

Breathe Your Way to Consistency with Ashley Neese – Insatiable Season 8, Episode 4

[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: Hello Insatiable listeners. Before we get to today's episode, I want to put a trigger warning on our episode. Around minute 5 of the interview, or the second question that I ask Ashley, we do discuss her sexual-assault. If this is something that can be triggering, upsetting to you, you want to skip over that part. Again, it's the second question into the interview and it's about 5 minutes. If this is triggering, I would skip 5 minute, 5 through 10 of the interview, and then you can hop in. You'll still get so much from the interview and we don't go back to that piece of her story in the interview.

All right, enjoy today's episode.



[INTERVIEW]

[0:01:30.5] AS: Welcome, everybody to Season 8 Episode 4 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. Here, we fall off track, lose motivation and get discouraged.

Convention tells us consistency is about willpower, discipline and hard work, but 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 that the power of food is medicine and felt amazing. Even with all of these great results, it couldn't stop my bingeing and overeating.

My quest was to discover, why can't I stick with this, led me to grad school to study adult development and how we really 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," diet or self-care 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 self-care and tell ourselves, "Chuck it. F it."

Most of our behavior change and self-help targets our brain and thoughts. Yet, our ability to think clearly instead of catastrophizing or spiraling, so that we can make good, clear choices rests largely on the state of your nervous system. If you feel unsafe physically or emotionally,



you click into all-or-nothing thinking because your nervous system is getting you to focus. The challenge is our nervous system doesn't know the difference between real and perceived threats, if we've never worked through our past pain and trauma.

One of the ways we can start to have space to explore perceived threats have better discernment and greater choice is regulating our breath. It sounds simple, but it is definitely not easy, which is why I wanted to have our remarkable guest, Ashley Neese on today. I wanted to talk to Ashley about how breathwork can help us resolve the root cause of our hard-to-break habits, how breathwork helps us be in choice around our emotions and why this is more important than control, in simple, accessible ways to integrate breathwork into your life.

Ashley is a renowned breath worker, teacher and author of a great, beautiful new book called How to Breathe, which I've been totally loving and using and benefiting from. She has studied with some of the world's leading masters in yoga, meditation, medical intuition and somatic therapy. Ashley draws from this deep well of resources to guide people back into their bodies, where they learned beyond the cognitive mind how to cultivate resilience, develop relational intelligence and trust the wisdom held within.

Her passion lies in the belief that our deepest and most profound healing occurs when we learn to listen to the unique language of our bodies. She's in private practice in California. Thank you for being here, Ashley.

[0:05:06.1] AN: Thank you so much for having me, Ali.

[0:05:08.7] AS: Yeah, everyone is just going to love this. I've been hearing about breathwork, in the ether, on the fringe of my awareness. I feel your book is really going to help make it more accessible and mainstream. Thank you so much for being here for this conversation.

In a lot of interviews, you shared how you came to breathwork through your recovery path



from drugs and alcohol. On Insatiable, we love to get to the root causes of things. How did you understand your addiction at 21, versus where you are today, where you understand root causes?

[0:05:41.0] AN: This is a great question, Ali, and one that I am very passionate about. To start off, I just want to say for anyone listening that I do not speak for AA, or any 12-step programs, I am just going to share my own personal experience, really in the hopes that I help somebody listening. They might be in a similar place that I was when I got sober. Also, the ways in which my understanding of addiction has really evolved and extended over the last 18 years, which I still can't even believe I've been sober for that long. It makes me feel very old.

Anyway, these days I really choose not to drink or get high as a way to stay grounded and to stay in my body. The idea that I was presented at 21 when I went to rehab was the very prevalent model that's still out there today, which that addiction is a disease. It's the disease model of addiction. The traditional medical model of disease basically requires that any abnormal condition be present in a person that causes some discomfort, or distress, or dysfunction to the person who's suffering. That's the typical model that's out there and that's also in some ways a model that AA uses.

The main treatment that I was involved with when I was 21 were group therapy, individual therapy, lots of 12-step meetings and of course, working with a 12-step sponsor. It was all under this premise of this disease model of addiction. At the time, that worked really, really well for me. Like I said, I was 21 when I got sober. I was really young. There's a way in which we talk about addiction, this is true with trauma as well. When we start drinking and I started drinking around 13, a lot of my development stopped, right? A lot of my emotional development, a lot of my relational development stopped at that point.

When I got into the rooms of AA and into rehab at 21, I was stunted in many ways. I needed to learn how to – with a lot of cognitive processes, how to identify for example, destructive



behaviors. I needed to learn how to face my fears. I needed to learn how to take responsibility for my life. I needed to learn how to accept that there was a bigger purpose for my life. These things didn't all happen in the first day of my recovery, or even in the first 10 years, but these were really the building blocks for how I worked with that disease model of addiction at that time. All of those pieces were really helpful for me.

After listening to your podcast, so many episodes, especially this last week, I know that this is a big piece of all the work that we're doing. It's like, we have to identify what are the markers of our destructive behaviors? We need to be taking inventory daily of what are we thinking about? What are we feeling? What are we eating? Just really looking at those pieces. Being in a 12-step program gave me all those tools that I did not have.

The other thing that I want to say about my personal experience with AA that was so powerful is the group energy, right? Being in the group. I never really had a safe core group of people growing up, and so being in community, healing in community was really, really powerful for me. I really needed what they call that, fellowship of other addicts and alcoholics. I needed to be around people my own age who were trying to do something different with their life.

Back then at 21, I didn't really know anyone my age was sober. I would go to meetings and everyone was like, at the time, I was like, "If you're 30, you're ancient, right?" I thought everybody was so old and weird. I really needed to seek out other young people who are making these big choices to make this life change.

Today, the idea of the disease model of addiction doesn't sit with me in the same way, because what I've learned through my own life is that addiction is much more nuanced than just labeling it an abnormal medical condition. In my experience, long-term recovery has to include the body is part of a treatment plan and the lifestyle changes. In order to have a sustainable recovery, we need to be looking at the whole person, not just this cognitive model, or spiritual model, but we also have to include the body.



[0:09:57.7] AS: Yeah. First of all, I love the care and consideration you give with how helpful AA was and what it offered. We did last season a pros and cons of various healing and food approaches. The main takeaway for people was each of these is a tool. None of it is the final destination, right? The elimination diet, like all these different things that we try. I think the same is what you're describing with AA is that it was super helpful and it was an important step, and you can still go further than that, or take another step, or another direction. Doesn't mean that that's not valid, or hasn't been, but it doesn't have to be the be-all, end-all in a way.

[0:10:39.6] AN: That's exactly right. Honestly, the way I look at my – we'll get to this next, but I don't really – I don't use the term alcoholic or addict when I'm talking about myself anymore. The way that I understand addiction for me personally, is it's really was rooted in the lack of stability that wasn't present in my early years, and my, what I call a compromised capacity for self-regulation.

Not having any capacity to self-regulate at a very young age and growing up at a home that was very unstable. I was searching, searching, searching to feel regulated. I wanted to feel ease in my body from a very young age. I just remember feeling so disorganized and so insecure and so afraid and just terrified of everything and everyone.

