happen in my 20s, when I at that time, we're talking about the 70s and the 80s that were just beginning to be books. One of the first one was called fat as a feminist issue. Then later, there was – Geneen Roth was writing about emotional eating. I mean, this was all new then. That the intuitive relationship one could develop with food, such that over time, you could actually heal not only your relationship with food, but your relationship to your body.

**[0:12:53] AS:** I love that you talked – you originally phrased the not so great relationship to your mother. Then you talked about healing the mother line. The healing the mother line to me, I think everyone can, whether they think they have a good relationship to their mom and are struggling with food are not so great, it's like, healing the mother line is like, “Oh, we all need to do that.” The feminine in our culture, in general, just has not been given the proper respect, or reverence. I love how you phrase that of the work of healing or mother line. For most of us, that will involve changing our relationship to food in our bodies.

**[0:13:33] SR:** Right, exactly. Listen, anybody who's listening, and can ever read different versions, including a great relationship with their mother and their mother line, which is so great. But still, maybe even not have a great relationship with food, because the culture doesn't make that easy. Don't worry if you don't fit into any of these exact experiences that I'm describing. I agree with you, Ali. I think healing the mother line can mean many things. It can mean finding our voice.

In my 60s, I am looking at a mother line where I'm the first in my mother line to be able to support myself financially. That's pretty radical. I mean, there's so many ways that we can look at where our mother line and how our mother line has healed, or needs healing.

**[0:14:30] AS:** Oh, my God. I love those examples. You said, we were going to talk about archetypes. let's dive in. I would love for you to expand upon what the role of this archetypal feminine isn't the same thing as – well, maybe you can clarify for me, because this is your wheelhouse. I don't know if it's the same thing as the mother line, or it overlaps. What is archetypes for everyone who might be new to this? Then what is the role of the archetypal feminine in our food and body image struggles? Because I've talked about it on the podcast before. Actually, my master's thesis in graduate school was how to heal our relationship with food. We have to go on the heroine's journey, not the hero's journey that is put into all these infotainment health and weight loss shows. If you could tell people what that is, since you are so well versed in this.

**[0:15:22] SR:** Yeah, sure. I just wanted to point out, you just asked, is the archetypal connected to the mother line? In the way that I'm talking about the mother line, we're talking about, literally, the maternal line and the ancestral, or the epigenetics, or what we've inherited literally from our mother, grandmother, great grandmother down the line culturally and otherwise. It could also be women on our father's side.

Whereas, the archetypal, in a way is the spiritual mother, it's archetypes as coined by Carl Jung, the Swiss psychiatrist. He spoke of the personal unconscious, quite like Freud, who was his teacher, who he actually broke away from, because he found him too limiting, versus the collective unconscious. the Collective unconscious is where the archetypes – the archetypal realm. Meaning that it's a realm that Jung felt was universal.

No matter where you grew up, what culture you came from, there was just this thread going through, like all cultures tend to have a creation story. All cultures have a mother god and a father god, even if the mother goddess is suppressed in that culture, she lives in the shadows. Archetypes can be anything. Archetypes, or anything universal. Like, if we're looking for instance, which we do when you psychology at dreams. What we look for in our dreams is these universal themes, like the mother, the father, the queen, the king, the divine child.

Archetypes are everywhere in art and poetry, in movies, in books, in fairy tales. I think one of the most important things to know about archetypes, especially if we're using them, and in this case, the archetypal feminine to explore and heal our food and body image struggles. There's always with archetypes, the positive and the negative pole. For instance, the great mother is a name of an archetype, as we would call her, either universal, like the personal mother, in the sense that we all have mothers. The great mother is Demeter, from the Greek myth of Demeter and Persephone. She was the goddess of the grain. You could call her the great mother, because she was in charge of life and vegetation and literally, the food that grows on Earth. She's an archetype.

However, what's beautiful about working with archetypes, is, especially in healing our food and body image struggles, is that we can begin to notice the ways in which the inner mother, the archetypal mother that lives in us. Do we hear her voice as criticism, or as love? Sometimes when I'm helping clients to connect with that inner, critical voice, that sometimes that's – I was talking about enemy territory that expects perfection, nothing we do is ever good enough, versus, and I teach women to identify that voice, but not identify with it. Versus a more positive and nourishing and loving voice within and cultivating that.

**[0:19:34] AS:** I love that. I love the distinction between identify, but not identify with, because in my work, it's often the voices we think that are ours are actually our parents, or a teacher, or someone else that was authoritative to us.

**[0:19:52] SR:** Exactly. Exactly. As we get older, and we're say, out of the home, we might still hear our mother's, or father's critical voice within us. The healing potential of instead making it personal – I mean, yes, our mothers and fathers said and did certain things to us that might have really hurt, or cause suffering, or even damage. One of the reasons why I love archetypal psychology as a healing path is that we can access within ourselves the healing power of what I would call, the archetypal mother, the positive loving voice and energy within ourselves that yeah, is spiritual.



**[0:20:46] AS:** Oh, I love that. It's like, yes, I can still hear this voice and there's another source that I can access.

