

Belonging: The Missing Key to Consistency – Insatiable Season 8, Episode 2

[INTRO]

[0:00:08.9] AS: When you're fed up with fighting food and your body, join us here. I'm Ali Shapiro, creator of the Truce with Food Program and your host for Insatiable; where we explore the hidden aspects of fighting our food, our weight and our bodies and dive deep into efficient science and true whole health.

Fair warning, this is not your parents' healthcare. This is a big rebel yo to those who crave meaning, hunger for truth and whose lust for life is truly insatiable. Believe me, freedom awaits.

[INTRODUCTION]

[0:00:47.4] AS: Welcome everybody to Season 8 of Insatiable. This season's theme is consistency. It's no secret that consistency is the key to success. Many of us have so much health knowledge and are aware of the latest and greatest food research and have the best of intentions and then real life happens. We fall off-track, lose motivation and get discouraged.

Convention tells us consistency is about willpower, discipline and hard work. Research and adult development theory points elsewhere. 15 years ago, I discovered functional medicine and reversed my irritable bowel syndrome, depression and a host of issues. I was amazed at the power of food as medicine and felt amazing. Even with all these great results, I couldn't keep it up. I continued to binge and overeat.

My quest to discover why can't I stick with this, led me to grad school to study adult development and how we change ingrained patterns and behaviors. I came to realize inconsistency is a symptom, just like depression and bingeing. It's not the problem, but has various root causes depending on the individual.

Not only is falling off-track an invitation into deeper healing and radical results, I found that when it comes to consistency, a lot of the common beliefs we have around being consistent are what actually causes us to fall off-track.

In this Insatiable season, we will look at inconsistency as a symptom, not a problem. We'll explore what happens after the novelty of some new plan has worn off and why real-life trips us up, what are the various root causes of why we lose motivation, want to be "bad with our food" and tell ourselves, "Chuck it. F it."

Today, we're going to talk about how overeating and bingeing often happen when we don't feel satisfied from just one piece of cake, feel heartbreakingly alone and are empty of the meaning in our jobs. All of these feelings are tributaries back to one root cause, a sense of disconnection from ourselves.

In today's episode, we have the wonderful Toko-pa Turner to discuss with us how we can map how a lack of connection with ourselves is why we are inconsistent with our eating and self-care goals. We're going to discover what belonging is, the deepest form of connection as a skill set we can all learn, and how working with our dreams and rewriting our stories allows us to offer our gifts to the world, which is integral to belonging.

I am so grateful to have Toko-pa here with us to discuss belonging. I read her book, *Belonging: Remembering Ourselves Home* last year and it felt such a deeper understanding for me of what it means to belong. I can always tell when someone knows what they are talking about by the clarity and beauty with which they write; her book has both. I also realized we were doing similar work, but very different modalities. Me, with work that blends nutrition and adult development theory and her, with dream work. The journey back home to ourselves is the medicine we both offer.

Before we get to hear from Toko-pa, I want to give you her background. She is a writer, teacher and dream worker. She is the author of the award-winning book, *Belonging: Remembering Ourselves Home*, which won the 2017 Nautilus Gold Award, the 2018 Reader's Favorite Gold Award and was named finalist for the 2018 Whistler Independent Book Award. She founded the Dream School in 2001, which blends the

mystical tradition of Sufism in which she was raised with and she and integrates the Jungian approach to her dream work.

She has been interviewed by CNN News and BBC Radio and has a community of over 100,000 online readers. Toko-pa's work focuses on restoring the feminine reconciling paradox, my favorite, and facilitating sacred grief in ritual practice. Thank you so much for being here, Toko-pa.

[0:04:43.8] TT: I am so happy to be here with you, Ali. Thanks for having me.

[0:04:47.6] AS: Yeah. You're good friends with a previous Insatiable guest, Bethany Webster, who was a huge hit –

[0:04:53.3] TT: Yeah. Yeah, Bethany and me are BFF.

[0:04:58.0] AS: Yeah, yeah. I was like, "I have to have you on." This was the perfect season to have you on. I want to start with your story and how you came to understanding belonging, through being a literal orphan. Can you share that with us?

[0:05:12.9] TT: Yeah. I grew up in a household that as you said in my bio, I was raised as a Sufi. There were years in my life where I really I enjoyed living in community, but at a certain point, I think I was about eight-years-old and my mother became pregnant with my little sister. At that time, we left community living and went to go in with in the suburbs. For me, that was a very dramatic change for me, because suddenly, I was isolated and now that's very nuclear family context, as well as living in the suburbs. I grew up in the red-light district of Montreal. It was a very dramatic cultural change as well.

In these isolated circumstances, it became very clear to me as a small person that my household was volatile, and there was a lot of violence and different kinds of abuse and neglect. I began to feel very exiled and unbelonging in my own family. At a very young age, I started to imagine leaving the family home and I started to run away, or at least practice that running away when I was nine-years-old. I wasn't very good at it, obviously, because I wasn't old enough to take care of myself.

Then, I was I guess you could say successful running away by the time when I turned 14, going on 15. That was when I was placed into what we call the system, so the foster system, or just government care, so called caretaking facilities, where people who don't have parents are sent. That began that whole period of my life. I was characterized by a lot of darkness and a lot of hardship. That was the last time that I ended up having a family. My life changed dramatically after that.

[0:07:23.6] AS: Do you think moving to the suburbs created some of the issues with your family, or did you not recognize the degree of that, because you had that other sense of community still attached to?

[0:07:37.1] TT: Yeah. I mean, I do think it's both, because when I lived in community, we had 18 with this rundown tenement. They had nine cats and 18 different families that lived there. I was constantly interacting with different people. We also had all of these community practices, like the security, those singing and chanting and devotion, singing and dancing. We would eat communally. There were lots of cats to play with and stuff like that.

There was a lot of different influences in my life. Then suddenly, when we went into these isolated circumstances in the suburbs, yeah, I think you put a lot of pressure on everyone, but I also think that the pathologies that were already there, now came to the surface really to be seen. I guess, it was one of those things where it was easier to for it to blend in to all the other activities. Suddenly, I was completely alone with this set of parents who have a lot of problems, and some of those may have been exacerbated by they themselves, being socially isolated.

