

## How to Eat to Fix and Optimize Your Period with Alisa Vitti – Insatiable Season 9, 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.

[INTERVIEW]

**[00:00:47] AS:** Welcome everybody to season 9 of Insatiable. Our season 9 theme is fertility this topic often gets reduced to our periods. You're only getting pregnant without regard to the physical, emotional and soul process involved with our hormones, menstrual cycles, bodies and identities regardless if we choose to have children or not.

In this season we will take a holistic and integrated look at fertility to reveal you have more choices than most of us have been led to believe. Being in my eighth month of pregnancy at the time of recording, I'm now surprised that I thought that Western medicine would be authoritative on fertility. It is just as fraught with fear tactics, outdated science and siloed thinking as nutrition, weight loss and wellness.



My hope is we fill in the gaps you might not know are missing, have better questions to ask and are able to get the results you want on your terms for your period, hormonal health, conception, pregnancy, birth, and the fourth trimester. This fertility theme is also the theme for our insatiable membership community. We will spend fall, September, October and November, taking a deep dive into the physical, emotional and soul aspects of fertility for your current life stage. Whether you're menstruating, perimenopause, menopause, or post-menopause, and how to sync our nutrition lifestyle, including exercise and creativity to be in synced with our fertility to reduce and prevent cravings and optimize our health. More details on how to join at [alishapiro.com/isee2019](http://alishapiro.com/isee2019).

So welcome to episode two, where we have a very special guest, Alisa Vitti, and I wanted to have her on, because Alisa is such a trailblazer. She's changing the narrative, the conversation, and she really gets the nitty-gritty physiological details of how we can eat, and live to work with our periods and hormones, and she gets the metaphorical or emotional picture of how our cycles can be such a health symbol and what they can tell us about our own health.

So before we get to picking her brain, I just want to give you a little bit of her background. Alisa is a woman's hormone and functional nutrition expert and pioneer in female bio hacking. She is the bestselling author of *Woman Code*, which I recommend to all my clients when people ask me for book recommendation on periods, it's my go-to, and creator of the Cycle Syncing Method, a female-centric diet and lifestyle program that leverages hormonal patterns for optimum health, fitness and productivity.

As the founder of [floiving.com](http://floiving.com), she's built the world's first menstrual healthcare platform that helps women around the world put their period issues like PCOS, fibroids, endometriosis and PMS into remission naturally using her highly effective FLO protocol and FLO balance supplements. Finally, Alisa is the creator of MyFlo Period App, the first and only functional medicine period tracker designed to help users eliminate symptoms and schedule their lives



according to their cycles. It is consistently ranked in the top 10 of paid apps in the health and fitness category on iTunes. Probably still a bargain for the best healthcare.

A graduate of Johns Hopkins University and the Institute for Integrative Nutrition, Alisa has been featured on The Dr. Oz Show, Lifetime, and has been a regular contributor for Cosmo, Harper's Bazaar and Women's Health. She was selected as PurWow 100 Women to Watch in 2018, and Thrive Global named her one of the 12 women entrepreneurs changing the world in 2019, and she's also an advisor to several health tech startups.

Alisa, thank you so much for being here.

**[00:04:27] AV:** I'm so glad to be here, Ali. Thanks for having me.

**[00:04:31] AS:** Yeah. So we are like revolutionizing – I mean, the fact that we're even talking about periods, I think, and you're part of this this figure of conversation. So you obviously have a passion for it, and I'm curious how your own story, I'm sure, influenced this passion.

**[00:04:47] AV:** Well, I certainly never thought I would be like the queen of periods, but it just ended up happening that I was looking for my period for such a long time as a young person that I became really curious, I think, because it was missing. Then, unfortunately, it became problematic and had all sorts of symptoms that, again, kept me curious and trying to figure out and learn what was going on with my period. So I ended up just becoming really passionate about periods.

But even before all the problems started and the missing periods went into play, and keep in mind, when I say that, from the age of 12 to 22 when everybody else was just getting their periods and getting used to having their periods, I wasn't getting them at all. In that decade I maybe have five periods total. A few of them were chemically induced with synthetic



progesterone. And I was having all sorts of interesting symptoms, like massive weight gain, and acne, and mood issues, and it was not a fun time.

But prior to all of that kicking off, when I was a young person first learning about periods, because I had gotten no exposure to it, whatsoever at home. My parents did a really good job of like just letting me be a kid, I guess, and I had no idea that any of these stuff was going to happen when I first about it. And I just thought it was the most wonderful thing. I was awestruck that I was going to have this experience monthly and that this is going to be something that happened to my body.

My mother never said a single word about it, which also means that she didn't say anything negative about it either. And I noticed that as an important distinction, because when I looked around the classroom at my schoolmates at the time who I think we're all in the 6th grade, everybody else like already had a pre-formed opinion about this being really negative, and I did not, and only years later was I able to sort of track it back to the fact that I had gotten no in advance negative exposure to it. Then when it did happen, my mom wasn't – There was no like, "Oh! Welcome to the misery club." It was like, "Okay, great." It's very just normal.

So I've always had a really positive relationship with my period, but ironically then had a very difficult physical experience with it that led me to what it is that I do today. I think the end result of that journey of really struggling so much with PCOS was understanding and having insight into the conventional medical model for gynecology, for chronic menstrual disturbances, like PCOS, fibroids, endometriosis, etc., that conventional gynecology doesn't have a solution for us. They only offer us things like medication, like the pill, and these appropriate surgical procedures, which are not always appropriate, and they really just let – The idea is to kind of dismiss concerns for as long as possible. I was told that it was all in my head for many, many years, and then to give us almost no treatment options just seems like it didn't match the exceptional conventional medical care that you get in other verticals within medicine.