Our bodies are always looking for regulation. They're looking for ease. They're seeking comfort. At the time, the only way that I knew how to do that, the only tools I have access to given a house I grew up in was to use substances. That's what I saw the people around me do, and so I'm like, "Oh, well this is how you get through life. This is the medicine."

Most people who are in the addiction, get to a point where the medicine stops working, because it just ends up causing more problems and it's solving in a way. That's where things get – people talk about hitting bottom or things like that. Really for me, the core of my addiction and the root of it came from being so disregulated when I was young.



[0:12:03.4] AS: Well, and you bring up such a great point and in such a different context that I don't think people are used to hearing is that yes, the body is trying to regulate with ease and comfort. When we typically hear that, we think of that as a bad thing. Well, life isn't easy, or food is comfort, or alcohol is comfort. Comfort is often what's familiar. I know a lot of my clients had very unstable homes growing up, whether it was through financial, through divorce, through neglect and not realizing that trying to self-regulate, to your point of you're looking for that ease and comfort, but sometimes that you don't have a good foundation, or compass to walk into.

We use these other things that they're making us comfortable in the moment, but not long-term, but the body is trying to look for that stability. I love that you bring that up. It's such a interesting point that I don't think most people think about when they think of ease – they think that's a bad thing, right?

[0:12:58.5] AN: Yeah, they do. I heard this a lot from people too and I'll hear this from clients like, “Oh, I just can't stop. I know this food isn't good for me, but I just can't stop eating it.” For me when I was young, it was like, I know snorting coke and drinking and being out all night isn't good for me, but I just can't stop. Every attempt I had to change, I couldn't. Because when I'm looking at it and now, it was terrifying for me to give up the ways that I was trying to find ease.

When you take away the thing that is bringing ease, even though there's all this pain and all the shame and all this hurt around it, it's still really hard to give up, because like you said, that's what's comfortable, that's what's known. Really, you're asking us all to – not you, but this questions of change, or asking us to step into the unknown and get a little bit uncomfortable, so that we can then find that comfort in a way that's healthy and regulated and safe.

[0:13:50.2] AS: Yeah. Yeah. Speaking of the unknown and getting to a more inner sense of safety, I love that you talk about no longer identifying as an alcoholic, because that's something as someone who is a cancer survivor at that label, I know gives a lot of people strength, but I



don't identify with that, in the sense that now I know cancer is a symptom, like environmental pollution and all the – even though obviously, I went through treatment for it. Even the idea of survivor is I get how that was useful for me at one time, but I want to be someone who thrives now and who isn't only defined by that, even though it's been an important part of my life, I don't want that identity and the lack of safety it created to rule my life.

To access, to leave these identities that were helpful at one time, but no longer, to access this level of freedom, we have to transcend old identities, that again, were at once useful, but it requires reclaiming and cultivating inner safety. You had shared about coming to terms with being raped at gunpoint, which is probably one of the most dangerous experiences of your life, in which for a long time you blame yourself for.

I see this with a lot of clients and even in my own healing general journey, the self-blame that comes from being victimized and traumatized. Can you talk about how working through this experience and how breathwork was so important in that experience, helping you fully heal and get to better levels of freedom and ease and comfort within yourself?

[0:15:23.8] AN: Yes.

[0:15:24.6] AS: That was a big question.

[0:15:25.8] AN: No, it's beautiful and it's big and I'm just going to give myself a moment to pause and just sit with that. It's big and I've done a lot of work around this. I struggled with – really struggled with self-blame for many years around being raped, because I was raped when I was in the middle of a three-day cocaine bender. At the time, it was incredibly challenging for me to come to terms with forgiving myself, because I felt so strongly, so strongly that if I hadn't been high, then that situation would never have happened. That was my thinking around it for so long.



While I understand that that isn't true today, at the time, the self-blame was a coping strategy. It was a way that I tried to keep myself safe and to try to contain, really contain the shame that I had around being raped. I was really, really hard on myself. What I was trying to do was contain all of the shame. It took me a long time to work through the self-blame piece.

Sexual assault while under the influence of substances in somatic psychotherapy, it's considered a very complex trauma. Complex trauma can only be worked through very, very slowly, very titrated, one layer at a time. It wasn't a situation where I could go in and have one therapy session and be done, or I could go in and do one breathing session and release this experience and then be done. It took a long time, because there's a lot of pieces to that.

I wasn't really able to stop blaming myself, until I processed through what I call the stagnant energy in my body that was trapped from not being able to fight back while the rape was happening. This is something that happens in a trauma. We have these different responses; we have fight or flight, we have freeze/collapse. In that scenario, I was high. I was being forced to have sex with this person at gunpoint. It wasn't safe for me to fight back. I didn't have the energy to fight back. Then also, I wasn't fully even in my body in that moment. It's really hard to fight back when you're not present and you're not fully embodied.

I had to work through all of these complex pieces and get down to that energy that was trapped in my nervous system that actually wanted to fight, that had an impulse to fight, but that I couldn't actually connect to that impulse in the moment. Once I was able to connect to that impulse, I was able to discharge the energy in a very safe and a very contained way, and then my system completely reorganized. Once my system reorganized, I was really able to see clearly that it wasn't my fault and then I could finally move into all the different stages of grief and anger and all the deep feelings that never really had a chance to surface in a way that move toward healing, right?

Those things would come up and it would always go right back to the shame and that I would



just try to keep a lid on it. Once I actually moved through that energy and was able to go through the motions of fighting back and giving my nervous system what it needed, I was able to have a real healing. This is a piece that is so important, because I think that there's so much rhetoric and there's so many ideas in our culture that we can't ever fully heal down to the root, and that's actually not true. That's not true.

Breath-work for me was an integral part of all the work that I did at that time, because it guided me into my body and into the sensations. When we're working with trauma, we're always working with sensations, we're working with effect, we're working with memory, we're working with a lot of different pieces, but the sensations were really, really important for me to work with.

I'll say one more quick thing about that, up until I worked with this piece of trauma and really moved it and discharged it, I had a very intense breath-holding pattern when I would get stressed. I would just stop breathing, completely stop breathing. I didn't even really know it, because it was just so engrained in me, I had no idea, had no consciousness around it. When I moved through this piece, that totally shifted and I stopped holding my breath.

[0:19:34.3] AS: Wow. My mouth is like, you can't see me because we're not on video, but dropped. I mean, first of all, thank you so much for sharing that. Also, doing the work so you could articulate it like you did, because it was so clear and it was so nuanced and yet clear, which is hard to do.

Yeah. I mean, I'm just in awe of your ability to go through that, through the healing process of that and come out and say, "We can get through this," right? You can get things at the root. I think especially for listeners, to hear how so much of the self-blame and all of the stuff that in traditional coaching and self-development we're told to get over ourselves, instead of realizing that that's pretty protective, right? There's a pretty brilliant system going on and it's like, "Oh, my God." You just gave us such an exquisite example. Again, thank you for sharing that.