**[0:20:53] SR:** That's universal.

**[0:20:55] AS:** Yeah, yeah. Then that connects you to everybody and everything, right? Because part of, I think, so much of food and body struggle – body I should say, especially, is the shame that isolates us and that makes us feel we're different. On the surface, it may be about our bodies, but it's often most deeply about our worth, and something inherent about us, right? It could be anything, but the body –

**[0:21:18] SR:** That's right. That's right. That we're projecting onto the body.

**[0:21:22] AS:** Yes. Oh, I'm so glad you said that. Because I always talk about how body image is fluid. It tends to ratchet it up, when we feel at risk for something. Often, it is that isolation and belonging where – the body is just a convenient place to put.

**[0:21:39] SR:** Yeah, it's the dumping ground. Sometimes what I'll say to clients is, what are you feeling fat about?

**[0:21:46] AS:** Oh, I love that. I'm like, fat is not a feeling. What's going on? Great. What are you feeling fat about? What are some of the threads that come up?

**[0:22:00] SR:** Yeah, exactly. What happened an hour ago, where you were feeling at home in your body, and then something triggered. Something outside triggered a projection that went right on your body. If you get beyond that, you can find the real feelings.

**[0:22:21] AS:** Yes. Oh, my God. I love that. Well, no, because I feel like, sometimes a lot of the body image talk is about feeling better in your body, what you look like in clothes, and that's

important and stuff. To me, that's not the root issue. It feels so good to hear someone else feel like, yeah, there's more to it. Just, I'll use the crazy –

**[0:22:48] SR:** Yeah, you're welcome. Yeah, there's so much more to it. In fact, it's a portal. It's a way into your soul. My teacher, Marion Woodman, who I studied with for a few decades, her thesis at the young Institute in Zurich, she was interested in, because she had had anorexia as a young woman. She had started working with women, and most of whom were not at home with their bodies, or had some issue with body, or food, or their weight or whatever. She began to study them for research on her thesis. She was really interested in the deeper meaning. Why was it that in Western culture, there was a such a rise in disordered, eating disorders? I mean, we're talking, she was doing this research in the 1970s. This is very much on the rise.

I mean, that really was during my adolescence. She was really interested in figuring out why is a culture? What was trying to be expressed through these symptoms? If you can just hang in there with me, Ali, and those listening. It's a little hard to grasp at first, perhaps, but in Jungian psychology, we really feel there's deep meaning in a symptom. Whether it's the culture at large, where there's an epidemic of eating disorders, or body image, or dysmorphia or just women struggling with even liking, let alone loving their bodies. Also, it's the same within a family system, an individual family. What's the symptom trying to express for the soul?

What Marion Woodman found was that in the culture at large, not a big surprise to any of us here, a lot of imbalance with a the patriarchal system. The way she defined patriarchy wasn't really about men being in power, per se. It was about masculine values being considered more valuable than feminine values. Again, stay with me here, because I know this is a lot of words that –

**[0:25:20] AS:** I love it. I love it.

**[0:25:22] SR:** What I mean by masculine bellies is it's not about gender. Let me give you some ideas of what masculine attributes are. They're wonderful. Everybody needs them to some extent. Thinking, doing, achievement, order, discernment might be some of the examples. Nothing wrong with any of those. Everybody needs some order. Everyone needs the thinking and discernment.

The rational action, achievement, goals, okay? Those are masculine attributes in men and women, in all people. Feminine attributes are the opposite. Thinking and feeling rational and intuitive, order and disorder, or chaos. Again, you are already seeing, maybe as I begin to list some of these feminine attributes, again, not gender bound, but think Yin/Yang. They're just different energies, or strengths, or attributes. When I said goal before with the masculine, the feminine would be process, okay.

A lot of times when you're listing these two things, they go together ideally. I'm hopefully in balance that the process would be as important as the goal, that chaos and disorder would be as important as order. While, how could disorder be valuable? Well, think of nature. Nature is chaotic. If you walk through woods, there's order in nature, and there's disorder in nature. There's nothing wrong with it. Everything doesn't have to be perfectly ordered. In fact, to let things flow spontaneously and to be relaxed is part of the feminine process, if we give it the chance, the creative process.

**[0:27:32] AS:** You just said that keyword. If we give it a chance, right?

**[0:27:35] SR:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. What Marion Woodman found was in her research, and what she wrote about in her thesis was that there was deep meaning to the phenomenon, or epidemic, or large numbers of women and girls struggling with body image, and with their relationship to food. That it had to do with an imbalance in the culture, and imbalance in themselves, that they had been forced in some ways to be perfect, or good, or behave in ways

that were less aligned with her instincts and intuition, and to fit into a culture that overvalued masculine attributes and undervalued feminine attributes.

**[0:28:30] AS:** Do you see that as well?

**[0:28:32] SR:** Oh, my gosh. Yes. I continue to be in recovery from the diet culture that I was raised in, and that strict adherence to doing things perfectly. Marion Woodman's best-selling book was called *Addiction to Perfection*.

**[0:28:52] AS:** Can you talk a little bit about that? Okay, so there's a couple of things I want to say, but the perfection is in this, is that when we were talking about those voices, that we sometimes think our own, but we've actually internalized them. This relates to perfection and this over-identifying with the masculine, over-identifying, and then underdeveloped, under-identifying with the feminine, which we could call the Yin, I find in my work that – in my work, I have clients basically, when they feel unsafe, they then turn to food as that symbolic form of safety of love and nurturance.