I thought if I can get myself rebalanced and get well hormonally, I'd like to create something, a company that can help women like me who needs help who are not getting it in conventional ways. So that's really the full 360 degrees of this journey, is I had all these issues and then I became dedicated to making sure that other women who had issues like me could get the support that I didn't get.

**[00:08:26] AS:** I love those kind of stories, because I don't know if I believe in destiny, but it feels like your story is destiny. You're so excited and then you were having these issues. I think what's interesting that your story highlights and that many people don't connect right away, at least until their periods maybe are dysfunctional, but our period is not just about getting a period, but it's actually a vital sign of how our overall health is doing similar to temperature, heart rate, blood pressure. But for women, it's indicating all these other health stuff that is probably not going on or going awry, and the period just kind of being like the symptom. If it's irregular, or not having it, or cramping, or all the things that could happen, correct?

**[00:09:11] AV:** Absolutely. I had been for years taking a little workshop around demonstrating visually the different colors and textures that your period can be, and then I actually made TV and women's history by being the first human being ever to go on national television to demonstrate this to everybody on Dr. Oz.

**[00:09:31] AS:** On Dr. Oz.

**[00:09:32] AV:** Yes, on Dr. Oz. Who, by the way, he was super cool about it. He was like, "Bring it on." He goes, "We need more of the juices. We need bigger plates." A lot of people were really worried it wasn't going to go over well, and he was like – He's has like three daughters. He's like, "Let's do this." He was great. I really enjoyed taping that with him. He was so all about it.



I think it's just important for us to know that the color of your bleed is a biomarker. It's a bio indicator. For example, just like you would look at your poop or your urine or the smell of your sweat, or your skin, or your hair, your nails, as a signal that the body is giving you to let you know how well you're doing, health-wise. It's really important for us as women to also now connect the dots to our bleed and our period as a whole, the entire month, as an indicator of our overall health.

A few years after my episode aired, I think it was two years after. The American College of Obstetrics and Gynecologist made a new decree that your period should actually be considered your 5th vital sign. So your other four vital signs, you're probably familiar with like temperature and heart rate. Those are things that they will take in the emergency room, or you'll get a standard doctor's visit, like they'll check your vitals. Those are what those vitals are, those four vital signs. But now the ACOG, as of I think 2016, has added a 5th vital sign for women, that your period should be assessed in all routine health checks, because what we now understand about reproductive hormones is that they don't simply affect your cycle. They affect all of these other systems of the body.

So if your period is showing symptoms of suboptimal performance, it's also then very likely that your metabolism, your immune system, your stress response system and your brain function is not performing optimally either. So it's a really important indicator of overall health and it's one obviously that I'm passionate about women checking into.

In fact, after my Dr. Oz taping I said, "This information should really be available everywhere." So we actually created a free tool, which you can access on the website where you can answer a few quick questions that will help you identify which period type you have and what that means about your hormones and what you may need to do to bring balance back quickly, and all that information is free.



**[00:12:09] AS:** Oh my God! I love that. And we'll link to that in the show notes for sure for people, because I think that's so important. Because one of the things – I know when I work with clients, even though they're coming to me, because they're struggling with consistency and what to eat. A lot of them were put on birth control from an early stage to cover up other symptoms. Or when I ask them about their periods, because obviously it can contribute to weight gain, or autoimmune issues that they're having. But they're like, "You're like the first person to ask me about this connection," or something, and I'm like, "Yeah, we need to start looking at the whole picture."

But people think if their periods have always been a certain way, they've kind of normalize that rather than saying, "No, there is an imbalance there." So I love that you have people can like basically take a quiz and see what the color of their period. Is texture as well telling them?

**[00:12:59] AV:** Absolutely. Color, texture and then some other factors too, length, intensity of symptoms. So the quiz will sort of – It's called the Period Type Quiz. It will take you through the questions you need to evaluate. And then you'll get some information that you probably will start to explain a lot of things that may be you weren't sure how they're connected. It will connect a lot of dots for you, which I love, because this is information that every women should have and should have knowledge of not just about her period symptoms, but how her hormones work and how she should care for them. That's just really based on information.

That it's like how would you get in a car if you didn't know how it works and how to drive it. It's a similar – I mean, I hate to use the car analogy, but it's just so applicable all the time. It's a very similar situation. We need to know what tools we have and how to make those tools work optionally.

**[00:13:56] AS:** Yeah. Is there a kind of a gold standard of – I don't want to say gold, but what would a normal – I would love for people to know what like a normal period should look like.



**[00:14:05] AV:** Yeah. I mean, you want it to be kind of cranberry red in color. You want it to start red and end red, right? You don't want a lot of spotting and like a healthy start and have clean finish. Then four to five days is normal length. Five days being more optimal than four. No clots. Not particularly heavy. So you feel like you can use a normal amount of menstrual care products. You're not changing Tampons every hour, that kind of a thing. So a nice balance, healthy flow with that fresh cranberry red color without any clotting or severe cramping or other painful things that can accompany your period.

**[00:14:51] AS:** Yeah. I mean, what I'm thinking is just for everyone listening, is your body is so resilient, and if you support – I love how you said it, caring for your hormones. Your conversation about being young and loving your period made me think of I got my period right after I finished chemotherapy, and I remember telling my mom and she was really excited, because the doctors didn't know. I had been 13 when I was diagnosed and wrapped up with chemo and radiation by 14 and I got my period like three months later. But I'm just thinking about how when I first got it, it was like very brown and short. Then over the years, it got healthier once I kind of rehabilitated my body. So I just always like to remind people, I think if my body can recover, most people probably can as well.