[0:20:31.0] AN: You're welcome. Thank you for holding the space for that and for creating a podcast and a community aware we can talk about these things. I mean, God. When I was 21, I wish I had your podcast. Yeah.

[0:20:45.7] AS: Well, I mean, as a healer, part of the healing work is helping people and that gives us meaning to what we went through. One of the things that I love about, your book is so approachable and friendly and forgiving, yet also gives us enough structure so we don't lose ourselves into like, "Well, what do I do now?" Because some of this, let's be honest, some of this hippie stuff can be like, "What?" It's like, "Just feel." "Okay, what?"

One of the things you said that I think is so important to people is about when you're dealing with trauma or past pain, you have to go slowly. You have to titrate, because if not, you can overwhelm your system and re-traumatize yourself.

You said, breathwork was integral to this. That's one of the things I think I really learned from your book is how helpful breathwork can not only be in the day-to-day, but the deeper level of healing that's happening, because we're going slow and it's gentle. Let's define breathwork for people and how does it make us feel safe in our body?

[0:21:42.6] AN: The way that I typically describe breathwork, which again to your point of the book's accessibility, that was a really important piece for me in writing the book and in sharing about this work, because it is really deep and it's really profound and it can get woo really fast, like real fast. My intention with the book was really, how can I tow that line? How can I touch into spirit? How can I touch into these deeper layers and create a conversation around it, create space for it and also, how can I keep this so practical that my mom could pick it up and start a practice right now? I think those were the pieces that I was holding.

It's a lot to hold when you're writing a book. I think, usually people are going in one direction or the other. They're going to keep it super simple, or super deep. I appreciate the way that you



articulated that, because that was a big intention of mine with this book. I mean, the way that I typically defined breathwork is that's a very general term for a range of methods, that when we practice with an awareness, we'll have a lot of benefit, so that benefit could be emotional, mental, physical and spiritual.

Essentially, breathwork is breathing that is practiced with mindfulness. Conscious breathing, breath awareness, those are all really good ways to define breathwork. Breathwork, what I find so amazing about it is that the breath is the foundation of every single mindfulness practice. You can't hit on mindfulness practice without looking at the breath. We can look at yoga, we can look at Qigong, we can look at Chinese medicine, we can look at energy medicine, all these different healing practices, they all have some connection with the breath.

For me, that piece about grounding is that it's impossible to feel safe in our bodies, it's impossible to be present if we're not actually here in our body. One of the questions I'll ask my clients, especially if I've noticed that they're in a state of arousal activation, we'll do some neocortex work to bring them back in, back to planet earth. I'll say, "What percentage of you is here right now? What percentage of you is in the room right now?" That's a really good question to help people start to come back. "Oh. Oh, I'm 10% here. Oh, okay. Let's take a few more breaths. Exhale, okay I'm 50% here. Let's just gently work our way back." We cannot feel safe in our body if we're somewhere else. It's not possible.

[0:24:10.7] AS: That is such an amazing question, because I think a lot of times when we're getting back into our body it's like, what does that mean? If I'm crying, am I in my body? Or if I'm hungry, am I in my body? That internal reflection and just gathering our presence almost from is your mind at the doctor's appointment you were out with your husband today? Or is your mind at that work meeting? It's like, let's get back here and be present and be here now, which I think is a great starting point.

One of the things that I thought was so interesting and you've hinted at – well, not hinted, but



you talked about how you didn't even realize you were holding your breath when you would be stressed and because it was so normalized. One of the things you really emphasized in your book and in your work is the exhale, because again, I think everyone's like, "Well, I'm breathing," right? Maybe we know when we're in yoga that we're reading deeply.

As I've been practicing your exercises I'm like, "Oh, my God. My exhale is so – it's hard." Can you talk a little about the exhale and why it's so important in calming our nervous system down? We've got some science geeks in the crowd, so they'll love to hear about the diaphragm.

[0:25:23.2] AN: Yes. Yeah. I'm a big, big fan of the exhale. There's a whole section in the book, because it's something that for me personally, was a big growth hurdle and a big challenge for me to work with and it was definitely my edge. I had no problem taking a super deep inhale and then it would come to exhale and I feel like, "Where did it all go?" I don't even understand what's happening." It's like, "I took in all this oxygen, where's the carbon dioxide? It's literally gone." It would all just come out so fast. I didn't really have the ability to really slow it down and lengthen it, because the thing is our exhale is directly connected to our parasympathetic nervous system. The inhale is connected to sympathetic nervous system.

When we're working with the exhale, we're working directly with our parasympathetic state. For me, someone who comes from being on this high-alert for much of my life and then spending the better part of the last 18 years learning how to come home to my body, breathe, slow down, do all these different pieces, I've really – the exhale is a big, big, big focus for me, in terms of learning how to self-regulate.

In very simple terms, the exhale is connected to the parasympathetic system, which is why it is so important. This doesn't mean that it's not important to be aware of your inhale, or even work with your sympathetic nervous system. This isn't discounting or not including those pieces, but just for the sake of focus and also for the sake of 90% – I would say 99.9% of all the clients and students I've worked with over the years have needed to focus on this practice



specifically.

[0:27:01.6] AS: Yeah. I was telling a client of mine, because she's having trouble slowing down and she doesn't – I mean, she's come so far and she has some big decisions to make and she doesn't want to get back into the old patterns and just jumping into them. I was like, “You should try some breathwork.” I was like, “I'm reading this woman, Ashley Neese's book. It's amazing.” I was like, “I'll send you some of the exercises that you had shared on Goop and stuff like that.” I was like, “The big emphasis I want you to pay attention to is the exhale and she talks about this. She's the one who got me to think about it.” I'm like, “Because most people don't exhale.”

My client, she got the emotional and spiritual metaphor immediately. She's like, “That's me. I'm always inhaling, inhaling, never exhaling, like never exhaling.” I was like, “Yeah, that's why I want you to try this.” I think it's such a great metaphor on so many levels. Thanks for highlighting that for all of us, because I think we're like, “Oh, we're breathing, it's just mostly inhale.” I love you where did it all go? That's what I just wondering. I'm like, how could I breathe so deeply and I'm out of breath as I exhale? I'll exhale for four seconds, then I have to catch my breath again. It's crazy what I'm learning.

In activating our parasympathetic nervous system, we become less reactive and less on high-alert. I love that you're drawing this connection to emotional intelligence, which we traditionally think of in the organizational, industrial, psychology range, or it's Daniel Pink or Dr. Susan David reading this about how we can be better at work and with our families. I don't think we typically think of emotional intelligence as a healing tool and yet, it's a lot of the work that I do with client, and I know it is with you. Why is emotional intelligence important to our health?

[0:28:45.5] AN: This is a great question and I'm appreciating everything that you're saying so much. Yeah, it's we are relational creatures. We're relational creatures. We are designed to be



in relationship not only with ourselves, but with each other and in communities. This is a really, really, really big piece.