What will we do is we break down in their stories, they have the noble protector, which is often over-identified with those masculine values. If people are into the yin and yang, we'll talk about that, but we break it down more of like, this is what you've been rewarded for, are those masculine values, like you said, accomplishment, goal setting, rationality. Then when they feel like they haven't lived up to that, which is often these insane perfectionist standards, then what most people call the inner critic, we actually call an inner protector who's worried that your story is going to become true, because you're not being perfect. Your story usually comes down to some risk, like rejection abandonment, or these things that are terrifying.

Do you find that addiction to perfection in this masculine-feminine value conversation, that part of the issue is over-identifying with those masculine values? I know, even within the body work, even if it's not about looks, but something deeper. Is that clear? It's not just the way –

**[0:30:36] SR:** Oh, yeah. Totally clear. I think, you're exactly right, Ali. It is about over identifying with those values, to the point that there's no balance. In other words, those values, there's nothing inherently wrong with them. When they're overly valued, and they're overly identified with, then there's no other side to the self. There's no development of the intuition, or slowing down. No wonder we go to food for emotional safety, because the feminine when that is fully blossoming within ourselves, we create emotional safety. Because say, the great mother archetype is all loving. Her love is unconditional. There would be total emotional safety, because there's no agenda. We don't need to do anything to receive love. I mean, that's potent and deeply healing when we make contact with that part of ourselves.

[MESSAGE]

**[0:31:51] AS:** Ali here, popping in to let you know that if you're enjoying this season's food is safety theme and feel in a place where you want to take action, which is where the results unfold, come join me and other intrepid health rebels who hate small talk, for my free food is safety gathering series. In this series of three 75-minute calls, I'll share practical application tools for your own stress eating, workshop a few participant stress eating challenges, and continue the conversation.

These Zoom calls will take place from 12 to 1:15 p.m. Eastern Standard Time, on Wednesday, November 9th, December 7 and January 4. Come to one, two, or all three and recordings will be available to everyone who registers. These gatherings are casual. Come as you are and nourishing, even showering is optional. The truce with food and truce coaching certification groups will tell you these types of conversations have sustained us during these transitional times. Because if you're feeling stressed and anxious by now, you're paying attention.

Let's find our footing together, instead of using food and support each other through the holidays, which is a rich time to become aware of our stories, protection strategies and experiment with some new tiny behaviors that lead to big results.

If you've ever wanted to take the first step in your own truce with food, this is an amazing opportunity to get started. Did I mention, they're free? You can register for free at [alishapiro.com/food-as-safety](http://alishapiro.com/food-as-safety). The link will also, hopefully, show up in your podcast notes wherever you listen to your podcast. All right, back to the episode.

[INTERVIEW CONTINUED]

**[0:33:32] AS:** There's no agenda. That was so well said, right?

**[0:33:36] SR:** Yeah, yeah. No agenda.

**[0:33:39] AS:** What we do, at least what I say with my clients is they judge that side. You get so far out of balance, that then you burn out. Or then, you're “overly emotional,” but that's because you're so depleted, that you don't have the capacity to be with yourself with no agenda.

**[0:33:58] SR:** Yeah, exactly.

**[0:33:59] AS:** Everything feels like an emergency and “dramatic.” It's because you're so depleted that when you're – that stuff.

**[0:34:09] SR:** Yes. Well, yeah. You're depleted because there's no safe place to return to. We're back to the body and the psyche, which is the psychological, or the soul. There's no home literally in our bodies and in – We have nowhere to go. This healing process is about creating safety. That starts with identifying these voices, but not identifying with them. In the very identification of them, we realize, “Oh, I'm not them.”

**[0:34:51] AS:** I have other choices.

**[0:34:53] SR:** That's right. I've spaced here. Just in the identifying the voices and not identifying with them, we've created some safety and space.

**[0:35:03] AS:** Circling back to the perfectionism that you've seen in your work, and obviously, Marion Woodman did and wrote about it in a book, is I think people start thinking, "I'm a perfectionist," versus "I learn to be a perfectionist, so I wouldn't be at risk in some capacity." Can you talk a little bit about the role of perfectionism?

**[0:35:27] SR:** Yeah. Well, I think you just said it so well. It's like a strategy. If we could have compassion that we did the best we knew how at the time. Then as we become more conscious, then we realize, "Oh. Well, of course. The only thing I was ever taught was to be perfect and good." It's already hard enough to be perfectionist, but then to beat ourselves up for being a perfectionist, it's like, at some point, there needs to be a reconciliation.

**[0:36:02] AS:** Our being is the problem. Not what, but how – it's like, you have to stop the perfectionist to – Strategy, right, for a member.

**[0:36:12] SR:** Yeah. Because it's not sustainable. If your goal is balancing and wholeness and freedom, to be and to become who we are as authentic people.

**[0:36:31] AS:** Yeah. Well, and that makes me want to ask you the question of why do we treat – keep trying to be "good"? Again, these are the ways that we've been told to be good. It feels bad. What's the carrot? No one really wants a carrot, but to use the metaphor, what's the carrot that's being dangled for us to – What do we think the payoff is in this cultural moment that we're in if we keep being good?