**[00:15:35] AV:** I mean, that's an amazing share and also that you're absolutely right. That's the other thing. If you're listening and I'm saying to you that that's what normal looks like. You'll go, "Oh! Hey, Alisa. That's nice, but mine is like a whole other different story." That's fine, because you can actually completely transform the color, the texture, the length, the frequency, the duration of your bleed within 3 cycles if you do the right stuff. It's not that complicated to manipulate that biomarker.

It's just like, for example, you should think of it exactly the same way as, "Oh! I'm constipated and my poop doesn't look right. Let me drink a little more water and have some more salad." Then, "Oh, look! My poop looks different and better. I don't have to think about it now." It's a



similar thing. You can manipulate the biomarkers if you know what to do. So that's a good news.

The bad news is most women don't know what to do. So they think that they're stuck with whatever period problems that they have, and that's compounded by the cultural narrative that says, "Your period is supposed to be miserable. You're supposed to suffer." So if you believe that you're supposed to suffer and nobody is giving you an education on what to do to improve things, how to interpret this biomarker and how to work with your hormones.

You do tend to not do anything and continue to just expect that it's going to be bad and suffer month after month with the same problems when you absolutely don't need to. That's always something I'm excited to share with women, because they're like, "Really? It can change?" Yes, it can change. It does all the time, and you just need to know how to do that.

**[00:17:16] AS:** And in three cycles. I mean, that's pretty amazing.

**[00:17:19] AV:** Yeah. It is. It is. I mean, but that's – I've been helping women do this now, the world over for about 20 years. Yeah, if you do the right things, it really – Unless there's some major other health thing going on. It really doesn't take very long to see some improvements, which is so – It's so nice, because then you start to – I think the best side effect aside from helping a women recover from a symptom or like eliminate a symptom, I think the thing that I love the most is watching this women have one big aha and one big emotional shift, which is like the aha, like, "Wow! This really can change. I can't believe it!"

Because all our lives, we're bombarded with this messaging. I mean, it's even biblical. It's going to be the curse. So then you have this like aha pretty quickly like, "Oh my goodness! This can really change." Then that then transforms your emotional stance to your period to like you're falling in love with yourself a little bit. Like, "Wow! I love my body. It's great. I love my periods." It's like this happy relationship starts to form in the presence of correct information. I like to



pull that out for you to look at it and consider, because the current emotional relationship you have with yourself is formed on bad science and incorrect information about your biology and your biochemistry.

Your self-hatred, your sense of battling with yourself, your sense of being disappointed by your body comes out of propaganda and wrong information. Every single time I have worked with someone and I put the right information in. What naturally, spontaneously, organically happens every time is that a woman starts to love herself in a way that she never felt like she could ever, no matter how much self-help she had done, accomplish before, and that's a joy to watch.

**[00:19:26] AS:** That says the kind of church I want to go to. I feel like you just took us to church. I love it.

**[00:19:34] AV:** I feel passionately about it. That is for sure.

**[00:19:37] AS:** Yeah. I mean, in my Truce with Food model, I mean, it is so much when people starts seeing their self-sabotage is actually self-protection, or they just haven't been given the right tools. You're right. It just shifts all of these. It's like, "Oh my God! I don't hate myself. I was doing the best with what I was told, but it was on total faulty information." That just builds.

I'm curious, because you were also told that you would never conceive naturally, and you did at the age of 37.

**[00:20:06] AV:** Yes.

**[00:20:07] AS:** But would you have had that chutzpa if you haven't first started with your period and hormonal health?



**[00:20:13] AV:** It's a good question about my chutzpa. I think I've had that. I think that's just how it's like fresh out of the womb. That was just the default setting I had. But I think that it wasn't so much chutzpah that drove me to start taking matters into my own hands. It was desperation, right? I mean, anybody who's gone through a serious health issue, you hit the ground at some point. It's not like rock bottom. It's just like you hit the ground. You're like, "Okay, I'm here. I'm on the ground, and no one is reaching out a hand. There are no more hands. It's like I got to stand up. I got to get myself up. I got to do this.

So that's really what it was. Looking at the expense of my prognosis, which was positioned to me at 20-years-old, diabetes, heart disease, cancer, infertility, dementia, that hit me right between the ovaries. I was like, "Okay, that can't be my future. So what can I do now?" I just got right into action. It wasn't even, "Oh, I'm going to show them." It was more like, "I got to take this seriously," because it was serious, and that's really what it – That's where it came from. I'm really grateful, every time I look at my daughter, we do this little thing.

I can't help but say it to her, because I appreciate how precious fertility is, especially given that it was not a guarantee for me. I always say thanks to her. I'm so grateful to be your mom, which may seem a little emotional even to say it now, but it's very true. Had I not committed to supporting my hormones in my 20s and in my 30s, especially with the work that I do, I know it's more likely than not that I wouldn't have the opportunity to be the mom that I am today.

So it's another reason why I'm still passionate about sharing this information with women, because the younger you start getting your hormones balanced and sorting out the self-care habits that you have around your cycle, the healthier your chance of having easy fertility is whenever you do decide to have a child.

**[00:22:37] AS:** Oh, I love that. I love that. So how can we eat to support our hormones in period? I love your comparison, like we all know to look at our bowels now, right? Okay. Now, how can we start to eat? I mean, you've patented a cycle syncing process. So could you take us



through maybe just the general overview? All of the details are in the Women Code book, and we'll put a link to that in the show notes. It's a fascinating read. So I can't recommend the book enough, and I'd love for you to share an overview.

**[00:23:08] AV:** Yeah. There are two parts to eating for your hormones. So the first is to really assess do you have, let's say, garden variety PMS? Or do you have a diagnosed menstrual disturbance? So if you have PCOS, fibroid, endometriosis, ovarian cyst, irregular cycles, heavy cycles. There's something like really up chronically with your period. Then that's in fact why I wrote Women Code, because I wanted to share the FLO protocol with women so they could really take this into their own hands just like I did with my own PCOS. This is the exact process that I used to put my PCOS into remission.