Most of the folks that I've worked with over the years and when I say people I've worked with, I'm also including myself in that, because I have done everything that I'm teaching, everything that I'm guiding, everything that I'm saying, you better believe, I've done it times, a thousand, before I will even share it with anybody else. It's so important for me to be actively in this work, growing, expanding and just keep going, keep going. I'll say that.

The emotional intelligence piece is so key, because we need to know how to relate to ourselves and how to relate to each other and the way, or one of the ways that I really accessed that in my life and work is through breathwork. As I have become more regulated, I've had more capacity to even go into some of those higher states of anger and rage and those kinds of things in a safe way, right? Without flying off the handle, but being able to really contain my life force. It has opened me up to be able to connect with people, in a way that is so much more powerful than how I was connecting before.

I work with a lot of clients on differentiating. This is a huge, huge issue, especially for those of us who grew up in households where there were zero boundaries, right? I come from a very boundary-less family, very typical southern Jewish family, where everyone's in everybody's business. If you step outside of that, the whole family is wondering what's going on. There is a level of care and concern there, but there's also a level of if you veer off the track, then everyone's going to be upset.

When you grow up in a situation like that where there's no boundaries, it's really hard to understand, "Well, it's my feeling. What somebody else is feeling?" Emotional intelligence has a lot to do with this. It has a lot to do with being able to differentiate, "Oh, that person's angry. Okay, I don't have to take that on. I don't have to be responsible for that. I don't have to fix that. I can just be here in my body and they can be angry." This has taken a long time for me to



be able to get to this place, because I was so connected. I meshed with my family of origin and then so meshed with every partner in most relationships I've had growing up, that when somebody would be upset, or when they would be depressed or anything was going on, I was either taking it on for them and trying to fix it, or I was trying to take care of them and trying to fix them.

The thing is I wasn't comfortable, because I was so used to tuning into everybody else's needs. When you grow up in the dysfunction of alcoholism and all those things, then codependence, it's like, as a child, you're just like, "Okay," well there's no parent here that's regulated, so I become the regulator, right? I became the whole regulator for my family system.

When you are a regulator at such a young age, it takes a lot of undoing to unpack those layers and go, "Oh, I'm my own person. My dad can be drinking, I don't have to do anything about it. I can feel sad and I can wish it was different, but I don't have to fix him. I don't have to get good grades. I don't have to do all these things to make him love me and make him can be different, because I can't."

All the stuff that I'm talking about, this differentiation, this really learning how to be my own person, in my own energy field and my own emotional field has come from all the breathwork and being able to really lean into my emotional intelligence and grow that part of my system, which I would say that I was highly emotionally attuned when I was young, like very sensitive, very empathic, feeler of everyone around me, could read the energy of somebody all the way across the street and down the hall, knew what was going on, but didn't have a way to filter that, right? The emotional intelligence has given me a way to filter and process and really understand where do I end and where does somebody else begin?

[0:32:53.2] AS: That is such an amazing example, because what a lot of my clients come to realize is that they're eating to get back into their body, to feel grounded, because they are doing – on the this podcast and in my work, one of the patterns that we work on breaking is the



accommodator pattern. It is very much, the accommodator tries to take on every – fix all that stuff. Then you want to – how it translates food-wise is then you want food to reward yourself. It's like, "I just went through that and it didn't work, or whatnot."

I love what you're describing, because what you're saying is, "Okay, my dad can still be angry, or this can still be happening," so it's not about control, but it's about choice. I'm always trying to emphasize that with people, because people will come to me, "I feel out of control around food. I feel out of control around my life." Like, "I know I can't control other people. I know I can't control this." I'm like, "You actually don't even need to control it. It's about that, what you're calling regulation, I call it discernment of I have choices here."

When our nervous system is jacked up, we can only see the all-or-nothing, because your nervous system doesn't want you to think in nuance, right? Or making through. It's like, make a choice.

[0:34:03.7] AN: When we're in sympathetic charge and when we're activated, it's only black and white. That's all that's available. What you're talking about twice, I love that. I've used a similar languaging with my clients. One of my biggest goal is it's let's broaden that menu of options. When we're able to downshift and go more into a parasympathetic state, our menu of options expands. We're like, "Oh, I've got 10 choices, instead of all-or-nothing, right?"

[0:34:30.6] AS: Yeah, yeah. That's the freedom we're craving. I loved you in one interview, you said the breath won't change the content of what's happening, but the feeling that the contents are dangerous. I think that's so clear and liberating for people. Like, "Oh, it's not that I have to change all my thoughts and reframe." That can be helpful at times. The first step is like, wait, is this as dangerous as – is it feels and as I'm thinking about it in terms of black and white.

[0:34:59.6] AN: Yeah. That's such a good point. That's I think too as a culture, we're obsessed with – and this is all comes from analysts, psychology and our whole history with psychology,



but we're obsessed with narrative, right? We're so obsessed with the narrative. We know this from science and research now that every time we tell the story, it's different, right? You can have six people in a room and each person is going to remember that experience differently.

This idea that the narrative is the truth is really problematic, because it's elusive and it's shifting. As we heal, our memories change too. I've seen this. When I first was sober, it's I would look back at my childhood and it would just be all dark, right? It was like, uh, everything was hard, it was bad, it was this and it was that. I look back all these years later and yeah, there were a lot of hard times, but I also can see the joy and the love and the beauty that was also present. We've been talking a lot in this interview about the nuance of things and I think that that's a really important piece too is really being able to see all the different shades of grey.

[0:36:09.9] AS: Yeah, that process happens to my clients too as well, as starting to be – I mean, I hypothesized and I'm sure I could find research to back this up, but your system is trying to abstract from these experiences to keep you safe. If you don't heal, it keeps abstracting further and further, because then you see 20 years out, I talk about uncertainty became very dangerous for me at 13 when I went through cancer. Then because I didn't know to heal that pattern or look at it, it was by the time I was 25, anything that was uncertain became this big downward spiral for me, because the feeling overpowered me in a way.

I'm not being super clear, but it's just – the feeling will grow and you'll have less resilience around it and less choice around it the longer it goes on. Then that reflects how you review the past. I love that that you said that the past does change, as we change in the present. It's super trippy. I can talk about that for three podcasts.

[0:37:09.5] AN: It is. Just to your point, because what you said was so beautiful. Another way to articulate that, because you said I want you to – I'm not sure if you're understanding me and I was understanding, 100% it made so much sense to me. What happens, you're talking about this feeling unsafe in the nervous system and when your body is feeling unsafe. This is about



the nervous system. When there is an arousal level in the nervous system and we feel unsafe. That happens.

When that happens again, it connects or couples with the last time it happened. Let's say you have an unsafe experience and that doesn't get worked on or healed, the next time you have an unsafe experience, it connects to that one. The next time you have an unsafe experience, you may feel that activation in your nervous system, it connects to the last three, right?

What's happening is all those dots are connecting, which is why when I would look back at my childhood, it was like, all I could see were all those dots connecting all the pain, or all the ways that I felt unsafe. This thing is because they're all connected, it's this amazing domino effect. That's why when I work with clients, I love to work with this concept of layers, because as we just remove one layer, the whole pattern we organize is it has to, because it can't stay in the same stagnant place anymore; when you move one piece, the whole thing shifts.