**[0:36:58] SR:** Well, I think, I think it might be as simple as safety, even though it's "safety." It's not true safety, but it's a temporary safety. It's a strategy for hiding behind a persona. That's a

term we use in psychology for being the good girl is not really us, but it's a persona. It's a mask. It's a way of being in the world, so we can hide behind that and survive.

**[0:37:39] AS:** Yeah. I think, just for everyone listening, survival isn't just getting your basic needs met, but surviving and belonging where you want to belong, I think that's something.

**[0:37:50] SR:** Yeah. That's right. That's right.

**[0:37:54] AS:** Because the more belonging, which you can also think of a status, power, prestige, that gives you more control of your life in our society.

**[0:38:03] SR:** That's right. That's right. Listen, there's really good reasons why we behave in the ways we do. Whether it's being good, ascribing to the perfect perfection, controlling our eating, being the way we are with ourselves about our body, they're all strategies for getting through.

**[0:38:25] AS:** I think that's so resonant. I don't know if you said getting through, if it was even – To me, because it's like, there can be getting through. Then there's also the choice to thrive, which is different.

**[0:38:39] SR:** Right, well, that would that would be a conscious choice. That's why we're having this conversation, because to be the good girl is usually an unconscious choice. We're living a life that isn't ours. Actually, our relationship to body and food and the lack of safety there can be a wake-up call to discovering. I know it was for me, to rediscovering my true self, was the pain and struggle around food and body got to be too much, that I started trying to find answers and support for why I was behaving in ways that didn't serve me.

**[0:39:27] AS:** I love one thing you said, was through this soul searching, that you realize that reaching for food was a way to abandon yourself. I just love this. I mean, I love that you discovered it. I find that often, that is often our biggest fear and our stories and yet, then we



abandon ourselves and created a self-fulfilling prophecy, because we're not necessarily clear on what we need, or that there's other choices. Can you explain that discovery process of how you discover that at the core of it was you abandoned in yourself?

**[0:40:01] SR:** Yeah. It's a good question, because really, one of the things that Marion Woodman talked about in her thesis and in her books is that sometimes, not all the time, we can discover in our process of looking at our behavior with food and our body, the exact relationship is mirrored in that relationship with food, the same relationship we had with our mother, or very similar.

For instance, in my case, I was an emotional overeater. In learning from Marian, I realized, "Oh, I'm reenacting the lack of attunement that my mother had with me. I'm reenacting that with my relationship with food." Literally, by learning about intuitive eating in my 20s and learning to eat when I was hungry, and to learn to stop when I'd had enough, and to work with the feelings that came up around that, I was actually finding an attunement with myself, and with food, and my body that mirrored the lack of attunement that I'd had with my mother and that she'd had with me. The very process of healing my relationship with food was healing my mother wound.

**[0:41:42] AS:** I'm just processing.

**[0:41:44] SR:** Yeah, me too. There's so much information about where our wounds are, or where our developmental blocks are, when we look at our symptom. The symptom for me was not eating when I was hungry and not stopping when I'd had enough. That was a lack of meeting My instinctual needs – meeting me. It was chaotic in the way my relationship with my mother was emotionally chaotic. There was a replay going on.

**[0:42:26] AS:** I mean, you can feel free not to answer this, but do you think your mother knew how to attune to even her own needs?

**[0:42:32] SR:** Oh, yeah. It's a great question. Definitely not. I mean, if we can't attune to our own needs, then we can't attune to our child's needs, or to another's needs. There's the healing of the mother line at some point, if that's an issue in the mother line. No blame here, really. If our mothers didn't receive that attunement, they would have had to address it in order, usually, in order to attune to another. But not always. I mean, there's no hard and fast rule here.

**[0:43:11] AS:** Right. Well, yeah, and definitely no blame. I'm just thinking, even like you said, you're the first woman in your family to be financially independent. It's like, how many of our mothers didn't even have access, or time to figure this stuff out, because of resources?

**[0:43:27] SR:** Exactly. It wasn't available.

**[0:43:32] AS:** Yeah. It makes me think about, my dad was actually the one I think that probably contributed more to my food stuff, just because he had his own issues. Yet, I can see how over-identifying with masculine values, even though my parents, it's interesting, because my parents were in a "feminist relationship," but they would have never said that, but they both made the same amount of money. They're both teachers. My dad did a lot of the housework. It was just like, we never used that word, but it was just what it was.

Yet, I'm thinking when you said that about your mother, one of the big things I'm working on now is not overworking. I think that is something my mom never learned how not to do. I mean, she grew up very poor, one of nine children. She was helping out with everything, and then was a city school teacher. I'm just thinking about how this even applies to things beyond food, just how –

**[0:44:26] SR:** Oh, brilliant.

**[0:44:28] AS:** How we learn different habits, or ways of being. It's deeper than habits.

**[0:44:34] SR:** Yeah, and I wonder again, you don't have to answer this either, but was your mother more masculine and your father more feminine?