[0:08:51.8] AS: Yeah, it's amazing. I know you're in Canada, but I think you guys have some of those similar myths. A lot on this podcast, we talk about how we filter everything through the individual. I think your story shows how so much environment and belonging, right, influences what parts of our personalities can come out or not. It's like what soil are we in, versus what's the seed.

[0:09:14.8] TT: Absolutely. I think in a lot of psychological and mental health professions, that this is something that is being grossly neglected in our consideration when we're talking about mental illness, because not only must we consider the

environment in which we are being raised, but also I think we have to look at that larger piece, which is the intergenerational momentum, or lack of momentum that has led to our lives.

It's a belonging, it's a complex issue that has many different faces. I think these are the three main levels we have to look at what's happening at the level of the personal, but then we have to look at the cultural piece and what we are being taught by the culture that we live in. Then there is this intergenerational, or ancestral piece where we often see dramatic displacement of people from their place of origin.

[0:10:16.7] AS: Yeah. That reminds me, I saw this community of therapists who are coming together and saying, "Should we change the manual for rather than the DSM diagnostic manual, rather than saying the individual has depression to the individual's growing up in a trauma and youth society?" I just love that reframe of like, wait a second, this is a symptom of intergenerational trauma, cultural, or intergenerational displacement and trauma, then the cultural. Then that the individual is a microcosm of that. Of course, we have some free will, but we rely heavily on the free will, I think, and not enough on these other pieces that you mentioned.

[0:10:59.2] TT: Absolutely. I think that reframe is so important, because otherwise the individual feels as if they have something wrong with them. They think, "Well, I have this pathology." Well, there's a reason why we have the issues that we have and that we have to look at those roots, if we have any hope of not only healing ourselves personally and sharing some of the burden of responsibility around that with the culture that we grew up in.

[0:11:28.2] AS: Yeah. I think what your book does so beautifully is show these three layers, both in concrete and clear terms, but also in these beautiful metaphors. Can you talk a little bit about how we might not be literal orphans, but how you came to understand that we orphan parts of ourselves for false belonging?

[0:11:50.9] TT: When I'm thinking about belonging, I'm always holding these two pieces right beside each other; belonging and exile. They're like dark sisters of each other, counterparts of the same thing. In the way that I look at belonging, I really believe that belonging is actually dynamic. We think of belonging as something as that

if we look for it and we search really diligently, that maybe one day we'll find it. When we find it, we'll feel belonging as a constant state of bliss for ever and ever.

This has a very static definition, like either you belong or you don't. I believe dynamic – I believe that belonging is actually dynamic and it actually requires periods of exile of being outcasts, of being isolated, of being alone, or orphaned. What I like to always do is turn towards classical fairy tales and try to understand the archetypal patterns, which present themselves in fairy tales and understand how then those same patterns of behavior apply to our own lives.

What I mean by that is you can find many fairy tales and stories in which there is often an orphan, who is ultimately going to be the hero, or heroine of that story. Something like The Little Match Girl, or even in modern term, Harry Potter, and so many different stories like that, someone like Cinderella, where someone in some way has been separated from their parents. They are alone in the world. In that aloneness, they realized that they have some mission. They have a task which is ahead of them. They have to go through a series of trials and tribulations in order to develop a character, develop the character which makes them the hero or heroine of their story.

I don't believe that we are that much different. That actually, even if we do have parents in the world, a lot of people like myself, I had parents who were and are alive in the world, but I felt such estrangement and rejection from my family home, that it was in a sense very much like being an orphan. Eventually as I told you with my story, I left my family home and quite literally became an orphan, with parents still alive in the world.

There are some people who still remain in contact with their parents, but perhaps they were taught when they were raised that there were certain qualities that they possessed, which should be celebrated and revered and aggrandized, while other qualities were devalued and diminished and ridiculed, or even worse yet, completely neglected and unseen.

What happens in this dynamic when we're taught that there are certain things about us that should be celebrated and that are good, while other qualities are bad and we should keep hidden, there is something that develops in the psyche, which

understands that if we won't maintain our sense of belonging in our family home, or in our relationship, or in our workplace, or whatever the scenario may be, that we have to disconnect, or put ourselves off from those devalued qualities.

When you have enough practice with this over time, eventually you become alienated from those qualities yourself. You may forget about them, or even have a rejection, or repulsion of those qualities in your own personality, in your conscious personality. This creates a split in the psyche and you can truly never feel a sense of belonging, so long as there is that split at the core of the self.

[0:16:14.9] AS: I want to read a passage from the book that you – just so people get a sense of how beautifully written it is, that explains what you just described. You write, “Our first experience of unbelonging is like a pattern in our substrate, which like rocks in the soil, causes everything to grow awkwardly around it. Tracing or longing back to its origins, reconciling it to its history is an important step to healing belonging forward.” You then say, “The demands of your environment forced you to put your gifts out of sight, while you attended to something more immediate.” That as kids, you mentioned that we're so adaptable. That's when this substrate, or this beginning of rejecting that, or I guess orphaning it, or sending it to exile, I don't want to use the wrong words, begins, right? It's almost as we become adults, we don't even know what's missing.

[0:17:07.6] TT: That's right. That's when we have that nebulous grief, where it's like, I'm longing for something, but I don't even know what that is. That's a very hard place to be, because you can't even really articulate what it is that is causing this ache. Yeah, so when we split – I call these the refugee aspects of the self, because those parts of ourselves don't cease to exist. They just go and live in margins of acceptability in our lives.

I'm sure as we're talking about this, you can feel how there's always this symmetry between what is happening at the level of self and what is happening at the level of cultures. I'm always wanting to make this bridge between those two things, because don't we have that same racism and xenophobia, which exists at the cultural level?

Well, I truly believe that this starts at the self. This starts at the conditioning that we experience to push ourselves off from on so called, unbecoming qualities. That's how adhering starts. That is the seed that begins this huge cultural problem that we have, where we believe others are the terrorists, others are weird and uncomfortable, others are strange and different.