When you have that more substantial menstrual disturbance, so hormonal imbalance to address, the first thing you want to do is go to the first three steps of the healing process that's described in the FLO protocol. So you have to get your blood sugar stabilized before you can do anything that I'm going to talk about next. You have to get your adrenal balanced and you have to support your estrogen metabolism to the pathways of elimination. It all sounds very technical, and I break it down in a very easy way in the book, and hundreds of thousands of women have read this book and have used this process.

So it's very easy to do. Essentially, those three first steps in that specific order is what I researched for all the years that I was doing that research to try to get myself well to approach the endocrine system in the right way to turn on its ability to reregulate itself.

So for example, a lot of people think, "Okay, my period is heavy. I'm breaking out. I'm overweight. I need to detox. I need to cleanse." That's a common thing that people think they should do first. If you do that first, you actually will interrupt your hormones more, and that's important for you to know that there is a specific sequence. The first thing you do, whether you're trying to improve your fertility, improve your period improve your weight, is to stabilize



your blood sugar. The endocrine system, its main job, or anybody who ever watched Star Trek, it's prime directive is to safeguard the transport of glucose to the brain, the heart and the muscle tissues.

So if you do anything to interrupt your endocrine system's ability to get sugar in its usable form, glucose, to the brain, the heart or the muscle tissue throughout the day, it cannot then do its other work of having normal hormonal conversation. That's really important. So how might you be disrupting that? Skipping breakfast. Having coffee only for breakfast. Having sugary things for breakfast. Skipping meals. Going too long between meals.

There are so many ways in which you can mess up your blood sugar throughout the day, that it's the first place that we start in the FLO protocol. It's so important. We spend a month on it in our premier digital program called Monthly FLO, that takes you through this process to make it even more doable for you than even the book. This is just the anchor piece. It's the foundation. You get this right, that opens up the possibility for your endocrine system to restore homeostasis and start to have your symptoms resolved without a lot more effort. It's really a beautiful thing.

So, that's the first three steps, the blood sugar stability, the balancing of cortisol levels and having your body increase its ability to breakdown estrogen through the pathways of elimination, like the liver and the large intestine. You do that with foods and supplements. Once you've achieved those first three steps, this is what I call triage, right? Because if you're in a crisis, you've got endometriosis, you're in a hormonal crisis, you need to do the triage work first.

Once you are there, then you can move in to this next piece, which is the cycle syncing method, and this is also applicable if you don't have a hormonal crisis but you have some garden variety PMS or you just want to start to protect your hormones for the long-term. You want to make



sure that you don't prematurely age. You want to make sure that you can extend your fertility as long as possible. It has a very protective, preventative aspect to it.

So the cycle syncing method was something that I created out of my need to maintain my hormonal balance, because you can't be in triage forever. That doesn't make sense. Once you stop the – If you go to the emergency room, once you've like cauterized the wound. You don't need to keep cauterizing the wound. You need to start recovery.

So similarly with the cycle syncing method, I wanted to really deeply nourish and support my hormones in real-time on an ongoing basis. So I've mapped out in, I believe, chapter five of Women Code, the specific foods that really enhance and support the hormonal rations of each of the four phases of the cycle. You have a follicular phase, the ovulatory phase, the luteal phase, the menstrual phase. It turns out that if you eat specific foods for each of these phases, you optimize both hormonal production and hormonal metabolism. Each of those phases so that you don't have any symptoms of, let's say, breakouts during ovulation, or PMS during luteal phase, or of course difficulty with your actual bleed.

That's just the tip of the iceberg. So it allows you to really deeply nourish those hormones, but then of course because we know every productive hormones affect every other system of the body, it really allows you to start to function optimally in every area of your life well outside of just how your bleed is performing.

**[00:28:52] AS:** I love that, and I love that you give it in phases, because yeah – I mean, I feel like when people are watching like a show and they say, "Oh! Every time someone says the word you should drink." I feel like on this show every time someone says blood sugar, we should do a shot kombucha or something," because –

**[00:29:07] AV:** Oh God! Not kombucha.



**[00:29:09] AS:** Or maybe not kombucha.

**[00:29:09] AV:** Don't get restarted on kombucha. No! It's alcohol. No. It's sugar and alcohol. It's not great.

**[00:29:16] AS:** Kimchi. You should take a bite of kimchi. That's what we'll do.

**[00:29:19] AV:** There you go. Or bone broth. Do a shot of bone broth.

**[00:29:24] AS:** Yes, much better. Yes. Yes. Yeah, I haven't drank kombucha, oh my God! In years. I remember, it went off the show. Apparently, Lindsay Lohan said that's why she like to get her alcohol test, which is like years ago.

**[00:29:36] AV:** No. They pulled it off the shelf because it was an unregulated quantity of alcohol and people were drinking it thinking it was a health drink, but really it was unsafe for pregnant women and children to be consuming. So it's now becoming more regulated. So there's like hard kombucha, and now that's good that they've improved what you're drinking before you drink it. But, yeah fermented sugar, and fermented sugar in any form is alcohol.

**[00:30:06] AS:** Yeah. We're good. But I love that you mentioned this part about detox, because I see so many people detoxing and cleansing irrespectable if they have period problems or whatever. Not realizing that will – If you don't have the nutrition or the hormone health or the baseline foundation to support what's going to come out, or just the stress of that on your body, it can really set you back.

I think a lot of times people think, "Oh my God!" Especially if they're coming off the pill, like the first step is just to detox this out of me now that I know what is in it. I love your approach of like, "Wait. We've got to triage some things first," so that you can support your system to actually excrete the estrogen or whatever pill you were on, the various hormones.