**[0:44:43] AS:** Than typically?

**[0:44:46] SR:** I just mean, just in terms of attributes. Nothing to do with gender. Was your father – was he more a feeling person? Was she more a thinking person?

**[0:44:57] AS:** That's a good question. I think, my dad was sensitive, but he grew up in a very violent, poor neighborhood. I think he had to shut down a lot of that. He is sensitive. I know this is –

**[0:45:09] SR:** No. It's not whether they shut it down or not. What I'm sensing is that you could feel, even as a young girl that your father had a sensitivity.

**[0:45:21] AS:** Yes. Oh, and he was so protective of my mother, too. If I ever got out of line, he's like, "You don't talk to your mom like –"

**[0:45:29] SR:** Well, did he have an emotional sensitivity?

**[0:45:33] AS:** Oh, yes, yes.

**[0:45:34] SR:** Yeah. Yeah. Maybe slightly more than your mother?

**[0:45:37] AS:** Yeah. Well, my mom was very – My husband jokes when I want someone to pity me to call my mom. He's like, "Call your mom." I joke Switzerland, and of all her brothers and sisters always very attuned to her family as well. I think, she didn't like her job as much as my dad did. I think, my dad was more emotionally available at times.

**[0:46:03] SR:** Yeah. I mean, I think what I'm getting at here, and it's a really good teaching, for the people that are listening is that our fathers might have been more mothers and our mothers might have been more fathers. Or, it's just like mothering. It's just more about the attributes of being more emotionally sensitive. That could be, a father could be more emotionally sensitive than a mother. A mother could be more – have more developed rational function, and that's not a bad thing. It's just so interesting. When I talk about healing the mother line, in a way, I'm talking about healing the emotional, the ancestral, emotional inheritance, wherever it came from.

Because what's underneath struggles with food and body is repressed feeling. Underneath perfectionism and good girl and trying to make everything perfect is repressed, like real feelings, like sadness and wanting to be loved and wanting to belong and matter, and wanting to be seen and heard and loved without any agenda.

**[0:47:19] AS:** Yeah. I think what you said so well, is a distinction. It's a felt sense.

**[0:47:24] SR:** Yes. Yes. It's a felt sense. It's a felt sense. In psychology, we call it the feeling function. In patriarchy, we develop the thinking function, much more, even in our schools, the curriculum. The arts programs are slashed. The sports programs are slashed, or physical, where we move our bodies and where we might just develop other parts of ourselves and thinking function is overvalued. IQ instead of EQ, emotional intelligence.

**[0:47:59] AS:** I love that you brought up the part about not feeling, because with my clients, I often show how – it's about body image, but it's also related to weight loss, how often that stuff will come up when they don't want to feel all the stuff that's coming up in their life. It's like, oh, this is a way to just ratchet it down my feelings. I feel like, perfectionism is the same thing, right? It's like, “Oh, I won't have to feel this. Nothing will go wrong. Everything will be perfect. There's no risk. I mean, there is.”

**[0:48:30] SR:** Yeah, exactly. Yeah, it's a defense system. If we can have compassion that human beings as they develop, create defense systems to protect themselves. Then as we start to uncover this, we get more conscious about our eating behavior, and as a journey back to ourselves and to healing. We can have compassion for why we created these defense systems and these behaviors in the first place. It's like, we're brilliant. I overate to survive, to feel what was underneath. My eating was just too much to feel at the time. I needed support in order to get there. I could not do it alone. That was therapy, and I was in a support group, and it made all the difference.

**[0:49:21] AS:** Well, that sounds like that container was part of the emotional attunement, that was required for that healing to trust in that.

**[0:49:29] SR:** Exactly, exactly, Ali.

**[0:49:32] AS:** You said something that I read this in your writing and it blew my mind, because again, I am a novice at archetypes. Because I'm thinking about that support group and you being willing to feel was so essential. You said, when we reach for carbohydrates, the standard go to for emotional eaters, we are reaching for the ritual foods of the goddess; grains, milk and honey. I think, that's in part reference to Demeter, which you were talking about earlier. Can you tell me more about this?

**[0:50:06] SR:** Yeah.

**[0:50:08] AS:** You being willing to feel. It was like, you needed to do that, so that these goddess grains became obsolete. It wasn't about white knuckling, you know, "Don't bring food into the house, or whatever." Can you just talk a little bit more about that? Because that is just a beautiful archetypal, like, wow.

**[0:50:25] SR:** Right. Isn't it? I know, I love that. I mean, we're back to projection again. If we're not so caught up with, "Oh, my God, why did I eat another muffin again? Or, why did I eat all that bag of cookies?" Instead, "Oh, I'm on such a loser. I'm never going to get this." It's like, "Whoa. Wait, wait. What if there was meaning to the projection?" It's so basic, that it's – It's really like, I'm eating – Geneen Roth's brilliant book was called When Food Is Love. The title of the book is the projection. It's like, we are comforted and soothed by the goddess, by the great mother, when we eat her sweets.

If we could slow down and begin to just let that notion in, then it gives us the space again, to pause before we eat another cookie, and go to our journal, or do something that where we seek out our soul, which is the real food, where we see ourselves and love ourselves. Then the more we cultivate that condition within ourselves of unconditional love, the projection is withdrawn from the food. Because if we're getting the real food, then which is sole nourishment, and true and deep loving understanding of ourselves and treating ourselves like that, then we don't need food to be the goddess, to be that loving replacement, which is already in our own hearts.