[0:18:38.6] AS: Yeah, I totally agree. I think for listeners, we had this longing and how sometimes the symptoms of these longings are, "I'm not thin enough, right? I'm not healthy enough. I don't have enough time. I don't have enough money." This longing for these parts of ourselves come out as – Toko-pa, I love that you really am explicitly said this in your book, scarcity is an inner condition, right? Part of racism and xenophobia is believing that those other people are taking our resources, right? Where that's not the case at all. Can you explain how this not enoughness is a mirror for the projection of our own lack of wholeness?

Because I think sometimes, it's where I am in my personal development journey. I get it, right? The me of maybe 15 years ago might be like, "How does this not enoughness show up as a lack of accepting all the parts of myself, or the refugee, the exiled parts?"

[0:19:44.2] TT: You make this wonderful point. Yes, scarcity is an inner condition. I just want to make sure that we're being careful here, because scarcity is also an outer condition. Yeah. Just sometimes, there are a lot of schools of thought that say, whatever you believe to be true will create your own reality. I am not one of those people. I do believe that there is this profound connection between the two. It's like there's a conversation always taking place between the inner and the outer.

When we're talking about scarcity and not enoughness, I think we have to ask ourselves really at the root, it's not about not having enough money, that would be the concretized version of scarcity. Looking at its emotional roots, scarcity has to do with a lack of affection. It has to do with a lack of love, the absence of tenderness. I talk a lot about mothering in my book, because the relationship that we have with our mothers is the first place where we learned nurturing, or not.

In my case, I tell this story in my book about how my brother was born two years before me. When I came into the world, he was ruling the roost of our family. I came

along and my mother would tell me the story about how she tried to breastfeed me, but whenever she tried to breastfeed me and I don't know if this is true or not, because I was just an infant, but that my brother would have a tantrum. When he had a tantrum, she said she would have to put me down to go and tend to my brother. She said in a few weeks, the milk dried up. I was never breastfed.

I use this story as an example of the absence of physical nurturing at that incredibly formative age, which of course, also had many emotional implications in my particular story as well, the absence of mothering. This lays the groundwork for how we feel about the world in general. If we start off with too much scarcity, then we expect a lack of scarcity in the world. This is a wound that has to be rehabilitated over time.

In my book, I talk about the importance of learning to receive actually, because I think you don't have enough nurturing. Instead, you have to be self-sufficient, and a lot of us learned to be so self-sufficient that we actually atrophy the ability to receive support from others, from ourselves, from the earth and so on.

[0:22:57.6] AS: Oh, that is so beautifully said. I'm so glad that you brought up the differentiation between inner scarcity and external scarcity, because I'm the same as you. I'm not in those abundant mindset, it's all what you think. I think for people listening, it's the equivalent. They say that once you make \$70,000, money doesn't buy you happiness, but you need that base of security. I'm glad you brought that up, Toko-pa. Yeah, this is more if you feel like it's never enough, right? Or where you feel a lot of my clients feel like, "I have so much to be grateful for, but it doesn't feel enough," right?

[0:23:36.1] TT: That's just a bit of a different thing, because that's more around perfectionism, right? What you're doing, or what you're creating is not enough for some unknown standard for some litmus that we don't see. I think that has a lot to do with also what we talked about with regards to really truly being able to receive nurturing and support and love. It also has to do with that, we were talking about earlier, the manic culture in which we live, which is constantly proposing this idea of a no upper limit to what is enough for us to be accepted, that we're constantly driven to achieve more. We never talk about satiated – being satiated. We never talk about enoughness. What does enoughness feel like?

[0:24:39.2] AS: Yeah. I loved in your book that it's not really the – forget how you said it, like not the starting point. Not where we are, but the scale of what we're trying to satiate ourselves on, because that scale has no upper limit, which leads to quite – I even think of the physical scale, people – it's always 10 more pounds, or never enough that it's such a – I thought of that as the concrete representation of that. You're a metaphor of the scale and this upper limitness that seems to have no limits.

[0:25:12.3] TT: Exactly. I love that you're bringing the body into it, because so many of us have this, especially those of us who have chronic illness and disease. There's this pressure to get to some sort of wellness plateau, which constantly feels out of reach. Meanwhile, missing the incredible tiny triumphs, which are moving the needle in day-to-day living and not really being able to give thanks to the progress we are making to the strides we are taking, even just getting up and getting on the mat, or having that smoothie for breakfast, or whatever it is, that is supportive of your health and well-being. To really allow ourselves to be celebrated and to feel the nurturing, from a nurturing standpoint, instead of crack the whip standpoint.

[0:26:16.7] AS: Yeah. I loved in your book how you said that belonging has become – Dr. Brene Brown has made it very popular. I feel it's becoming more in your book, obviously adding to the conversation and yet, I feel you have a very holistic definition. In your book, you talk about how the body is left out of all of these conversations, which is deafening, right? The silence is deafening. Our season's theme is consistency. You just talked about people with chronic illness. You have rheumatoid arthritis, correct

[0:26:46.4] TT: Yes, that's right. Although, a lot of people who have my disease prefer the language rheumatoid disease, only because there's so many different – there are a thousand different kinds of arthritis. Often, people hear the word rheumatoid arthritis and they think, "Oh, yeah. My granny had that," but it's completely different from osteoarthritis and it's actually an autoimmune disease, which is degenerative and attacks all of not only the joints, but the organs in the body. Yeah, we're slowly trying to change the name of the disease, but it's an uphill battle.

[0:27:22.8] AS: Well, thank you for letting us know, because that's really important. Rheumatoid disease. One of the things you talked about in your book is that the Western medical model detaches us from our pain. We try to control all of this through medication. Our season's theme is consistency. I think one of the main reasons people struggle with doing those consistent things that move the needle that feel they're not this big all or nothing, but we don't understand our pain, right? Whether it's cravings, or physical pain or shame that we feel from not being enough. We tend to judge our body, rather than explore it.