**[00:30:47] AV:** Actually, I agree. I think we do tend to like run for like this more extreme kind of thing when it comes to health, which probably comes out of our masculine energy conditioning. But we can talk about that separately. I think when it comes to the pill and transitioning off the pill, that's a very – To your point, detoxing is not the right way to go about it. You really need to deeply nourish the body.

The pill, as I've written about it and talked about extensively, is very micronutrient depleting for the body. So before we have women transition off the pill, in our practice, we have them take a whole course of supplements and change diet for about three months, three cycles. Then work with their gynecologist to transition off that fourth month with full monitoring with their physician. So when you do that, you do two things.

One, you actually start to give back the body what it needs that has been depleted from taking the medication. Two, you prevent any sort of post-pill syndrome from evolving or developing, because if you've come off the hormones and you haven't replenished your micronutrient levels, you can really kind of get into a deep hormonal hole where you start to feel all sorts of symptoms that you don't want to feel, and that you can just fail right through that instead. So there's a way to transition off that phase, and we actually have all sorts of free resources around that, which if you want, I'm happy to share with your community too.

**[00:32:18] AS:** Yeah. Yeah. Thank you for sharing that. One of the things I like in your book as well, and I think women will be shocked to hear this. I know my clients are always surprised that they often need carbs, which is often why they're binging on them, because they're so depleted of them. But in your cycle syncing, I mean you have fruits in there, right? You have grains. You have veggies. Can you talk to the importance of carbohydrates for women?

**[00:32:45] AV:** Absolutely. Carbohydrates are critical. It's a major food group. I think this whole thing about excluding certain things and all of these sort of trendy diet term, like intermittent



fasting, keto and paleo, and all these things that are very top-heavy on one macronutrient and exclusive of others. You have to keep in mind that all of that research, what is done to this day on men and post-menopausal women. Let me say that again. All the research about these nutritional things are done on men and post-menopausal women. Not women in their cycling reproductive years. As such, these diets and these exclusive don't eat this, don't eat carbs, that does not apply to you if you're getting a period. Period. Pun intended.

**[00:33:39] AS:** I love it.

**[00:33:39] AV:** What you need to know is that there are specific phases of your cycle that change your metabolism. When your metabolism is running faster, that if you do not give it carbohydrates, you will actually turn on fat storage. One of these phases of course is the luteal phase, which is the longest phase of the cycle. It is 10 to 12 days long, and this is the phase, the last five days of which leading up to your bleed is the one that is rife with carb binging, right?

But that is only because you are in the habit of not eating carbohydrates that that ends up happening. What you do in the cycle syncing process is that you actually eat proactively good, slow-burning carbohydrates all stat-phase and so you don't ever get into a bingy moment. So, you are working with your metabolism. That is faster at that time, and you are burning more calories. You are keeping your weight balanced. You're not eating junk food and all cycle over cycle really adds up in terms of weight management or weight loss, if that's what you're trying to achieve. Not to mention, keeps your hormones balanced, which is should always be your primary goal. Everything flows from that. That is why we call it FLO living in fact, because if you can really orient yourself around your hormones, everything else will just flow.

Just to give you some perspective that I'm not just talking academic here. I myself was 60 pounds heavier than I am today and how I have lost that weight, not once or twice, because I also gained a bunch of weight during my pregnancy, was never by excluding carbohydrates or depriving myself, but by working with my hormones, and this weight has never been an issue.



Has always stayed off, and I don't – I don't even do extreme workouts. That also doesn't work for women in their cyclical years either.

So I take the easier path. I live really smart with my hormone and health management as supposed to just trying to push and push and that doesn't really yield results. It also doesn't make sense with how our biochemistry works. So I can actually do less and achieve more by using my hormones as a key tool and advantage point.

**[00:36:05] AS:** I love that you shared that, because I often think a lot of the reason that women in their reproductive years think keto is working is because they're balancing their blood sugar better, yet it's not sustainable. It's kind of like – I don't know, but I think that's so important for people to hear, because keto is so trendy. So is intermittent fasting.

I lost my period on intermittent fasting. I didn't had done not much research about it and my husband just didn't want to eat breakfast. I was like, "Oh! That sounds like a time saver." It was when I was trying to get pregnant, and I thought I was pregnant, and then I realized what was happening and I stopped it immediately.

**[00:36:42] AV:** Yeah, that's not uncommon in fact. It's really counter-indicated to your health cycle. The few studies that have been done, and I really actually was always very impressed that Mark Sisson of Mark's Daily Apple who he talks a lot about keto and intermittent fasting, but he's always very thoughtful to say through in the reproductive years, study show that this can adversely affect your thyroid, your fertility and your cycle. Probably not for women 30, 20 and early 40s.

Aside for me, he's the only other person I know who's ever said anything about that, but he's absolutely correct, because the studies do show that keto and IF do not work for your hormones in your reproductive years. But it's not being talked about. That's why I'm here talking to you about it.



**[00:37:32] AS:** Yeah, it was funny, because I didn't want to do the traditional gestational diabetes test. I was working with midwives, so they let me do the at-home monitoring, and I was telling my cousin who does keto and she was like, "Oh, yeah. I know about that," because she does keto, and like all these women who are, I guess, in pregnancy or whatever, they know about the home monitoring test. I was like, "Oh, they're all doing keto?" I don't know how you would do that, because I found during pregnancy, I had fruit on breakfast, which I normally don't eat fruit at breakfast. But I've had an increase need for carbohydrates during my pregnancy. I know –

**[00:38:05] AV:** Of course, you're 3D printing a human being. You need all the food groups to make that person. You cannot just – I just think that our orientation to our bodies needs a fundamental upgrade, and the upgrade is not – It's about what is actually happening, and then how do I actually support that. This is what I refer to as bio-hacking. So some people think about bio-hacking as, "Okay, what isn't my body doing? And then what I can take to make it do what it doesn't do?"