**[0:52:45] AS:** It makes me think about, I was having a conversation with one of my clients in the span of truce with food. We were talking about how God can be in the body and how they hid it from us, because it was in the most obvious place.

**[0:52:58] SR:** Oh, I love it.

**[0:53:00] AS:** It makes me think of what you're saying. We have access to this, but we have to stop. We have to slow down, pause, understand our strategies. Because all of these strategies, almost, I don't know, if we're blocked, disconnect, distract, but from what you're saying, we already have access to in this universal archetypal mother.

**[0:53:22] SR:** Right. If our parents didn't know how to cultivate this slower, soulful life, then they weren't able to pass that on to us. Hopefully, there were aspects like that, that they were able to pass on to us and that we build on that. That's part of healing the mother line, or the father line. That's part of healing what's come before us is this evolution of understanding and consciousness. That we realize, oh, these struggles we have can actually be the way in. They can be how we transform ourselves is through these challenges.

**[0:54:11] AS:** They can be an invitation. When we overvalue the masculine, they become something to fix, right? Something rational.

**[0:54:17] SR:** Right. Or something wrong with us.

**[0:54:20] AS:** Yeah. This is a tangential question. I would love your thoughts on this, because you said, I think the work of our lives and I agree with this, too, is to more embody our soul. In ways, the archetypes are the, I would say, the world soul embodied in a way. A lot of what people – again, and there's a lot of things in different realms, and I'm not saying that in their context, they don't work. I was having this conversation with another coach friend of mine, and we were talking about how – because you mentioned the divine child as this archetype. I see right now out in the world, a lot of people doing inner child healing.

Part of me was like, are we glorifying this inner child that some of us never experienced, because of various reasons? I'm assuming, you're saying the soul is different than this sometimes, divine child. Then sometimes when people are saying inner child work that needs to be done. Is that question clear? Because I know I'm piecing together the archetype of the divine child. I think, sometimes that gets projected as like, “Oh, we all have to cut back to our inner child.”

**[0:55:34] SR:** Yeah. No, I think I'm getting it. The inner child work, I think is more almost psychological, developmental inner work, working with parts of us that that got stuck along the

way, and need loving encouragement. Mothering those parts of ourselves. I think it's part and parcel with the archetypal as well. You can bring in the archetypal to do that inner work. The divine child is, it's definitely, when it comes in a dream, one way you recognize the divine child was a golden child. I don't mean that in an idealized form. I just mean that is a radiant part of ourselves. I would call that the soul.

The soul can show up in many ways, in dreams and in many different archetypes. When we talk about the divine child and really use that word, it's the divine within. Yeah, I would say, it's very much about the soul. That transcendent, infinitely radiant part of us that our culture tends to miss and not celebrate. That would be more celebrated in the arts and in slowing down and nature. We're so busy, we miss the soul lot.

**[0:57:15] AS:** I think we also take the soul out of so much, that –

**[0:57:18] SR:** Right, right.

**[0:57:20] AS:** Yeah. We went to the farmers market this weekend. I was like, there is soul here, right? That I feel at the grocery store.

**[0:57:30] SR:** Yes, yes. Yes.

**[0:57:31] AS:** Even if they're shipping in local food, it's just a different experience. I guess, the French would say [inaudible 0:57:38]. You can feel when something – and again, not to knock IKEA. I have some IKEA stuff, but furniture that's been handmade, versus I can't – Maybe there is soul in IKEA furniture, too. Again, no pick on brands, or anything like that. There's something about when the roots are acknowledged, I think of something. And the chaos. What you were talking about earlier, the feminine.



**[0:58:09] SR:** The messy. Maybe that is a confusing word and it's more about the messy. It's like, allowing some spontaneity and disorder and messiness in our lives, and learning how to be comfortable with that. On the other hand, some people could be way too much messiness in their life. They need more order, positive masculine. There can be a sedentary stuck quality to messiness, too. I don't want to glorify messiness. It's just a balance between the two.

**[0:58:48] AS:** Yes. No. I'm so glad you said that, because I tend to be overly structured and ordered with my schedule and stuff. Since becoming a mom and going through menopause at the same time, it's like, okay life. I get it. I get it. You need to phrase this in, or the chaos, the non-structure. Okay, I get it. I get it.

**[0:59:12] SR:** Right. Right.

**[0:59:14] AS:** Well, that brings up to, I think, because one of the things is that I think for everyone listening, too, if they're – I mean, this has just been so rich on so many levels. Realizing that the – I will call it the wounded feminine, the mother wound heals in relation to the masculine. As we strengthen that archetypal feminine, that divine mother, the masculine automatically softens. Wouldn't you say so?

**[0:59:40] SR:** Oh, without question, right? In the Jungian world, we call it the inner marriage. It's an inner relationship of two energies, and a being together, working together and supporting each other, honoring the different attributes.