[SPONSOR MESSAGE]

[0:38:31.6] 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 around 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 the live program, so why not get started today and start getting relief and clarity?

[INTERVIEW CONTINUED]

[0:40:48.8] AS: That's why for people listening or struggling with food every time, that you feel bad about what you ate, right, you're connecting then to all the other times that you feel you've failed, or that you've lost control. Until you can really see that the food is not about the food in those situations, you'll continue to link with that. That's amazing. Yeah, thank you for that. I know that as I work with clients, what we're working on is the good-bad binary and getting them to X-ray what's really happening, but I didn't understand probably why for all of us, it feels so shameful, right? I mean, we're chipping away at that chain, but that's partly why it



feels so shameful is because every time you have go overboard with food or whatever, you're linking to all those other times, because most people don't get out of the diet binge cycle. It's because we have poor treat – I don't know if we want to call it treatment plans, but poor approaches to it, right? We just fall back on willpower and discipline, instead of no, you've got some unresolved pain and trauma we need to look at.

[0:41:52.5] AN: Yes. I know.

[0:41:54.5] AS: Well and this is what I love. In your book, you have a breathwork practice for anger, for resilience, for unwinding. Oh, my God. I did the unwinding one after such a cognitively intense day of work. I was like, "This stuff works." It was so exciting. How did you come up with this approach? I'm just fascinated. I love it, again, because most of my clients need some structure, but they want that flexible structure and this book provides that. It's like, "Oh, feeling angry, or oh, need to unwind?" I love it. How'd you come up with exercises for each state of being that we're feeling?

[0:42:30.1] AN: A way that I came up with it is really a hybrid. My methodology is a hybrid, based on so many years of studying my breath, with myself, with clients and with a myriad of teachers, studying with different somatic therapy teachers also doing neuroscience research and of course, just practicing all the stuff that I'm teaching. My background, my initial background was breathing came through meditation, Zen meditation and hatha yoga, and that's where I was introduced to the breath and that's where early stages of my practices began.

More classical, traditional, pranayama or breathing practices and they have expanded as I've expanded, of course. Also, really looking for ways that I could teach the processes that felt more contemporary. I was teaching very classical hatha yoga for a long time and just felt I loved the techniques, but the languaging just wasn't quite resonating with a lot of my students, which also makes sense, because it's in some ways culturally appropriated from another country and



time, and so we have to look at all those pieces too.

I was like, how can I just create this in a way that feels really fresh and modern and really accessible? It's really a hybrid of all those different pieces. There are some practices in the book where I talk about here's the research I did, here's where this practice comes from, or here's a nod to a very classical hatha yoga pranayama practice, and giving respect where it's due of course. I think that's really important. I didn't just put there and channel all these things out of nowhere. They came from somewhere. I have a lot of teachers.

The other thing with the book is that I really wanted – I really wanted as – when we sat down with my editor, initially it was we were going to do 50 practices. I was like, “That just seems overwhelming.” I wouldn't go buy a book that was 50 practices. I'd be like, “That's A, how can they all work like that? Doesn't even seem real,” you know what I mean? That does seem like, oh, a little cheesy and weird and not the direction we wanted to go.

It's really like, okay, great, how can we just narrow this down? Then we're like, 25. It sounds like a good number. I was like, I definitely have more than 25 practices, but let's just hit on the topics that I'm seeing the most in my life and in the life of my clients and the ones that I have worked with them for years and have expanded.

The other way that we structured the book was very intentional, doing all the practices in the beginning in the table of contents, just an alphabetical order. I worked a lot with Oracle cards, right? I don't really know much about Tarot, but I work with a lot of these animal decks. I'll shuffle my deck and I'll set my intention and I'll pull a card and it's always just spooky, spooky how accurate it is. I love the idea of the Oracle. I loved this concept that somebody could open the book and just close their eyes and move their finger down the page. Then when they got to a point where they just felt a hit, they would open their eyes and stop on that practice. I wanted people to be able to approach this in a lot of different ways.



[0:45:27.2] AS: Yeah. I mean, Ashley also has a background in art and it's beautifully designed. I feel the design embodies the message, which is hard to do, right? The medium is the message, but it's such a beautiful book. You just feel calm opening it. I'm laughing about the 50 breathwork exercises, because when I see those articles of top 50, or top 100, I'm like, "Uh, I can't even." I think they were saying this is a good thing and I'm like, "Next. I can't handle it anymore."

One of the things, you said you used about what was coming up in your life and that of your clients, one of the things I'm noticing these days is a huge desire for people to want to slow down. It seems the busy badge of honor is starting to lose its luster. What is your favorite practice in the book to help us slow down?

[0:46:19.7] AN: My favorite, there's a few, but I honestly will suggest the unwind practice. It's one of the most advanced practices in the book. Meaning, if you're brand new to breathwork, it wouldn't be something that I would have you actually start with grounding. If you're brand new to breathwork and you're looking to slow down, start with grounding. Then if you've done some breathwork, or some meditation, or some yoga, start with unwind.

The unwind practice is just a very quick and easy way to regulate the nervous system. I have yet to meet a person that it hasn't worked for. It can feel a little odd in the beginning and it can take some getting used to, but I promise if you do that practice for a few minutes, for a couple days in a row, you'll really start to notice a shift, and most people notice a shift after, just a few minutes of one practice. I typically suggest practicing days in a row and like you talked about in the beginning, so beautifully consistency and really showing up for it. Yeah, those are the two that I would suggest. If you're new, grounding. If you've been practicing for a little while, unwind.

[0:47:25.8] AS: Okay. Because you've clearly done your healing work and can speak about this clearly, I want to know how you define grounding for people, because it's going to help them.



[0:47:35.9] AN: I love this question. Again, it's one of those things. It's something that I say and write about so much. I think defining it is really, really important. For me, grounding is feeling at ease in my body. Feeling at ease in my body.

[0:47:51.4] AS: I love elegance. It takes a lot of work to get to elegance, people. One thing I just wanted to circle back, again about the book and I love – and your approach is that, I remember a couple several years ago I used to live in Philadelphia. One of my favorite yoga teachers there, we were having a feminist chat and she was telling me how she stopped teaching the Bhagavad-Gita, because she realized how patriarchal and masculine it was.

I think we often – it's so matrixy, because we're looking at these ancient texts, or we try to go to the wisdom of the ages, but we don't realize that most of the wisdom of the ages was still highly hyper masculine-focused. That's why I just love so many women getting in the game, or getting in the game, clearing their head and whatever. God, I'm even using sports metaphors, right? I don't have a feminine metaphor for this.

I been saying, I feel women are putting together, reconnecting and interconnecting, which should have never been separated in the first place. Men can do it too. That's a gendered lens, but I just love that you intuitively sense that okay, I can combine this into something that really, really incorporates the body and has a feminine lens, more feminine, or meaning yin, yin archetype, not female. Now I'm going down a rabbit hole, but do you get what I'm saying?

