

EPISODE 75

“AS: I realized that when it comes to health and weight loss, meritocracy is why so many people struggle with reaching their goals. They’re working hard, not smart, because they believe hard work and discipline is how you succeed. They think that they’re trying all these different things, but they’re all shaped by the same meritocracy story.

Then, when you don’t get the results that you want, you blame yourself rather than question this meritocracy story that told us that all it takes is hard work and discipline to achieve success, and being thin often a result of wealth. You’re able to hire a chef if you need it, right? You have more flexible work arrangements. You have the resources to buy organic, have a trainer come to your house.

My sister said her definition of wealthy is “never inconvenienced”, and I think that’s very true of the wealthy in this country. I’m not saying they’re happy per se, but they do have a level of access and time that you can get to the salon, you can get to the dentist, and there’s this less chronic stress about safety for your kids. Can you pay the bills? So many times we unconsciously equate thin with life being easy, easier. Often, it’s the wealth and resources, not the thinness that make life easier.”

[INTRO]

[0:01:21.2] AS: You know battling food in your body doesn’t work. You want to love and accept yourself, and because you’re insatiable, you want results too. You bring the same intensity to your life, wanting to maximize your time, potential, and experiences you have here on our beautiful and wondrous planet Earth. Fair warning, it will be a rollercoaster. But for those insatiable, this is your primetime to thrive. Here is just saying yes to the hunger of wanting it all.

I’m your host, Ali Shapiro, who is dedicated to pioneering a saner and more empowering approach to health and weight loss.

[INTRODUCTION]

[0:01:42.2] AS: You know battling food in your body doesn't work. You want to love and accept yourself, and because you're insatiable, you want results too. You bring the same intensity to your life, wanting to maximize your time, potential, and experiences you have here on our beautiful and wondrous planet earth. Fair warning, it will be a roller coaster. For those insatiable, this is your primetime to thrive. Here is to saying yes to the hunger of wanting it all. I'm your host, Ali Shapiro, who is dedicated to pioneering a saner and more empowering approach to help in weight loss.

[0:02:02.2] AS: Welcome to episode 75; *Your Green Juice Doesn't Make You Worthy*. Clients often come to me frustrated from everything they've tried and exhausted by the lack of results. They also believe it required too much energy and effort to do all the things to lose weight and be healthy, and, oh yes, fit in your life too.

In today's episode, I'll reveal the mindset that keeps you working hard, not smart, the opportunity you have when you realize not all efforts are equal, and this trick to sticking with healthy living and your weight loss path.

[EPISODE]

[0:02:35.2] AS: Hey, everyone. Today is my first episode with — post Juliet, leaving, where I'm going to be solo. I'm going to try out some things and I would love to get your feedback. The Insatiable Podcast Facebook page has moved to my public page in Facebook, which is Ali Marie Shapiro on Facebook, or you can reach out to me on Instagram @alimshapiro about what you think of the episode, what you like, what you thought could have been better. All those things. I've been in this entrepreneurial game now for 10 years, so I'm good at taking feedback.

Let me know what you think of today. It's definitely A-typical of what Julia and I have often talked about on the podcast. Today we're going to talk about your *green juice doesn't make you worthy*. Before we get to that, I want to catch you up on some moments in my life and kind of let you guys know a little bit about the community.

I headed out back in February. This is April now, I know. I feel I have so much to tell you, but I did a "Cookie Isn't Just a Cookie" tour, and a lot of the people that I met, all in San Francisco,

Los Angeles, Philadelphia, virtually were Insatiable listeners, and I have to tell you guys, we have an amazing community. You guys are really the coolest. I know I don't just think that, because we just started Truce with Food and a lot of Insatiable listeners are in there. Hi everyone. Truce with Foodites.

One of the Insatiable listeners commented about what an incredible caliber of people in our Truce with Food group, and I think that is just such reflective of the Insatiable community. I just want to say you guys are awesome and know that I, in the future, want to work to bringing us together more, because I think we really need community in these times.

I had so much fun in all the cities. I never made it to New York City, because of course I pick the one day that there was an epic New York City snowstorm, so everyone was — We brought it online and had a lot of people virtually join us, so that was great.

I wanted to share with you one of my really cool experiences in L.A., because I think it's relevant to what we talk about here on the podcast. My best friend from college, one of them works on the Ellen Show and so I got tickets to go, and it was so funny — I didn't know that to expect. I actually don't even have cable, or a T.V. We had a T.V. but I watch Roku, it's like Netflix and stuff. I used to work at NBC sports in New York back in 2001. Yeah, it was 2001, but I hadn't really been on a T.V. set in a really long time since the NBC Philadelphia show and that I did that for four years. This is was national network.