**[1:00:00] AS:** I love that. Yeah, it's like holding the space for Anne, which is paradox and where to me, truth is.

**[1:00:06] SR:** I totally agree, Ali. Exactly, exactly. It's where truth is.

**[1:00:12] AS:** Yeah. Yeah. It's dynamic too. I know, I want to circle a little bit back to your story. Then we'll end with one last question. When you changed learning to eat for yourself, and emotionally tuning to that, did you then find it was easier to – it doesn't have to be in a certain order, but how that was the foundation then to be able to learn that your needs were contextual, in a way. I think that's part of the challenge, not only when we're turning to food, or we're looking at other authorities, it's like the static plan, but that our needs are changing in dynamic. That is what we have to learn is the attunement, not just our hunger, but that that hunger changes. Also, with our emotional needs as well. I'm asking –

**[1:01:02] SR:** Yeah. It's literally, if our relationship with food is disordered, then it becomes a practice of learning to attune to so many things, if we're really tuning into our physiological cues. We're also tuning into like, are we getting enough rest? Are we moving our bodies? There's so many ways for us to grow that emotional attunement, and instinctual attunement, and that ability to meet our needs, our literal needs of body and hunger, rest, like the most basic needs that get translated on an emotional level. There's a softening, like you said, that can happen. A healing.

**[1:02:02] AS:** Did you find that you're tuning into your food needs, everything was such a powerful foundation, that's then made other things easier?

**[1:02:11] SR:** Yeah. Well, yeah. I think part of the reason why it's so powerful, Ali, is because it was almost developmentally, I was starting at the beginning. When we start with food, we're starting with our first days of life. It's almost like, we're setting, resetting a fracture, or an early misattunement that might have just been emotional, but gets translated, and played out in our relationship to food. It's so basic. It's so basic. To start there is so powerful, because it's setting everything right.

**[1:03:02] AS:** Yeah. You have to do the foundations, before you can do more the tricks and tweaks, I guess.

**[1:03:09] SR:** I think so. I think so.

**[1:03:11] AS:** Yeah. What is listening to the wisdom of the body mean to you today? I'm curious, how you learned to trust in it, even when maybe it feels a little, I don't even know, crazy, chaotic. We'll use the feminine.

**[1:03:25] SR:** Yeah. Well, today, it's more – I healed my relationship with food and body decades ago. My process of listening to the wisdom of my body these days is more about listening to my nervous system. That's my fine tuning these days. Luckily, there's just so much good material in the last decade or so, about neurobiology. I lately been, yeah, just learning so much about listening to my body's fears and anxieties. Instead of overriding them, just slowing down and meeting them.

It's very nuanced work. The culture is so anxious. The culture is so, I mean, with COVID, with polarities in politics, we're just so anxious and fearful. All you have to do is look at the newspaper and it's an opportunity for me to set boundaries around how much I'm going to read, and an attunement to really respecting my sensitivity to, and concern for the environmental climate change stuff that worries me. I could either worry about that all day long, and it could throw my nervous system out of whack, worrying about our planet's future. Or, I could set limits about how much I'm going to go there and find ways to make a difference and contribute towards the solution, but also to take care of how much I care, and set boundaries around that. I mean, that's just an example of the way in which I listen to my body. It tells me when I'm overdoing it, in terms of – just as an example, exposure to the news.

**[1:05:53] AS:** Well, don't you think of our bodies – well, at least I think of it as connecting us back to that great mother Earth. It's somehow connected. I mean, not somehow, but when we could show the people call it earthing, which is walking on the grass now, but it's a thing now.

**[1:06:09] SR:** Yeah. It really is. It's a reason, right? It's so grounded. It's literally grounding. I think, it's a return. I agree with you. I feel like, that's where she lives in me. She guides me through my body cues. If I listen to her through my anxiety, or when I experience something as stressful, I tend to it as best I can.

**[1:06:44] AS:** Yeah. Well, and I loved what you were saying about, okay, well, also attuning to what's mine to do, because you can't do it all. Also, what's actually effective? Versus, just more, more, more news.

**[1:06:58] SR:** Yeah, yeah, exactly, exactly.

**[1:07:00] AS:** I have one more question.

**[1:07:02] SR:** Yeah. No, no, no, I'm good. I'm good. Yeah, yeah, please.

**[1:07:04] AS:** Okay. Well, it just made me think about when you were talking about the climate change and what the great mother is going through, the spiritual mother. Because I'm assuming, the spiritual mother and the earth mother, earth mother is different than the archetypal feminine mother, correct? Spiritual?

**[1:07:20] SR:** Well, everybody has their own personal relationships with their own personal archetypes.

**[1:07:25] AS:** Yeah, okay. No, I love that. I love that.

**[1:07:29] SR:** We can be inspired by real myths and stories about all these different gods and goddesses from many traditions. I think that the more we embody through healing, spirit and matter, or the earth body and the spiritual experience meld together.

**[1:07:57] AS:** Yeah. We took the spirit out of matter, didn't we?

**[1:08:00] SR:** Yeah, yeah. We took the matter out of spirit. Because, I mean, that was like, yeah, that's the great divide. Mind and body are one as we're learning.

**[1:08:15] AS:** I watched the Married Woman documentary in preparation for this. During it, she's talking about how within death, there is always life, and within life, there's death. My final question is, what collective archetype, or collective world do you think is trying to be born amongst all of this collapse?