I was just wondering what your experience has been in living with the rheumatoid disease in the connection for you between this illness and staying true to belonging in your body, even when it's hard?

[0:28:16.7] TT: Let me just say that I have a friend who she has this great expression. She read my book. She's one of the first people to read my book. She was one of my beta readers. She says, "You know what I love about this book?" She says it was a great Irish accent. "What I love about this book is nobody gets saved."

I laughed so hard, because it's so true. This isn't 30 days to belonging. It's not take this checklist and you'll, I don't know, unleash your potential or whatever it is. It's not like that. It is about this consistency. I really believe that belonging is a practice, not a place of attainment. It is actually a practice. This work are a belonging in our bodies, is just a practice that you can continue to deepen.

For me, the turning point into this awareness was a moment where I tell a story in my book about waking up from a dream about my pain. The dream context made me realize that I was carrying something in my pain that actually was intergenerational. That it was the privilege of actually having the support of my beloved partner and my work and my community and my home, it was those privileges, which have allowed me to actually address this pain with my life.

That was a turning point for me, because for the first time, was able to feel a small measure of compassion towards my pain. Up until then, and I still fall prey to it; annoyance, anger, irritation. I want to – like an aggressive feeling towards my pain like, "Ah, you're making life hard for me. Or Jesus. This hurts so much. Or when are you

going to stop torturing me?" These are the kinds of things that I fought for a long, long time.

Then when I realized there was a context to my pain, not just from my own life, which had led me to this point, but for the intergenerational trauma that came from my people's people, into the momentum of my life through the momentum into my life. From that awareness, I could do some compassion. Like, "Oh, it's like a cry." Of course, that would seem very obvious if I had a child, or an animal, or something that was neglected, or wounded. Of course, I would naturally feel that compassion for their pain, but somehow in our own bodies were just the pain of more immediate. We forget to have compassion for the pain that's being experienced. This is my practice is trying to be respectful of my pain as I go about the many protocols that I undertake to become more well, to become healthy.

[0:32:04.2] AS: Yeah, I love that. I have this big note of to let everyone know, wholeness doesn't mean perfect health, right? To your point, this assumption that there's a finish line that if we do belong correctly and follow the steps, right, our pain is going to come to this natural, heroic end, right? I thought it was so interesting how you talk about, because in the work I do with clients, we really are breaking down binary thinking. People don't just think their food choices are good or bad, they have that binary thinking around those parts of themselves that they've exiled as well.

A lot of the work is to break down those binary thinking. I had never thought about how we even put wellness and sickness as a zip there at two ends of the opposite spectrum when I mean, how do you really define that? You can be feel great one day and then come down with the headache. Are you sick, or are you well? Or to your point, you can be in pain and yet, it can bring support, it can help you receive, it can help you bring compassion for yourself, which are all to me, metrics of health. I thought that was such a good point. You said in your book and I teared up when I read this, you said about our pain. It's important to say, this too is welcome. This too belongs.

[0:33:23.8] TT: Yeah, that's my mantra. This too belongs, this too – even this terrible thing, I have to practice at welcoming it into belonging, because otherwise, it's living on those terrible and neglected margins of acceptability in my own heart. This is the

work. Yes, I wrote this book. I spoke about my rheumatoid disease. Then after the book came out, I began to get invited to speak and make appearances. I would. I would go and do these events. Invariably, there would be a person in the audience who says, "You know, I read about your book. I read your book and I saw how secure and you went through such a hard time. Look, you're standing here and you did it. How can I do that too?"

I would have to use these as quite strong teaching moments and say, "Just because I'm standing here, doesn't mean that I'm well in the way that you understand the word well. I continue to have this disease and I will for the rest of my life." Me and my family are doing our best to live in relationship with it. My husband and I call my disease our houseguest who never leaves, because it's this really, really awful, sometimes traumatic presence who is constantly putting us through the wringer as we try to find a way to deal with each new obstacles and challenge.

Yet, he's not moving out anytime soon, so we need to get right with it. We need to make room in our lives for it. We've gotten so much better over the years and we'll continue, I think to be compassionately inclusive of that difficulty.

[0:35:26.6] AS: Oh, I love that. We're going to take a break, a short break to hear from our sponsor. When we come back, we're going to talk about the other things that belong, so that we can start to welcome back and bring to ourselves. We'll be back after this short message from our sponsor.

[SPONSOR MESSAGE]

[0:35:44.1] AS: It's that time of year again. The live version of my annual group program Why Am I Eating This Now, opens for registration August 5th and begins August 13th. This program will help you unlock your keys to consistency with your nutrition goals. With a small group of 15 people, we will get to the root causes of why you fall off-track. Together we'll transform those patterns and behaviors, no willpower required.

To learn more, check out Episode 6 Season 5 where Why Am I Eating This Now participants Dr. Tina Boogren and Lourdes Brolly discuss how using adult

development theory, which is not therapy or coaching made the program so challenging, life-changing and different from anything they've done before.

A year later, they're still seeing results impact and feeling further transformed. Here's what they shared. Dr. Boogren said, "Why Am I Eating This Now is about getting to the root of things, not hovering on the surface as too many other programs plans do. As a result, I stopped slipping with my healthy eating and falling into old thought patterns. I got unstuck and have the tools to keep going. One year out of the Why Am I Eating This Now process and using the tools, I've lost 20 pounds and kept them off."

Lourdes shared, "I joined Why Am I Eating This Now, because I wanted to move forward in my own self-development. I was able to discover the deeper conflict or on my food battle, including how it protects me and how to move forward. I exceeded my own expectations from my progress, was challenged and I will continue to make these changes in my life. I have been binge-free for over a year post Why Am I Eating This Now. I truly thought I'd never break free from emotional eating, but I have. I am much bolder in my life. Yes. Win-win."

If you're ready to work smarter, not harder, to be consistent and reach your nutrition and wellness goals, join us. Full details are at alishapiro.com Why Am I Eating This Now live program. Make sure you sign up on my list, so that you can get the early bird discount. If you don't want to wait, you can get started today with the self-study program now. What you pay for this will be credited towards the cost of a live program, so why not get started today and start getting relief and clarity?