I went on there and it was so inspiring in a way that just totally — It was totally unexpected. Ellen came out and I got these chills and this almost teary sense, and I'm not usually like that. I get really inspired and I'm always thinking everything is meaningful and that's what it is. It really brought me back to — As she was walking out, I was thinking about when Ellen had her own show originally. I don't know how old everyone is who listens, but Ellen had a show way back in the — I think it was the late 90s. She was the first person to come — One of the first women to come out as a lesbian on T.V. This was during an era where Bill Clinton was the president and he signed the marriage defense act, basically outlawing gay marriage.

ABC, when she came out, she wanted to take the show on a different direction, and ABC dropped her show. I'm sure some of you remember that. I think it was really a total of three

years before she got back into the entertainment gig. As she came out, I thought of all of these and how she has this big show now. People were so excited to be there. I was so excited to be there.

It was such a fun atmosphere. We're dancing, and I just thought about when she lived her truth, and it also flashed back — I don't know if any of you know, but President Obama awarded her — I believe it was the Presidential Medal of Freedom. When they showed Ellen getting it, she just had tears in her eyes. Here is someone who makes all of us laugh, and she was so emotional, because she was being seen for exactly who she was and it made me think about how no matter what level of success we achieve, we all want to be seen for example who we are. Not the perfect version, but the human version that has been challenged and rose to that challenge.

It just really inspired me to think bigger and to — I was like, "Oh my God! I'm in Disney — Warner Brothers, Disney. Dreams can come true!" I joked with a couple of my clients that maybe I'll start posting motivational quotes online. Not quite there yet, but it really inspired me.

I think it's really important for everyone listening to realize that weight loss and wanting to be thin, or lose weight, is really a deeper craving to be seen and seen in a safe manner which ultimately isn't just about what we weight, but seeing for who we are, including our imperfections and the humanness of us, because that's what connects us to each other. It's not the achievements. It's not looking a certain way. It's, "You too? Oh my God!" or "I totally get that."

It really inspired me and — Oh! I forgot to say one of the most exciting things. Ellen does this 12 days of giveaways around Christmas time. It's kind of like Oprah's favorite things, but Ellen style. We actually, our episode crowd got invited back for one of those days. It's apparently one of the hardest tickets to get in all of entertainment, and my friend who got us the tickets, she was like, "I can't even get tickets to that." I'm going to be going out there in November, or December, so I'll catch you up. I don't know what we'll get. I'm not usually a things person, but, hey, free stuff is exciting.

Also, I kind of personally — And a lot of you reached out on Instagram, but I've been advocating the affordable care act. One of the things that has been really — As a small business owner. It was healthy. Very healthy here at 38. No medications. Really, just go to the doctor for an annual

physical, but I am considered to have a preexisting condition because of the cancer that I had when I was 13.

What's really interesting is the way the economy is shifting, is that by 2020, we know that 40% of the workforce, according to an intuit study, will be contractors and freelancers and kind of what we think of as the gig economy. That doesn't even include those of us who are small business owners, or self-employed.

In sharing my story at my house of representatives town hall and the media about why we need to really, both of the isle, think of how we approach healthcare in this country, because it affects everyone, not just those of us who have to find our healthcare on our own. A lot of the ACA protections protect those of you who are in jobs and how your charged and what can be covered.

I've been doing a lot of work on that. That's kind of been my post-11/9 work. It's been interesting, because I have very conflicting feelings about our healthcare system, yet I really feel like most change happens incrementally and happens in multiple ways and we can't just go back to what we had.

Yeah, that's kind of what I've been up to. Again, I'm trying to do formats. I just had a couple of people on Instagram say, "Talk about Ellen, when you went there." I think sometimes I think I share a lot, but I often don't kind of share what's been going on even though it's really exciting.

Our guest, I got to see John Meyer interviewed. He kind of took a hiatus. Then, David Spade was one of the guests. He was hilarious. I never realized how funny he was. Ryan Seacrest was on as well.

Yeah, a lot has been going on, and I just feel after going to Ellen and really getting involved, I wouldn't say politically. I would say humanly. Getting involved in the human experience. I feel a lot more dedicated to the truth and what's true for me, what's true for the direction of where I want to take my career, my personal life, et cetera. It's a constant iteration.

It's interesting that I've been thinking about this, because up until recently, I've been really struggling with what is true, and I want to kind of take a step back before we get into with this has to do with green juice and discipline and that having to work super hard to lose weight and be healthy.

A big part of my work with clients is transforming their current mindset that is informed by the stories that make them overeat or binge. I think a lot about how people see the world. Most of us don't know the extent that the deep core stories we have shape how we see the world. They shape our logic and then they affect our actions. When we feel powerless in a story, we often eat. That's the connection to food and it runs so deep. You have to kind of go through the process to really get it.