**[1:08:37] SR:** Wow, what a great question. One where the feminine is honored in men and women and everybody in between. One where feelings are expressed and heard and honored. One where to slow down is seen as a strength, not a weakness. That vulnerability is also brave and beautiful, that we hear each other out. That we soften, especially in our approach to ourselves. We'd be the change, one person at a time.

For everybody that's listening, I know that you're listening and that you're a student of Ali's because you care so much, and you want to be the change and you are – you want to transform within and be part of the greater transformation on the planet.

**[1:09:55] AS:** I just love that. I hope that's what's coming into existence.

**[1:10:00] SR:** Yeah. Well, I see evidence of it everywhere, if you're really looking. I mean, that's what's hard about seeing the news is the news cycles focus so often on the bad news. I think, when I slow down enough to – and I look back, and I'm in my late 60s now, so I'm already – I struggle with a lot of bad news. I'm so encouraged by how many young women are many more than when I was younger, just are in the business of transforming their relationship to themselves in the best way. I'm so encouraged by the trends that matter, and what's deeply

changing in the culture. I'm an optimist. I see really good signs, even amidst all this falling apart, is new life, signs of new life and so much kindness and care.

**[1:11:17] AS:** I totally agree. It's like, the news. I mean, again, you want to be somewhat informed, and I just see so many sprouts of new – even just walking around – Well, I live in Pittsburgh. Some of your family lives here. It's like, I saw a couple of businesses being like, “We're employee-owned now.” I'm like, oh, that's a sign of a new world order. To your point, even the work that you and Eliza did of this new mother line, of during your teenage years, when so many teenage girls, we get lost at sea, right? Now, there's a template for this that no other generation had before. This stuff takes time to really –

**[1:11:57] SR:** Yes. It takes time to dismantle patriarchy.

**[1:12:02] AS:** Yeah. It's not going down without a fight.

**[1:12:04] SR:** That's for sure.

**[1:12:05] AS:** Yeah. It's part of we're having this backlashes, because we are making progress.

**[1:12:09] SR:** It's true. It's true. I totally agree. I totally agree.

**[1:12:14] AS:** I agree with you. I think, the younger generations, and even as we're recording this, I'm enthralled with the women of Iran right now, because I just – I mean, I don't think I would ever have that courage to put my life on the line.

**[1:12:26] SR:** What's interesting about that, is that it's a leaderless movement.

**[1:12:32] AS:** Yes. Oh, you're right.

**[1:12:36] SR:** They can really suppress it. Because in the past, I was – the last big movement they had was 15 years ago, and it was an ecological movement. There were four leaders, and they put them in prison, and the whole thing was shut down. What I'm reading and learning about this is that it's a mass uprising. There's no leader. You can't put your finger on it. I find that really encouraging. The feminine is rising, and that there's a lot of young man marching in the streets with them. These are 15 to 30-year-olds. This is really exciting. Really awful. But like you said, it's so captivating, I think, in part, because it's a rising up. There's no leader.

**[1:13:36] AS:** Yeah.

**[1:13:36] SR:** Everybody is their own leader.

**[1:13:39] AS:** Well, and that's what I was thinking, applying that to this episode. Because we all have to have the own leadership in our lives to create these new normals. Rather than thinking, “Well, I'm not a President.” Exactly. That's why you will be effective. That's part of the new movement of we do have to lead ourselves out of these systems.

**[1:14:00] SR:** Exactly. Exactly.

**[1:14:03] AS:** Yeah. Thank you so much for being here. Where can people find more of you?

**[1:14:08] SR:** My website is [silreynolds.com](http://silreynolds.com).

**[1:14:11] AS:** I love it. We will put it in the show notes as well.

**[1:14:13] SR:** Wonderful.

**[1:14:14] AS:** Because you're not real big on social media. I see sometimes, you have a comment.

[1:14:19] **SR:** Yeah. No, I'm not doing anything on social media.

[1:14:24] **AS:** That's my goal.

[1:14:29] **SR:** Yeah. I don't accept following. Yeah, I'm pretty quiet, I remain. Also, the mothering and daughtering work is there and archived. [Motheringanddaughter.com](http://Motheringanddaughter.com). We have a book, *Mothering and Daughtering*, and an online course. Yeah, my coaching practice on [silreynolds.com](http://silreynolds.com). There's a resource page with, if you're interested in more and learning about Marion Woodman. It's on that page, how to start with Marion Woodman, including the link for the documentary about her called *Dancing in the Flames*, which is on Vimeo.

[1:15:04] **AS:** Yeah. Well, you are brilliantly carrying on the torch.

[1:15:07] **SR:** Oh, thank you. Thank you for having me. I loved it. Really appreciate it.

[1:15:13] **AS:** I'm going to have to listen. I don't like to listen to episodes with my voice, but I'm going to relisten to this one.

[1:15:21] **SR:** Sweet.

[1:15:22] **AS:** Thanks so much, Sil.

[1:15:24] **SR:** You're so welcome, Ali. I

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[1:15:28] **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. Remember, we have transcripts of our episodes at [alishapiro.com/podcast](http://alishapiro.com/podcast) for your non-audio friends and family. If



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