For example, you see that a lot in a conversation around energy. So I think bio-hacking really has its roots in extending energy. You see it with certain caffeine supplements. You see it with all sorts of supplements around like maintaining stamina and energy. A lot of things that become nutritional trends actually come out of military needs and bodybuilding for men. So this energy and stamina thing is really I would say probably the birth of bio-hacking as we have it today.

That makes sense in the male hormonal conversation, but in the female hormonal conversation, which is extremely efficient, you don't need to extend your energy. You actually are gifted lots of energy only if you work with the hormones that you have. And that's really the big distinction. So you don't need to like use caffeine to extend your energy. You only need that if you are interfering with your endocrine function and your energy is low and it's trying to use



that as a bio feedback tool to let you know that that symptom is there to remind you that you're messing with your hormones.

I have been caffeine-free and sugar-free for 20 years, and you read my bios. You know I'm not also sitting on the couch napping all day.

**[00:40:05] AS:** Not at all.

**[00:40:07] AV:** I just want to tell you from the frontlines of me bio-hacking in my own life that the key to everything is really supporting your hormones, working with them, and the cycle syncing method is certainly how I do that.

**[00:40:22] AS:** I love that, and I love also that you said – And I want to get energy. That's a great question I want to ask you about something. But first, you have mentioned that even if you are a perimenopause or menopause, you can still do the eating cycle syncing. You just have to pick one day to assume that is when to start. Because you still have hormones even if you're going through to menopause or post-menopausal, you still have hormones that needs supported.

**[00:40:44] AV:** You still have hormones. Yeah. I mean, listen, post-menopausal, you're not cycling anymore, but leading up to that in various stages of perimenopause, you're still fluctuating hormones. You can still do this. A lot of women like to do it even post-menopausal, because it's something that they really enjoy. But you don't need it as much as you need it in your reproductive years once you're post-menopausal. In your reproductive years, your biochemistry is changing, if fluctuating and you have to work with it the way that it's working. And that's just a fact.

**[00:41:18] AS:** So I love that you brought up energy, because what you've also written about and I find fascinating is how our hormones change the way we think and feel during different phases. So I feel like a lot of people listening might say, "Hey, eat relatively healthy and



whatnot,” but like that week before my period, my energy definitely goes down. I know mine does in the week of our period.

So can you talk a little bit about how we can work with this shifting energy kind of the same way as if we get nutrients when we need them, our cycles balance out? Can you talk a little bit about how to best work with our cycles so that our energy, not our energy, but the way we think and live works as well based on your cycle syncing method.

**[00:42:01] AV:** I think, first, we have to address the inherent judgment that we have about our energy as women, right? Let me just go right at it for us, which is that we, again, because of cultural conditioning and the patriarchy and all these things, which we don't have to get into, but essentially long and short.

**[00:42:21] AS:** No. Go ahead. We talk about it a lot.

**[00:42:23] AV:** Okay. Great. Since all of those things are at play, how that manifests pre-conditionally. Again, I've been working with thousands of women for about two decades now and it's always the same and it's certainly was the same for me. They were oriented to seek approval externally and we do that by doing, right? People pleasing is one form of doing, but also being busy is another form of doing. So whatever the doing looks like for you, that businesses is about earning approval from outside of yourself, and that has to do with the fact that women were not really given equal footing in society and so you had to continuously earn approval and keep your place safe in a culture that doesn't consider you equal. So these are all conscious and subconscious reactions that we're having to this situation. Okay. Fine. So that's what that is.

So as a result, when we look at our energy shift across our cycle, we look at the first half and we're like, “Oh, yes. I love this part of my cycle, because this part of my cycle I can be busy. I can do all the things. I can say yes to everybody. I can do all the people pleasing stuff. I can be



busy, busy, push myself even though I'm tired. I'm still going to do it." And your body will have some energy reserve for you then.

Interestingly enough however, nature is not interested in you living this way. Nature isn't interested in you living this way. This would be the longest part of your cycle. Nature has the longest part of your cycle being the second half of your cycle. The combination of the luteal phase plus the bleeding phase, and in this phase you are supposed to be oriented energetically and focus-wise more inwardly. You're supposed to be doing things that are about restoring and regenerating and recharging yourself.

But that is terrifying to you subconsciously, because if you're doing that, then you're not people pleasing. You're not earning and securing your place in the culture. That does not yet have [inaudible 00:44:28]. So it is really a challenging thing, and I get that, and I have worked with it in myself and I worked with it in my clients for years and years and it's the same for all women. We're all carb carrying feminists. It's all good, and that's fine on a conscious level.

But on this unconscious level, the only way that I have been able to personally work through that myself and to help other women really undo this is to actually really, again, do the practice of the cycle syncing method, because you then see that you're safe. You see that it's safe to allow for your energy to shift more inwardly in the second half.

But also you start to value or you drop the judgment about you having slightly more energy the first half of the cycle and then slightly less. You don't have this judgment that more is better and less is bad, because that's what we think. We think, "Oh! We have to be like machine-like robotic." Even if you put the patriarchy aside, if we just look at our humanization of technology, the personification of that technology we're like, "Oh, we need to be on 24/7 all the machinery that surround us." So we value that constant productivity. That is not how your body is wired, whether you're male or female.



For example, we now know that we never understood what was the purpose of sleep. Now we know it's actually to clean the brain so that you don't end up with dementia. Rest is critical. In 2018, two scientists were awarded the Nobel Prize for understanding the negative effects of interrupting the circadian rhythm on our genetic expression. So rest and recovery is just as important as productivity. I think that what's beautiful about the cycle is that it takes those two things in equal measure. You have time to be productive and you have time to be recharging, and it's not this extreme like one half of the cycle you can do things and the other half of the cycle you're on the couch. You read my bio. That's not what I'm doing either.