I am always trying to zero-in on what mindset is someone bringing not just to their food, but to their life, because it's the same mindset. One of the common denominator. I'm always kind of thinking about this in general. Then, back in 2015, my grandma past away, and it will be two years next month and I really still get so emotional thinking about it. She was like a second mom to me. You can hear my voice quiver.

My parents were — We grew up in a quintessential middle-class family and my grandma lived two miles up the road. She would come down in the morning when my parents were headed off to work and then she was the first person I saw after school, because my parents weren't home yet. She was just really close with us. She came on all the vacations with us. She was born an atheist, but converted to Catholicism when she met my grandfather. She had nine kids, and so I have all my cousins at holidays, but it always centered around her. She was the matriarch in our family and she and I had a really special bond. She's actually the one who got me into my love of nutrient.

My grandma, when she was — This was in the 40s, 1940s. She had been introduced — She was catholic at the time and a priest introduced her to this idea of nutrition and taking care of our bodies as a holy temple and that food could be medicine. She was so enthralled this. They actually moved their family; my mom and all of her sisters and brothers, to what was considered an organic farm. It wasn't called organic at the time. We just didn't use pesticides on everything.

She believed in wheatgrass shots before — She was alive before John Mackey, the creator of Wholefoods was even an idea in the universe.

She really instilled a fascination with nutrition, and her friends used to say — Her name was Francis. “Francis, do you think you know more than the doctors?” People were skeptical back then. My grandma was also really philosophically curious. She and I often talked about the afterlife and what happens when we die.

My grandma was an atheist, born into an atheist family, but she said that at the age four, she declared that she had lived before and she always says, “Can you imagine?” She met my grandfather who was Catholic, and he died from multiple myeloma very early. I think when he was about 51 or 52, she had a couple of kids still at home.

She really lost her faith in Catholicism, I think, at that point, but she didn’t turned back to being an atheist. She was always searching. Last time we talked, she believed in reincarnation in which she called the universal mind that basically lobbed all the good and bad we did. She used to tell me, I actually asked her when I was four. I went up to her and I said, “Grandma, what happens when we die?” She said that I would keep coming back as Ali until I could be the best version of Ali there was. I did run back and say, “Will I get my same mom?” Which she always loves telling that part of the story.

I’m sharing you all of these, because when she died, which was 97. I had her in my life for so long, and she was very able bodied. She was reading, up until 95 years old, big books. When she died and I think many of us can relate, when someone, like a grandparent, or a mother, or father dies, you realize that they were holding up scaffolding in your life that you didn’t know was even there until they were gone.

I realized a big part of my grieving process was realizing that a lot of what I believed was because she believed in. It made question, especially some of these afterlife questions, if these beliefs were really mind. One of the things was that I realized my grandma is she always gave everyone second chances, and chances over and over again. I realized that’s part of why she believe din reoccurring lives. If people have multiple chances, you get multiple lives. Yes, we have multiple lives within our life, but also reincarnation and all that kind of stuff.

My grandma was just so empathetic and compassionate that that make sense. She was also incredibly progressive. This sounds like such a white person thing to say, but one of her best friends in the 40s was African-American Dorothy. That was kind of radical back then. She always supported anyone's sexuality. She was a huge feminist. She had progressive values before I think we even had the term progressive.

I realized she believed everyone was equal, and so there had to be some form of justice, because life is not fair. Since she wasn't a Catholic, she didn't believe someone can decide justice at the pearly gates. She created this idea of a universal mind that logged our rights and wrongs and we had to keep back until we made the score right.

Her religious and spiritual and afterlife beliefs really mirrored her mindset in everyday life. While she had a very different spiritual views than most Americans, because America is a majority Christian nation, I could see how so many Americans had a similar theme in their beliefs. Some sort of equality, being we had the opportunity to be saved, equal, and justice, or heaven or a peaceful afterlife.

As I started to see that this wasn't — That she had these values and this mindset of equality and justice for all, I then I started to wonder if her spiritual views were influenced by believing in the promise of America. America, in general, is this idea that we're all created equal and there is justice for all. Equality and justice for all. That's the promise. That's the vision.

I think what's really interesting is my great-grandparents immigrated from Slovenia, and this belief wasn't alive and well, and they were atheist, and it used to be a communist country. In a lot of communist countries, you have higher rates of atheism. I'm wondering all of these. I know really deep thoughts, but this heavy stuff. I'm starting to see why did she believe that, and do I believe that.

At the same time, there is a lot of news going on. This is late 2015, and showed me that America, while we aim — There's a promise for equality and justice for all. It's a constant striving to get there. It's not true for all of us. The Charleston shooting happened where a racist young 20 something year old gunned down nine African-American parishioners in the church.