[0:49:11.3] AN: Yes, I do. I really appreciate what you're saying for me as a practitioner in this space. There are very, very few female identified folks in the breath workspace as teachers that have risen to a particular level, given how many decades of work they've put in, right? It's not just someone was like, "Oh, you're a teacher." It's like, "Everyone's been doing work to get to this place."

I look around and it's a very masculine, men-dominated scene breathwork, and so much of the



breathwork that's taught is very intense. A lot of it is about catharsis and really going hard. I've had students, especially when I was in LA that would come out of these breathwork classes and come to my class and be like, "Thank, God. I just was scared. This guy was literally yelling at me to breathe and scream and feel my pain. That's really intense. I'm looking for something that's just a little bit safer and a little bit quieter and a little bit softer."

Again, there's no I'm not right or wrong, and he's not right or wrong. There are so many approaches, which is so awesome. There's so many different ways to access whatever is that we're trying to access. I was really feeling that in the space as I was building my practice and as I was starting to get pressed and coming out. So many amazing people reached out to me and they were just like, "Thank you for sharing this work in a way that it's really, really different," because so many people have an idea about breathwork and I'm really trying to disrupt that.

[0:50:44.0] AS: I love it. I mean, the same in the personal development space. I mean, the week we're recording this, a big article has come out about Tony Robbins being accused of sexual harassment and abuse of victims. His approach, now changing beliefs and stories is more mainstream, but his approach is very direct. It's very like, almost exorcise the trauma out of you in a weekend. I just want people to know there's other choices out there. That may not be the best for you.

The challenge though is I remember, when I was – didn't even know I was struggling from PTSD from going through cancer, all this stuff, I was attracted to that, because it felt so certain and so quick. That's all I wanted. I was like, I don't want to talk nuance and discernment. I want a black and white answer, because that's how I'm seeing the world. It gets very matrixy. I'm glad we had this little plug of a conversation for knowing your choices, right? All comes back to knowing your choices.

[0:51:41.2] AN: Yes.



[0:51:42.2] AS: Since you're super well-versed and help, this is just tangential, but you talked about ground and being, feeling ease in our body. I know that you used to live in LA, where they have the 5G networks. I mean, I don't know how well versed you are on 5G. It's this emerging thing I'm learning about. How do you think all of this Wi-Fi and EMFs is going to affect the grounding in our body? I know that's not your – I'm just curious. This is more like a philosophical question; little off topic.

[0:52:11.7] AN: Yeah, it's totally on topic for me, so I think you're good.

[0:52:14.2] AS: Oh, good. I was like –

[0:52:16.4] AN: Yeah. Interestingly you bring this up, especially now that my partner and I have a seven-and-a-half-month-old. I can tell, you watching him just even around the iPhone, and we're really conscious of, cliché now that he's here. We don't have the phones in the room and all that stuff.

When he gets around the phone, something – his energy gets disrupted. I can see it so clearly in him, because he's so new. Of course he's an old soul and it's probably his tenth incarnation, but I can see it so clearly in this little person when the phone is around him, what happens to him energetically and how it disrupts his energy. To me, that's just this huge wake-up call. I felt it myself, which is one of the reasons I left LA. It was just, I was becoming – it was too hard for me to be grounded. I was like, I don't want to have to work this hard to live somewhere. Honestly, that's what it came down to. That might sound weird to some people, but I was like, I don't want to have to have this protection. I don't want to have to do this many yin yoga practices. I don't want it to be this hard. I just want to be able to feel.

We talked about at ease in my body without having to struggle to get there. For me, I'm very sensitive and the environment has a huge – I think, plays a huge role on that. As far as the 5G goes, yeah, I mean, it's a huge disrupter to our nervous system and they're so much coming out



about it now. I've been doing – probably a lot. We've been looking at a lot of the same things, reading a lot of the same studies.

My partner and I are actually in the process of – we just got a realtor and we're looking at doing that. We're getting out of this little city and moving to the woods next. We were just like, “We need a break. We need to just have a break and really go full-on and just really explore what that's like.”

[0:53:59.5] AS: Yeah. I'm from Pittsburgh, but I left for 18 years. Thought I'd never come back. My husband and I were in New York after Philly, and I couldn't articulate it at the time, but we ended up moving back here and we just bought a place. The big requirement for me was that we were right next door to the massive park here. I go there. It's a forest. I mean, it's Frick Park, it's miles and miles. I was like, I think I was craving – first of all, I mean, I love the East Coast. It'll probably always be part of me, but a slower pace. It's amazing how I just wanted to be near the forest.

I go there so often. It does the relaxation for me. I don't have to try so hard. I was like, “I'll take that ease.” I think this is actually a really great point of when you do the work, you start to get attracted to ease, rather than almost afraid of it; less attracted to chaos, more attracted to ease. I think that's one thing I've been doing, even with your book, having the exercises, now it just makes me conscious to breathe in general, even if I'm not doing a formal breath exercise. Even in the forest this morning I'm like, “My own breaths.” I'm like – getting all those good nutrients in them.

You just mentioned your son, Solomon. For Insatiable listeners, I mentioned this on the top of the season 1, but I'm pregnant. We have a lot of clients. I have a lot of clients and listeners I know who are in that fertility phase. How did your breathwork influence the birth of your son, Solomon? Because I knew from your blog that you would plan on using a midwife, doing a home birth. How did all that pan out, I'm so curious?



[0:55:36.0] AN: My biggest attention with the birth and I call it our birth, because I feel with Solomon, it was definitely a co-collaboration of my body and his body and this – the birth is a dance and it's a relationship. The day he was born, of course, I became another woman. I was pregnant, but I really feel that was my initiation into motherhood. It was like any initiation. It was amazing. It was excruciating. It was all the things that you would imagine it would be.

My biggest intention with bringing him earthside was to stay connected to myself and to him throughout the entire experience. We had a midwife, we had a birth plan, we had all the things. I said, "No matter what happens, no matter what happens during this birth, whether if he comes out here, or we have to go to the hospital, or whatever happens, I just want to be in my body. I want to be connected to myself. I want to stay connected to him. I want to just really go inside and be in this experience and feel every single thing that I can feel, with just so much presence and consciousness."

That was not something that I would have imagined my intention would be, even five years ago. It would just be like, get him out as painlessly as possible, you know what I mean? Let's just get this over with, because I'm really scared it's going to be really hard and there's nothing wrong with that. I'm just literally speaking about my own experience and what I wanted for myself. I really wanted to feel – really wanted to feel my body expand and change and shift and just stretch in all the ways that I had to, to make safe for him to come out.

The word that I was using the whole time, just my own mantra was just stay steady. I just learned to be steady. I wanted to be so in the moment when he came out, that there was – I was just putting the blinders on. It was just him and I on a space. Of course, my partner was there and there were other people, but I just really wanted that first moments of connection to be really potent. I think that that is in some ways, especially now seen as even still seen as very counterculture and very radical, but it's very natural. It's very natural.

Our culture is we treat pregnancy and birth as a medical condition. We view women when



they're in labor as if they're at this weak point. Actually, they're at a really potent, powerful place. In some ways, I've never felt more powerful like I did when I was in labor.