[INTERVIEW CONTINUED]

[0:37:56.9] Toko-pa, before we took our quick break, we were talking about re-welcoming our pain and being compassionate with it. One of the other big messages of your book is that we must re-welcome anger, disappointment and grief. I think, I joke with clients when we're working and they're like, "This is hard." I'm like, "Wa, wa, wa." I wish I could tell you it was the five steps, or it was super easy. Always joke like, "Wa, wa,wa."

I think, if people hear anger, disappointment and grief, it's like, "Oh, that's a lot," right? Can you expand upon that? Before you do, I just want to – for people listening, I'm going to show you an example of how this shows up with inconsistency. I had a client who I hadn't seen in several years and she had a really rough year. She had a grandson who was going through cancer, right? Very young. She was eating relatively well, because of the all the work we had done together.

She came back, because she was finding herself grabbing chocolate. She knew it wasn't about the food, so we explored it. Really, she was grabbing chocolate when she was over at her family's house. Her family was there in the beginning and she continued to ask for what she needed. Because treatments were so long, the support fell apart, fell away. What she realized was when she was over there, she was feeling extreme disappointment, right? They have let her down, even though she was clear about what she want.

She was like, "It's okay. My daughter and my husband, we're all closer now." I was like, "That's great." You can be disappointed that people didn't show up the way that you would have liked. This is often we think that we can't – when we deny anger disappointment and grief, we end up eating in those situations, where we feel we can't bring that side of ourselves to the table. I was just wondering if you could talk a little bit about those three feelings that are definitely exiled culturally and usually internally.

[0:40:03.6] TT: Yes. I wrote a chapter in the book called *The Dark Guest*. The title of the chapter is inspired by a Rumi poem, called *The Guest House*. He says this, "Being human is a guest house. Every morning, a new arrival, a joy, a depression, a meanness, some momentary awareness comes as an unexpected visitor. Welcome and entertain them all," he says. "Even if they're a crowd of floros who violently sweep your house empty of its furniture. Still treat each guest honorably. He may be clearing you out for some new delight; the dark spot, the shame, the malice. Meet them at the door laughing and invite them in. Be grateful for whoever comes, because each has been sent as a guide from beyond."

This is one of my favorite poems by Rumi, translated by Coleman Barks. What I wanted to do with this rather robust chapter, I think it's one of the thickest chapter in

the book, chapters in the book, because I wanted to cover a lot of the popular dark guests. Yes, grief. What were the three that you want to know about? Disappointment and anger now?

[0:41:31.0] AS: Yes, yes.

[0:41:32.3] TT: Yeah. Start with anger. What I try to do is if I am making a true encounter with each of these emotions with each of these guests, can I attempt to be curious, to be at least curious of them, so that I can find out maybe what it is that they want to say? Instead of just trying to push them away, or trying to override them and be something else, or trying to drown them out with positive thoughts, or whatever it is, because none of those things are really sustainable. As anybody who's had tried to just have positive thoughts, knows it doesn't work. Not long-term.

What might happen is it'll – those so-called dark or negative emotions will express themselves in other ways, whether that is lashing out inappropriately, or having an unexpected crying fit, or actually symptomology in our bodies. Anger for instance, women especially, but men as well, are taught that anger is a negative emotion and you shouldn't have it. You shouldn't express it. It makes you less likeable and it's not the feminine thing to do. It's not lady-like. These were particularly for women, the kinds of programming that we get.

For men, it's a bit different. Anger is a little more sanctioned for men, where it's like, that's an acceptable form of expression from men is to, "Yeah, kick his ass," that thing, or whatever the form is.

[0:43:23.8] AS: They're a leader. They're an aggressive leader.

[0:43:26.2] TT: Yeah. Exactly, exactly. I want to get curious about angers. When I do, I discover that anger arises when my boundaries have been transgressed in some way, or when something that I care about is being threatened, or devalued. If that's the case, then I have to examine. I want to listen to my anger. I actually want to first of all, I don't advocate for just letting loose on people. I don't think that's the way forward, tempting as it may be.

I think the bigger thing is actually to sit in contemplation, or move in contemplation, whatever works for you and really run your emotions, really let them even amplify them and let them really come on strong and find out what it is that you're mad about, what is it that's causing your anger? I guarantee, you're going to find something where something was transgressed, whether it was your own boundary, or maybe you don't feel heard, or maybe you've ignored your own needs for so long and not spoken about them, that other people don't even know that you have means.

Whatever it is. Or maybe it has to do with something or someone that you care about. For instance, I'll get really angry about what's happening to the environment and what's happening to people of color and these things create rage in me. We have to look for what the root is. At that point, once we have contacted what's actually making us angry, now we can make a decision about how to take that anger and move in defense of whatever has been transgressed in a productive way in our lives.

Often, this looks like asserting your boundaries again and again. In the story that you told about the woman whose care just fell away, he or she had stated boundary. Though she was feeling disappointment, there's probably some anger in there too. Okay, well you need to restate that boundary and again and again, until it's really clear for everyone. That's the only way that you can really honor your anger.

You see, the anger is there for a reason. It's telling us something. It's not others that have to validate that anger. It's us. We need to validate that anger, first and foremost in the self, at the level of the self first. Then when we have that inner stability from that validation, then we can move into the world and say, "Hey, I'm really angry about this and this can't happen again, or this is not acceptable to me and you need to know that." Then if people continue to disrespect the boundaries that you have, then something else has to be done. We can make an informed decision based on only our true recognition of what is triggering that anger in the first place.

Maybe I'll just add one little side note here, that if you are someone who has been deeply traumatized and if you have PTSD, anger is often a chronic symptom of having being traumatized. If that is the case, you're in a bit of a different situation. I'm not saying that you can't work with the same principles, but it's a little more like people report from – the people who are being traumatized report having anger many,

many times a day. It's good to have, definitely have support in terms of therapeutic environments, but probably also some adjunct practices, especially somatic ones, which can help us to feel safe in our bodies and while having anger.