So, it's really about just being able to make those slight shifts. Right now, I'm in my ovulatory phase while I'm talking to you. So I'm full of energy. But next week I'm going to be slightly lower in my desire. It's not so much my energy is lower. It's just that my desire to connect outwardly is going to be slightly less. So I'm not going to, let's say, book a podcast to do next week. I might not want to go out with the girls at night next week. So I might shift those activities to the next phase of my cycle where that make sense to me. By doing so, I'm actually keeping the energy that I have and building my energy reserve.

Can you imagine if I know my energy shift is coming, but I keep all the busy things on my schedule. My energy is draining, then I have less energy the next time I'm supposed to have more energy, because I've drained my energy during a time where my energy was lower. So it becomes a downward spiral of lessening energy. This is why I've been able to be caffeine-free for 20 years. I never do that to myself. I do not do that to myself. I always support the energy that I have and continuously build my energy reserve phase over phase, cycle over cycle. So I have upward spirals of energy instead of constantly draining my energy reserve.

**[00:48:16] AS:** I love that, and I love the emphasis on it's not necessarily more or less good or bad. But I'm even thinking of during the luteal phase or PMS phase, it's like – And I don't mean traditional PMS where we're like bitchy craving all that stuff. I find myself just so discerning



during that phase of like, “Okay, I had all these ideas. What’s actually going to work?” It’s like a strategic energy.

As you were talking, I almost thought about like when we restrict carbs and then we binge on them. It’s like we binge on our energy and then we kind of like crash in a way.

**[00:48:51] AV:** Yeah. Exactly.

**[00:48:52] AS:** It’s the same cycle rather than –

**[00:48:54] AV:** We’ve got to break that pattern of like just pushing till we fall over. We just can’t do that. That just doesn’t make any logical sense. I think that’s so beautiful about your cycle is that if you align with it won’t let you. You’re protected from that, which is so nice. Looping this back into your fertility journey, so, so important, because one of the things that the body is doing when it’s considering conception, which it’s you and your body.

Your mind may be ready for the conception, but if you have been ignoring signals from your body from your period, to your energy levels, to your mood and you’re seeing things that are even showing up on lab results with thyroid, vitamin D3 levels, progesterone levels, etc., that are like showing suboptimal performance even if they’re within normal range or on the lower end or perhaps they’re out of range already and you haven’t taken the time to address those. You’re just continuing to go, go, go in your life. It’s going to have an impact obviously on your ability to get pregnant and to maintain a healthy pregnancy and have a healthy pleasurable experience while your pregnancy like forever feels like.

Of course, that then has ramifications into how you recover postpartum. Really practicing preserving your energy and supporting your hormones throughout the month is such an important part of the fertility conversation and one that I think is really easy to do, much easier



than we think. You just need to, again, understand how your hormones work and just work with them and that's really the whole point.

**[00:50:40] AS:** I love that. I do think a big part of me – My husband and I left the east coast and I went to grad school in Philly. We lived in New York after that. And I couldn't slow down at the time for myself, and we were just like, "Okay. We're going to –" We moved to Pittsburgh, which is where I'm from, but I left for 18 years. Never thought I'd come back.

But I slowed down so much and I really do feel like consciously, subconsciously, metaphorically I made this, I was able to make this space. And my energy is just so different here. I mean, part of me of course is still like, "Oh! Where would I be if I was on the east coast?" And things are unfolding the way that I want them to in the fertility department, because I personally needed this space and I just couldn't do it for myself on the east coast. But a lot of people can. It was just – For me, I thought I needed a restart in a more complaisant.

**[00:51:26] AV:** Well, and instead from a biochemical point of view, what happened is that you were able to shift your adrenalin cortisol dynamic in such a degree that your body was not being given the hormonal conversation that you're under stress and that because of that stress, conception should not take place, because it wasn't safe.

This chemical conversation that's happening is being interpreted by the hypothalamus in the brain and the pituitary gland has been responding to this. So your hypothalamus is scanning the body by a negative bio feedback loop, like how much adrenalin is being produced? How much cortisol is being produced? Then it will inhibit or stimulate the pituitary gland to make more or less or certain hormones in response to what it is reading in the body.

So if you have high-levels of adrenalin and then cortisol also, because the more adrenalin you product, the more cortisol you need to produce. It's like the anti-venom for the snake bite. Your hypothalamus are going to say, "Oh! My goodness. Orange alert. There's a lot of stress going on



every single day.” Even though your stress is not like a bear chasing you. It’s like you’re trying to make deadlines and run to the subway or commute to work or whatever it is. You have too much to do. Your body is going to interpret that as there is too much stress in your external environment that is disrupting your hormones internally, and therefore is not an appropriate ideal optimal time for conception not just from a subjective point of view. That cortisol actually disrupts ovulation.

So, it isn’t like just, again, me having some sort of psychological conversation with you about your cortisol and your brain. Everything has a cause and effect. Too much cortisol will strip the hypothalamus and then the pituitary gland will suppress ovulation. It’s a direct little journey. So you removing yourself from an environment. It’s not the environment. It was the lifestyle that you could slowdown. Also, there is something powerful about going back home, because it’s the environment in which your amygdala was formed, which is the part of the brain that responds to stress and stimuli.

So if you grew up in Pittsburgh and then you went home to Pittsburgh, your amygdala is now like, “Oh! Everything in this environment is non-stimulating.” You are now the fish in the fish tank. Everything is like, “Oh, this is normal.” You don’t have to have your senses heightened to pay attention to things in the street or whatever. That calms you down as well. Plus, you’re probably sleeping better and in more complete darkness and silence and all of these things added up to an accumulated effect that signals to your brain and change your cortisol patterns to allow for improved ovulation and successful conception. So, so interesting.