[0:58:18.9] AS: It's so funny when you say that, because I'm friends with Kathleen. I don't know if you know the Being Boss Women, but Kathleen who's the co-host, and we were DMing back and forth and she was like, "You will see how powerful women are." This is why people are afraid of them when you're in labor. It was like, "Ooh. I'm scared, but excited and intrigued."

[0:58:40.5] AN: Yes. Yeah, she's right. Yes, I'm a big fans of her and their show. Yeah, I felt that. I was reading, we talked a little bit before the show started about different books and things, resources that we've been reading and paying attention to and checking out in this new space of being a mother and motherhood and on the journey. Yeah, I was happy to tap into that work and just go, "Oh, yeah. There's this whole thing in our – there's this cultural imprint that I have around what this looks like," and also the experience that I went through when I was born and what my mother went through. Even though of course, I don't cognitively remember it at the time, but I still had a very big traumatic imprint memory from my own birth.

I really just wanted things to be done with a level of consciousness. Also, recognizing what and being grateful, just so grateful for what a privilege that is. I mean, it's a huge privilege, a huge privilege.

[0:59:35.1] AS: Yeah. As you're talking, I'm just thinking about when you can really get things out at the root and regulate your nervous system and we talked about choice, you just gave me so many choices and ideas about what I want for my own birth. I think the more that you work with choice, the more expansive your idea gets, your ideas get and the more creative. I mean, I know with my Truce with Food clients, that's a lot of – we're always looking for their – we call it option C, rather than A or B, right? Lean in, or lean out. Or wait, can I choose something else? Or this is good or bad, or discernment.



I think the more we can regulate our nervous systems, the more choices we see. Not only the more choices, but the more expansive and true to who we are and the path that we're on that we can get. Thank you for sharing that, because I just got a whole lot of ideas.

[1:00:24.9] AN: I'm so glad. I love what you said about choice and what you've been saying, what we've been talking about in terms of choice, because ultimately, that was a huge, huge piece around the birth too is that I really wanted to feel empowered and to have choice and to be conscious. No matter the outcome, that there were choices and there were choices that were made all along the way, and it didn't have to feel this rushed experience. It's where I'm like, "Wait, what's happening?" I wanted to, because we talked about to really slow things down as much as I could, so that I could have access to those choices. Also, so that my birth team knew exactly what my choices were, in case I was in a moment where I couldn't say them out loud.

[1:01:08.5] AS: Yeah. I joke with Carlos, who's my husband. I'm like, "Okay, we're going to do a decision tree birth plan. I'm going to get the count for everything, but I'm going to have a choice every step of the way," because I think that's ultimately what's important is that the choice if something, whatever happens is going to happen and you have to surrender. I want to make sure that my choices are honored, whatever path that we go down. I totally get it. What are you learning about the power of breath with parenting?

[1:01:37.3] AN: Right now, probably one of the big things I'm learning about is how my regulation affects my son. What I know from just this limited experience as mothering, but I've been with him – I've barely worked since he's been here. I've been with him a lot and just been very present with him and watching this process. What I've learned through being with him and also on a lot of the research that I've done is that what children need for a healthy attachment for healthy development is to have a mom who's regulated, and to have a mom who has support and have a mom who has people to help her take care of herself, when she's so tired, she can't do it for herself.



There's a lot of layers of support that are needed for the mother. The mother being me and just the “mother of the family,” or that's the person who is carrying the child, so the parent, but that role. It's not necessarily even a gendered role, but that role is really, really important and needs a lot of support. I am learning that the more support I get, the more Solomon feels supported.

It's really wild, because we're taught and this is new for me. This is really new for me, because I've been taught and I've been teaching. What I've learned is that right, I take care of myself. Of course, I get support. That's a huge thing in my practice and in my work. I'm always encouraging clients to get support from whoever they can and to have a very robust support network.

I've never seen it so clearly as I have with my son. The more support I get, the more relaxed he is, the more at ease he is, the happier he is, because he knows I'm being taken care of and I'm taking – that I have what I need. For him, that's just so life-giving and that's so affirming. Because he doesn't have to then do something for me, right? So many babies come into the world and I was one of them feeling I had to take care of my mom, right? There was this unspoken agreement, whether it was conscious or not, but that's what what's happening. I really don't want Solomon to grow up feeling he has to take care of me.

[1:03:51.0] AS: I just keep thinking about the absence of the village that we don't even know we're missing anymore, right? I keep thinking about for so many of my clients who grew up with neglect, or a mother that wasn't functioning, or even a parent and how even today, if you can get the support you need, that's healing, you're making new choices, rather than taking it all on. You had to. You can make new choices, even today.

I love that you share that, because again, I think it's something that's so natural and that people need, but often it feels like, “Oh, I should be able to do this. Why is this so hard?” It's because we're missing the village.



[1:04:34.5] AN: Literally, like every conversation I've had in this. My partner and I are out here in California. We don't have a ton of family around and we really are in some ways so far away from that village. Yeah, it's a huge, huge, huge thing. I didn't even really – it's like, I knew that going into it and that we've planned as best we could to have meals delivered and all the different things that you do to set yourself up for at least what we wanted to do is I really wanted to set myself up for the first two months. I can just really be in bed with my baby and not have to cope and not have to go into the kitchen and just be with him and take care of him and heal myself. I had no idea until I was in it, just how much we needed that. It's like, you can know it, but you can't really know it in your body until you're in it.

[1:05:21.7] AS: I know. I always know people, remember those book, it's books in the early 2000s like, why French women don't get fat? I'm like, you know why they don't get fat? Because they have a social safety net. They get a nurse that comes to the help them for the first year. They know that if they take a lunch break, they're not going to be fired. Let's look at the social systems that make them feel safe in their body. No one's talking about that. It's not their scarves, okay people?

[1:05:47.2] AN: No, it's really not. It's really not. The other quick thing I want to just say too about parenting that I feel has been a big piece for me, especially this last couple months now that Solomon is just developed – I mean, babies develop so rapidly, it's just really wild. He's learning the things with his body and he's learning how to crawl and he's just going through all these huge developmental milestones.

Then part of what happens with him and this is apparently according to her, our therapist that we say just very common in babies and which makes sense, but as they're going through challenges, they can feel not – he doesn't get overloaded or overwhelmed, he gets frustrated, right? It's uncomfortable. He gets frustrated. He's just trying to get his right knee forward and he just can't quite get it. It's like, his mind knows that it can happen, but his body just can't quite get it yet, and so he gets frustrated.



What was interesting in the beginning was I was watching my own impulse, when he would get – and just immediately, he would get frustrated and then I would go pick him up. I'd be like, “Oh, it's okay.” I'd hold him. Now what I've been practicing is just letting him get a little frustrated and just sitting with him. I'm right there with him. I'm watching him. I'm like, “Hey, babe. I'm with you. I'm here. Mama's here. She's not going anywhere. I see how frustrated you are and we're going to get through this.”