[0:47:37.9] AS: Yeah. That was so excellent. To circle back in what you were saying about what's happening with people of color and how we other ourselves, one of the notes I wanted to make and talk to you a little bit about is because the majority of my listeners are white women. We know how frustrating it is that we can't express anger. Yet, women of color are given even less leeway.

This was after the 2016 election. I basically got real comfortable with my anger for three years straight. It's not over, but it's now being channeled effectively. One of the things that was just so shocking to me, because I – is learning how racist our society is. I have friends of all races and all this stuff and I never thought that I had internalized that angry black woman character, that our culture because again, mainly white people have learned to deal with their anger, and so we put it on to other people as an identity. Not necessarily as individuals, but as an identity.

Of course, I didn't feel that way about my friends who were black. In fact, they were less angry than me. This was a big wake-up call for me and they were like – the more that I learned, the more I didn't understand how people of color in general, not just black people, not just Latinos, natives, how they're not more angry, right? Because the more that I learned, the more enraged I'd become.

I just want people, especially our white listeners to question your own biases, right? We live in a racist society. We tend to shy away from racism, because we think it means that we don't like people of color that were wearing KKK hats. No. The best we can hope to be is anti-racist. Part of that is looking at our own biases and reaction when people of color get angry, right? What biases have you internalized? I was shocked that I had internalized that with women I didn't know, not with my friends, but people I didn't know. I just want to share that, so that other people can hopefully feel less shame about examining their own biases.

[0:49:48.6] TT: I'm so glad you gave some airtime to those thoughts. I just think it's so essential now that especially, white women who have platforms are again and again,

returning to these conversations about racism, because how else are other white women going to start talking about it? Because it doesn't affect us in a day-to-day way, unless we are getting hot under the collar about it with each other.

I think there's a really intricate piece here that I want to pull out, which is that the reason why we reject women of color and black women, especially when they get angry is because, at least in part, because we ourselves have not integrated our own abilities to be angry. The reaction is to put somebody under the boot and say, "Quiet down. I don't want to hear from you." Well, that's just a very strong mirror of what happiness we have around our own spectrum of expressions as well. It's really important work to be doing the above the inner work and the outer work of racial justice.

[0:51:14.9] AS: Yeah, yeah. Thank you for making that line much clearer, because I don't think I said that as like, sometimes people, you're white people and it's like, "Huh," a wall goes up. I'm learning how to talk about this in a way that I've been reading, doing anti-racist work and reading for three years now, which obviously I'm just at the beginning, but I think I'd become so – I don't clam up adhering whiteness as part of my identity, even though I'm half Jewish, I obviously benefit from whiteness, but I've even learned that being Jewish is not a white identity. It's how little I knew. It's a constant learning curve that I'm clearly at the beginning of. Thank you for articulating that.

I think that brings home the point in the beginning, that is we bring these parts back of ourselves, of our anger, of our grief, of our disappointment, we can be with other people who are experiencing that and we can be productive, rather than just overwhelmed in our feelings, which took me – I mean, I was taking action right away, but it took me about a good three years to learn how to not be angry all the time. I wasn't scared. I just didn't know what to do, because I didn't feel I was doing enough. Yeah.

One of the big things that switching gears, because I want to really get into this dream work. I know we've got about 15 minutes left. One of the things that I think is just so amazing – I mean, there's so much that I love about your book, but this dream work and how dreaming can start to help us be okay with these parts of ourselves.

I was just working with a client and I've always said this on the podcast, but just if you're a new listener, anytime I use a client example, I've gotten their permission, just want to restate that. I was working with the client and she was saying how she kept having this reoccurring dream, where she was at this party and no one would listen to her, right? Asserting her boundaries and no one would listen to her. Then gradually, she realized that it was her who wasn't listening to her, right? I was like, "Oh, my God. I'm interviewing Toko-pa Turner, who has this great book on belonging. She says that we cast ourselves in our dreams, so we can actually have some compassion towards ourselves."

It was so insightful of her. I just wanted you to talk about how dream work can help us reclaim these refuge, or these exiled parts of ourselves. Obviously, not the whole – I mean, we don't have the time for all of it, but I'm going to stop talking.

[0:53:45.2] TT: No. That's the problem with talking about belonging is that it's just such an ambassadorial subject. That's how I ended up spending five years of my life writing a book about it, because – I also just want to name that I've only scratched the surface of this conversation.

The way that I understand dreaming is that dreaming is actually nature naturing through us. In the same way that a tree bears fruit, or a plant gives flowers, dreams are produced through us. I literally believe that there is a larger intelligence, which I call nature, which hasn't – it's an organizing principle, and which is guiding our lives in the direction of not only our personal sense of alignment, but also in harmony with that larger ecosystem, which we are just a part of. This is what I think dreaming really is.

I use dreams throughout the book and reference how to work with dreams throughout the book, because I think this is an incredibly powerful tool as we're learning to dismantle the othering that happens at the level of the psyche and the trauma, that so many of us are unpacking about our lives and the needs of our combined coherence. All of this takes forms in the dream. This is a brilliant thing, because instead of it being having that – we'll go back to the example of anger. Instead of just having a nebulous

anger, you can receive a dream which shows you exactly the context in which anger is coming up.

By exactly, I mean, symbolically. That's the tricky part is learning to understand the language of the trades. Many indigenous cultures around the world have used dreams as a central guiding principle in village life, in cultural life. It's really only us who has this poverty of not paying attention to our dreams in the West. This whole idea that you need to pay somebody who went to a university to tell you what your dreams mean. I mean, it's just a bunch of nonsense.

I mean, this is our mother tongue. Unfortunately, we have lost the ability to understand these dreams. It doesn't take that much to re-facilitate our abilities with this language. The first thing you have to do really is to write them down, then to give them some relevance, or importance in your life. It's what you teach online and I help people to understand the language of their dreams. For me, the most incredible thing is our dreams will show us exactly where we are at in the mythic unfolding of our lives.