**[00:54:27] AS:** Mind-blowing. Mind-blowing!

**[00:54:29] AV:** Right? But like I just like to explain the science, because we’re just like, “Gee! I wonder why it happened.” Well, there’s a reason why it happened. It’s not something like random anecdotal. When they say, “Oh, it’s a wives’ tale, that when you moved back home, then you got pregnant.” No. There’s the science. This is why it happened and there’re even



more reasons I could go into, but these are just some of the fascinating facts of how your body works. I think understanding these things would empower women to make choices that are appropriate critical times on their health journey or in their life. If you knew that you had to manage the stress piece in order to get pregnant and that changing pieces of your life was germane to that happening, you would do it. Of course you would, because you're already a mom.

Even before you have the kid, my experience and also my experience in observing women is once you've made the emotional or the energetic commitment to have a child, you're already willing to do whatever it takes for that kid who isn't even yet in your uterus. So if you knew that moving was going to be piece that helps you do that, you would move. I know you would. Having the science to back up your decision would make it a lot less stressful. You wouldn't have – I'm sure you hemmed and hawed about, "Oh gee! We should move. Maybe we should. I don't know. I don't know. I'm so worried about it or what if."

Yeah. That would have been completely nonexistent, because you've been like, "Okay, husband. Husband number one. Super husband of mine. Let me break it down hypothalamus, cortisol, ovulation, do-do-do-do-do. Throw us some big wards." He'd be like, "Okay, we're going to move to Pixar. No problem. Let's go. Let's pack them in the van." And you would feel confident in your decision. And that's just an example of how you can use your biochemistry to make a decision about, let's say, supporting your fertility.

You can also use your biochemistry to make decisions about absolutely everything else you would like to make decisions about. Instead of asking somebody else, do you think that this idea that I have is okay? Again, seeking approval form the outside. You would know within the stealth of your being that the decision that you are making is right for you on an emotional and biochemical reason and it's very grounding and it increases the sense of security that you have about your life in such a profound way. That's a beautiful thing.



**[00:56:57] AS:** I just love that, especially because I am a science nerd. And I started out with actually one acupuncturist, and she was just like starting out in health coaching and she was like, “Well, maybe your blocked to receive it. You can’t receive.” And that’s why Western medicine – Because I had went to Western medicine and they told me I was infertile. I was like, “That’s not it.” I was like, “I’m really good at receiving.” I did feel it was something like biochemical. I mean, it has all worked out.

**[00:57:25] AV:** Yes it is.

**[00:57:25] AS:** Yeah. I appreciate that viewpoint, because I think when it comes to fertility, women can feel so vulnerable and be running in all these different directions versus if they understand the biochemistry, like you just explained it. Things become a lot more clear and you have a lot more of a direct path especially if you feel like time is running out.

**[00:57:45] AV:** Just to put into some perspective for you as to how important it is for you to have this perspective both for your physical well-being, but also your emotional psychological being. Let’s just juxtapose that example that I gave of you and the stress that you had making this decision to any man that you know in your life. Do you experience or observe man having this inability to feel – Even if they’re wrong, by the way, confident in what they’re choosing for themselves?

**[00:58:17] AS:** No, not at all.

**[00:58:18] AV:** No. Why is that? Because they actually are taught from a young age how their bodies work, and they understand how to use them to their advantage.

**[00:58:29] AS:** Yes. That is very true.



**[00:58:32] AV:** And we're not. You go your whole life literally without your own legs to stand on. So you're always grabbing outside of yourself, "What should I do? Tell me what to do. I don't know. What do you think? What do you think? What should I do? Oh my gosh! I don't know. I don't know. I don't know." That adds to your internal stress. It's a hot mess situation. But the science of how your body works, it's the ground you need to stand on. Then from there you can really springboard into just about anything, whether it's starting a family, or finding your passion, or just setting up your life in a way that really works for you.

**[00:59:10] AS:** Yeah. Well, we have people like you to thank for filling in the gaps, because we know it's not readily available in understanding. To your point, I mean, not just intermittent fasting and keto or only studied on men. That's basically your whole body of science. So I really appreciate your work, Alisa, and this has just been amazing. We will link to all of your website, your app, and everything, but where can people find you? Just tell them now as well.

**[00:59:37] AV:** You can find me at [froliving.com](http://froliving.com) for all of our products and resources to help you improve your fertility or deal with your menstrual issue. You can find us on social media @froliving. You can also find me personally on social media @Alisa.Vitti. That's at least Instagram. You can find my book on Amazon, which is Women Code, and you can find my app on iTunes and the Google Play Store. I think that's what it's called, and that's [myflotracker.com](http://myflotracker.com), and that's FLO. All the FLOs are without a W.

**[01:00:21] AS:** I love that. Find the resources, listeners, and liberate yourself. Thank you so much, Alisa. Is there anything else – I meant to ask, is there anything you want to say that I didn't ask about?

**[01:00:34] AV:** Oh, no. I think we talked a lot about a lot of things. I guess I just hope that at the end of this conversation, women really feel not only hopeful that they can transform their hormones from whatever state of hormonal chaos they're in now to recovering their hormonal flow, but that also you have some excitement about discovering this new relationship with



yourself that's possible. Not just one of more compassion, but one of more optimization on so many different levels, but it's pretty fun to shift over into that way of living.

**[01:01:10] AS:** Yes. Well, thanks for leading the way.

**[01:01:12] AV:** My pleasure. My pleasure, and thank you so much for having me.

**[01:01:15] AS:** No problem. Yeah, likewise.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

**[01:01:21] 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](http://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 conversation. Remember always, your body truths are unique, profound, real and liberating.

[END]