What's so amazing is how much that is expanding his capacity for resilience, because what's happening is he is learning a different way. Sometimes, he can't get there and I will pick him up of course, and comfort him and do all the things. Other times, he gets frustrated and he starts to cry and then he changes. He does something different. It's so powerful.

[1:07:30.1] AS: It's so interesting you say that, because my sister got me this book that she's like, “All my friends who have kids said they wish they would have read this early,” and it's called *Growing up Bay Bay*, and it's actually this American journalist living in Paris. She talks about the pause when you're trying to get your kid to sleep. Rather than just rushing in, because sometimes when babies are learning to sleep, they talk, they coo. If you go in and rush in there, you're actually training them to wake up and wake up every two hours.

They're like, of course, if they start crying after five minutes then you go in there, right? As I was reading that book and your book at the same time I'm like, “This is why breathwork is so powerful,” because rather than just reacting to that impulse to want to, “Okay, I'm going to help you. Okay, I'm going to make this all right and fixed,” right? It's like, okay, the breath is going to help me take the pause and it's going to be better for both of us in the long run. Your next book has to be the breath pause, or something like that.

[1:08:28.1] AN: Part of it for me too, especially with what what's going on with the crawling is that I was having to – I had this moment. That pause gave me a moment to look at, “Oh, am I just trying to pick him up, because I'm uncomfortable with what's happening?” It's like, there's



so many layers to this and it's so complex. Then I got to a place where it's like, "No, I'm genuinely wanting to support him." Sometimes, building that resiliency it's like, I know this from my own work. It's we have to get in the struggle, because the cool thing is once he got that knee forward, he was laughing. He was laughing hysterically. He was so happy. There's joy in being able to do that and get that piece, but I have to actually give him the space to get there and go through that little bit of a struggle, so that he can get to the joy and find out.

[1:09:12.6] AS: I love that. That's why your book says 25 simple practices for calm, joy and resilience. They're a package deal, people.

[1:09:21.1] AN: Yes. Yes, they are.

[1:09:23.5] AS: Ashley, first of all, if you want to get started, you guys buy her book. We link to it in the show notes, as well as a ton of things. Again, it's called How to Breathe: 25 Simple Practices for Calm, Joy and Resilience. What is your recommendations for consistency when we start? How many minutes? You had mentioned about that a little bit before, but wanted to get your expert opinion on just to start, what do you think is good to be consistent with?

[1:09:51.6] AN: I typically suggest people start with 5 to 7 minutes at a time. Again, with the caveat that if you set your timer for 7 minutes and you've done two and you're just like, "That's all I can do right now," then be gentle with yourself. Gentleness is key. Try to go in the 5 to 7 minute range. I find that 5 to 7 minutes is good, because it gives you enough time to get the hang of whatever is happening, burn off whatever thought, or thing that's coming up and then actually get into your practice.

A lot of times, with more mental meditation practices, they talk about this burn off, right? They talked about that a lot in transcendental meditation. It's like, you'd get these 5 to 10 minutes of just burn off, before you actually go deep into your meditation practice. The cool thing about breathwork is that you don't need to practice for 20 minutes. It actually will happen a lot faster,



because you're working directly with your nervous system, and to be able to drop down into that parasympathetic state. It's not a top-down approach, it's actually a bottom-up approach, which is why it's so effective.

I typically will suggest yeah, 5 to 7 minutes to start. If you're brand new, like I mentioned before, start with grounding. It's a really, really good practice for just learning how to feel regulated in your body. Then from there, just explore whatever practice you want. I also suggest in the beginning to pick one practice and try to stick with it, at least for a week, if not two. That way, you'll start to build the somatic memory, you'll build the nervous system imprint of what that practice feels in your body. The more you set aside that time for that consistent practice, the more you're going to be able to access the benefits of those practice all throughout your day, right?

I'll have people who say – clients would be like, “Oh, I did one of your breathwork practices twice and it didn't work.” I'm like, “Okay, wait. You did it twice? Excuse me, what? Okay, why don't you try it every day for 21 days and then call me and tell me what happens.” Then they go, “Oh, it really works now.” I'm like, “Yeah, we have to be consistent. We have to do the thing, especially if it's something that we're not used to doing.” You're not going to go sit down at a piano and go, “I tried to play and I don't know how to read music.” Oh, well. No, you got to practice, which I know is a huge thing around what you're teaching too. We have to be consistent. We have to show up. You'll see this other book, there's – I am encouraging folks to show up with a lot of gentleness, a lot of softness. It doesn't need to be this rigid thing.

[1:12:20.0] AS: Yeah. I will tell you guys, as someone who's very skeptical of quick fixes and things working simultaneously, I was really surprised at how – I always tell clients, life is energy management, not time management. I was like, what can 5 minutes do, right? It's shifting the energy in such a dramatic way. It will give you at least triple the return on your investment, in terms of you spend 5 minutes doing it, you're going to get 15 minutes of energy back, or at least enough energy to keep going with what you need to do. I cannot recommend you enough.



It's so beautiful to look at and it's so accessible. Again, I love the flexible structure. You can be in choice about what you want to do and the structure will help make sure that you feel successful with it.

Ashley, thank you so much for your time. Again, we will link to people to find you and you do these great gratitude journals on Instagram, I follow you there. Where can people find you online?

[1:13:18.3] AN: You can find me on Instagram. My handle is @Ashley_Neese. You can also find me on my website, ashleyneese.com. I'm actually next month launching the first in a monthly series, called How to Breathe Deeper. It's a live book club class, which I'm very excited about. There'll be live offerings every month, where you could tune in anywhere in the world and we're going to do a breathwork class and also a book club. Each month, we'll have a different theme.

[1:13:47.6] AS: Oh, my God. That's amazing. You'll get the power of the group.

[1:13:50.0] AN: Yes. Yeah.

[1:13:51.0] AS: We need each other, people.

[1:13:52.3] AN: Yeah, that would be great. My one-on-one practice is basically full for – it's been really hard to manage that, especially now with Solomon. I haven't been able to open up my books in the way that I have in the past, and so I'm trying to do offerings that are really in alignment with where my life and where my energy is now too. How can I extend my offerings? What you're talking about is so beautiful, the energy management. I'm like, "I can't actually see nine clients a day anymore like I used to," but I can do these two-hour classes a couple times a month and see 300 people. It just makes way more sense.



[1:14:27.4] AS: Yeah. I mean, Inc. magazine a couple years ago, they talked about this doctor seeing – he was so tired of being able to see patients for 10 minutes a day, so we got all his type two diabetic patients, 10 of them together and they had an hour-and-a-half meeting and he was like, “Oh, my God. It was so much better than seeing everyone privately, because everyone in the group met each other, people knew what questions asked to people who didn't know what questions to ask, learn what they should be asking.” I think that's what's so powerful about group work. It really can help exponentially. Thank you so much for being here again, Ashley. Again, the book is how How to Breathe: 25 Simple Practices for Calm, Joy and Resilience. Thank you so much for being here, Ashley.

[1:15:07.9] AN: Thank you so much, Ali.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[1:15:13.3] 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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