What I mean by that is earlier, I was talking about fairy tales and about how a set of chapters unfold in every myth, or fairy tale. When we understand these patterns working with fairy tales and working with dreams, it helps us understand why we are experiencing what we're experiencing in present time, because we can see where we've come from. It also invites us to consider what is the way forward. Some of the example that you used of the woman at a party who wasn't listening. She was talking to somebody and nobody was listening to her.

[0:58:01.2] AS: She was talking to a bunch of people. A bunch of people.

[0:58:05.3] TT: Talking to a bunch of people and nobody's listening to. I mean, we all have dreams like that, right? It's the sense of not being relevant, of not being heard. Yes, so the dream offers this really strong mirror of well, if all of the aspects in my dream are aspects of myself, all the people in my dream, the characters are actually aspects of myself, then where am I not listening to myself? Where am I not feeling relevant? What is it that I really want to be heard with? How can I listen to that? How can I bring more presence to that?

When we do that work at the level of the personal, again, there's this symmetry which then carries out into the world. We are more courageous with our ability to be seen, with our willingness to be seen and to be heard.

[0:59:04.7] AS: One of the important things that I think that you bring up in your book, and I'll use an example of my own life, but you talk about you can't go to a dream book. On this podcast, we always talk about not one size fits all, whether it's eating, or whatever. You can't go to a dream book and expect one person's symbols to being your symbols, because they mean what they mean to you because of your lived experience.

Second of all, to your point about the unfolding chapters, I think sometimes we try to make conclusion from one dream versus realizing that there's going to be more data coming, more information coming. I think about back in 2012, I was working with a visual imagery therapist. I feel like my psyche was finally strong enough to go back to around when I was diagnosed with cancer. Even though I was working with him in his office, I would have these dreams where I was going to the hospital and I didn't know if I was checking in for chemo, if I was really sick, did they have my medical records.

I remember thinking like, if this were the old me, I'd assume that I was going to get sick again. Like, "Oh, this is what this means." Because I would wake up with the same uncertainty that I felt after I was diagnosed with cancer. I was like, "No, I got to see what's happening when the dream comes back to me." It was amazing how the more work I did with Bob, who was my visual imagery therapist, to really integrate my choices then and do some deeper healing, that in the dream, I started having more agency, more choices, and directing the scene, versus when it first started I was just lost and I didn't know what was what. I was asking all the questions, versus towards the end. Again, this wasn't five steps. This was over a course of a year. It was like, "No, this is what's happening." Just waking up with so much more of an empowered feeling, versus hey, I have no control in this situation.

[1:00:56.8] TT: I love that. That's such an amazing story. I think that is one of the great payoffs of dream work is that when you are making progress against the obstacles, which hinder you, you will see that in the dream. You will see what's working and then

the dream. It's really important to notice what you did, you noticed those moments of progress like, "Oh, I'm beginning to have agency and choice."

There's absolutely this wonderful conversation that then takes place. This is why I've really devoted my life to dream work, because of this. You realize then that you're in conversation with something. This is why dream dictionaries are pretty much rubbish, because they are attempting to make your dream symbol into something that is static and dead. The way that I think of dreams is living breathing creatures.

If you were to go walk into a forest and you're deep in the forest and you hear a little stirring and you look up and you see a fox in the forest. He's looking at you and you're looking at him and your eyes are locked. Suddenly, your whole body is filled with resonance and awe and a little bit of terror and magic. This is what it's like to make an encounter with a dream, if you're doing it well.

It should remain autonomous and living. You don't say, "Oh, that fox means I am stealthy and I like to steal things." Because how's that going to help you? It doesn't help you at all. Maybe if you think, "Well, how can I make myself approachable to this fox? Maybe the fox will trust you and come a little closer and then you understand it a little better. Then you take a step towards him and he trusts you. Before you know it maybe, the fox puts your hand in its mouth, but it doesn't hurt. Instead, you have this telepathic connection and you understand everything."

This is an actual – I'm using this this wonderful thing as an example, but I've had these over – like you said, over years. Not five steps to in trust having your dream fox trust you. Actually, making a courtship of our dream symbols, so that they reveal their hidden medicine and helping and become allies to us as they did in your case with the cancer dreams.

[1:03:47.6] AS: Well, and it makes me think about when you say that it is this courtship and it's nature, it makes you feel like you belong to something bigger, which is beyond that there is an organization, right? Because that's not always my – I believe in nature as my guiding framework in life. When you can feel that there really is that courtship, I think it brings a sense of safety, or at least for me, I'm like, "Wow, I don't have to do this all on my own." There's help.

[1:04:15.7] TT: Yes, exactly, exactly. I love that. I mean, I say that the broader definition of dream work, it's not just about understanding what your dreams mean and leaving it there. The broader definition of dream work for me is a – it's like a living bridge between the seen and the unseen worlds. It's a conversation between what's visible and what's behind the world that we see, the unseen world. For me, that's ultimately dream work, is marrying the inside life with the outer one, and having them be in a constant conversation.

When that happens, when you are tending to that living bridge and keeping it – keep weaving into that conversation, yes, there is a sense of being supported, but also guided that you know you're constantly regulating like, take a step to the left and ooh, that's a little bit too much left. Let's put a little more right on that, like walking on a tightrope, finding that place of balance. Eventually, if you're one of those people who has a lot of really difficult, painful, scary dreams, I just want to reassure you that if you actually turn towards them and become curious about them and maybe even begin to tend to their value in their life, that those dreams will change, so long as you are acknowledging those little changes, they can add up into a complete remission of scary dreams.

[1:06:17.4] AS: Oh, I love. Getting us to author our story, right? Find ourselves way back to where we belong in the process, right?

[1:06:26.9] TT: Exactly. It's all part of the same thing. Yes.

[1:06:33.5] AS: Another thing that you wrote that stopped me in my tracks was you said – I think again when we think of consistency, we think we need discipline. You define discipline, so that we can belong, you say discipline is to relinquish the immature desire to each taking care of impulse belonging and to parent our own originality. I just love that. I was wondering, how can we start to know that we're on track with our belonging? What do we start to feel as we start to listen to our dreams and as we start to re-welcome anger and these other sides of ourselves that we've exiled? How do we know that we're on track?

[1:07:14.1 TT: Such a great question. I think at first, it feels a little bit waking up from a deep slumber. If your arm has ever fallen, or your leg is falling asleep, you get these terrible pins and needles, as the limb comes back to life? There's something like that, where there can initially be some very challenging things that come up for us as we are practicing at belonging.

I look at it like a mythic unfolding. We start in these places, because we are so split off from who we really are and what we love and what our values are. We start in places of false belonging actually, whether that's false belonging in a relationship, or a workplace, or a spiritual group, or even probably a dietary path, or whatever it is. Places that require us to split parts of ourselves off, in order to maintain life in that place of false belonging.

As we enter into exile and isolation, we have these very long difficult periods, where maybe we got really sick, or maybe we got fired from a job, or maybe we had heartbreak, or loss of some kind. Suddenly, we're isolated and we're no longer in a place of false belonging, or we're no longer in a place we used to think was home, like wellness for instance. That period can last a very long time, where you're actually in this state of exile.

When I'm talking about pins and needles, that's what I'm talking about, is like the real descent into not ever knowing where the light at the end of the tunnel is going to be, and how are you going to survive that. Where did all my friends go? How am I ever going to figure out what to do with my life? Will I ever find love again? These kinds of questions are all about belonging. They are ultimately, where do I belong? Am I even worthy of belonging? These are the pins and needles questions, which will come up and confront you.

This is when I think it's really important to turn to the inner life, to actually look at what's going on in your dreams, so that you can begin to map out the dimensionality of your exile. The paradoxical thing is that by really acknowledging and understanding a landscape of being outcast, you are actually turning towards a place of belonging, turning towards home if you stay with this.

Then I think, when you're beginning to make what in the mythic tales is called the return, which is the return to life, or the return to your own body, or the return to virtuality, or whatever your particular thing is, this is another really long and very gradual process in my experience anyway, where you feel you're making little triumphs. Whether that means, "Oh, when I did this physio-exercise, it was in my whole leg was shaking when I did it the first time. On the third time, my leg didn't shake." That is a huge triumph.

It's those moments which we have to treat with kindness and celebration and respect, instead of going into that, "It's not enough. I have to get all the way there." I call it one of the pillars of patriarchy, perfectionism. It will kill everything that you've brought alive. You really have to go on a perfectionism diet I think when you're doing this work and really recognize these small insignificant triumphs.

Then I think what happens is you'll start to see new supportive images and scenarios and characters in your dreams. You'll start to be feel little sparkles of joy and the ability to recognize beauty. You'll start to experience synchronicities in your life and simple things like, "Oh, I was just thinking of that and I listen to this podcast and she said this thing, which I was just thinking about." It may seem insignificant only if you brush it aside. If you aggrandize it, if you welcome it, if you celebrate it, then those things will continue to grow. Then the moments of joy turn into hours of joy. The hours of well-being, turn into days of belonging.

Soon before you know it, the architectural belonging has been spun out of the center of the self, into a life of meaning. Not only that. This is the great kicker, is that that place becomes a shelter of belonging for others actually. You realize that belonging was actually yours to give away.

[1:13:01.5] AS: Because you feel you have enough, so you can, right?

[1:13:05.1] TT: That's right. Yeah, a natural generosity springs out of our hearts.

[1:13:11.5] AS: That was so beautiful. I really want my Truce With Food group to take that to heart, during that stage where they're starting to get those beginning wins. I'm like, "Keep going." Trying to tell them, it's not about perfectionism. These are these new

choices that have come from really hard work. I want everyone of course to take that in, but special recognition for our Truce With Food group. It was right in that process right now, emerging from it.

Toko-pa, thank you so much for being here. We will have every where people can contact you and find you, but please share it here. Again everyone, in the show notes we'll have – you've got to buy her book, *Belonging*. I read it twice and I don't usually read books twice. I'm like, "I got the big picture," but I went back and read it twice. It was so good. We'll also have where you can find her in the show notes. For right now, Toko-pa, where can people find you?

[1:14:06.6] TT: Thank You, Ali. That's amazing that you read it twice. There's also an audiobook version on Audible. If people prefer to do that and I know some people who have disabilities have a hard time reading, holding a book. That could be helpful too.

To find me, everything is on my website toko-pa.com. My name is spelled toko-pa.com. If you want to find out about the book directly, I have another website, which is belongingbook.com, belongingbook.com.

I have a great Instagram page, which I have only been doing for a year, because I'm such a late bloomer when it comes to Instagram, but I love it. It's such a cool platform. My handle over there is Tokopa without the hyphen. Then I'm also on Facebook and I've been – I have an established page on Facebook, because I've been there for I think, eight or nine years. Tons of free, little inspirations and beautiful art every single day in those places, if people just need a little hit to stay on track and lots of excerpts from the book as well.

[1:15:17.3] AS: Yeah. I'm totally plugged her at your Instagram page, because I follow it and it's just such a – you leave excerpts from the book, you have these beautiful visual images and I'm like "This is what social media can be about, right?" Connecting you with that knowing, so I highly recommend following her on Instagram. I'm not on Facebook a lot. I'm sure that page is great too, but definitely do Instagram if you're on it. Wonderful. Thank you so much for being here, Toko-pa and all of your time. I really appreciate it.

[1:15:47.6] TT: Oh, my pleasure, Ali. Thank you so much for the conversation and for sharing my work with your wonderful listeners. I look forward to crossing paths again in the future in some unknown way.

[1:15:58.9] AS: Yeah, when the mystery thinks it's time.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[1:16:07.2] AS: Thank you, health rebels for tuning in today. Have a reaction, question, or want the transcript from today's episode? Find me at alishapiro.com. I'd love if you leave a review on Apple Podcast and tell your friends and family about Insatiable. It helps us grow our community and share a new way of approaching health and our bodies.

Thanks for engaging in a different kind of conversation. Remember always, your body truths are unique, profound, real and liberating.

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