Then, the Stanford rape case, where a rapist gets off with six months of jail because it might be hard on him. Then, so many women were coming forward about their own sexual abuse and how we treat victims in our culture about, "What were you wearing?" Which is absolute bullshit.

Now that I can see that I have this story about equality and justice for all and how it influence my spiritual beliefs and how it has also believed the actions I've taken in my life. Equality and justice for all is basically this upward mobility story in America, that if we work hard and stay disciplined, we will have success. I'm going to talk about how that plays out in health here in a second.

What happens is you start to see your story. You start to realize it's a story and not the truth. It's one version of events. I do think that we are ultimately — Upward mobility exist, but it's more likely to be true if you're white male born into a certain class, maybe middle to upper class. As you start knocking off privileges related to gender, class, religion, and in race, this equality and justice for all story starts to disintegrate very rapidly.

I'm thinking about all of these and I'm like, "How could I believe this? I'm a white middle class woman. I have various notch as a privileged." I realize how much I believed in this story and how much it shaped these values that I have of truth, justice.

I'm contemplating all of these and then seeing how our American values so much inform our religious and spiritual views including my grandma and how much we live. This bigger story of meritocracy came to mine to describe the story so many of us lived by and we want to believe. We all want to believe if we work hard, we're going to be better off, and there is some truth to that. This story of meritocracy came to mind, and this was a word I first encountered when I worked for GE. It was that idea that if you work hard and stay disciplined, you'll succeed. This is the promise of what America likes to believe it offers, and it does.

One thing that this election, the 2016 Presidential Election, has taught me is how much I value and appreciate America and what we're trying to do here, all get along of all different kinds of people. It's not true all the time, and it's like all of our stories. Sometimes they're true and sometimes they're not, which is hard to seem.

Underneath this concept of meritocracy is the American ideals of equality and justice for all. Justice being the success from all of us being capable, independent of our color, our creed, our race. It's just about hard work and discipline, because we're all equal and just need opportunity.

I realized that this meritocracy story, because it's such an American story. It's like in the water. It's the air we breathe. It's why we love the rags to riches to story. We love these upward mobility. We love the hero's journey, but it's baked into how we talk about health and wellness. If you go vegetarian induced and use non-toxic products, you won't get cancer. You have to be perfect in your pregnancy. Take your herbs. Get to bed early. Take your prenatal yoga, and eat well, have a natural birth, so you can have the healthiest happy baby.

Losing weight is all about discipline and will power. With being thin, it's kind of justice for your work. That's the success and what you deserve for all your hard work. I realized that when it comes to healthy loss, meritocracy is why so many people struggle with reaching their goals. They're working hard, not smart, because they believe hard work and discipline is how you succeed. They think that they're trying all these different things, but they're all shaped by the same meritocracy story.

Then, when you don't get the results that you want, you blame yourself rather than question this meritocracy story that told us that all it takes is hard work and discipline to achieve success, which feels like justice for all those sacrifice and dedication.

I hope you can follow me. I know this is pretty deep. This is kind of like — What can I say? I like to play in the deep end of the ocean. I'm thinking all of these, and then the election happens. Many of my clients and listeners and people felt along in overwhelmed, and myself included. I don't think it's very secret that I was very upset by the election, and it's still affecting me.

Regardless of what you thought of either candidates, I don't want to focus on the candidates themselves. I want to focus on what they represented, the metaphor, the symbol there. It's very clear that I call him the Donald, represents is not meritocracy, but privileged and abuse of power, from how he puts small business owners out of business, to using our tax dollars to bail himself out of bankruptcy. I don't want to go much into him, because it's not about him, but it's

about this idea that he really didn't work to win, and his version of winning is very different than we're taught the rest of us.

I think many of us fell so depressed over the election was because the values that we hold dear, like equality and justice, which is part of this meritocracy story, and something I believed in as a life guiding philosophy was clearly on display as not true. Even in a half-banked meritocracy, we would not have had the presidential outcome. I'm not saying that things weren't already crazy and that this changes much. To me, it's really a clear diagnosis, but it gave as a diagnosis to me that America is not as fair as I thought it was. Don't get me wrong. I didn't think it was completely sure to begin with, but I just thought it was much more true than I had hoped.

The truth can be very painful before it's liberating, but there are so much opportunity here and that the good news is when we discover our stories aren't as true, there is an incredible opportunity to get to more of the truth, which is more freedom, more ease and more of what we want, and we can see what's real.

When it comes to health and weight loss, there's an opportunity to figure out how to work smart, not hard, and put the idea to bed that being healthy requires sacrifice and lots of gearing up. I first want to start with the meritocracy illusion and why we believe it in the first place.

To repeat, meritocracy is this idea that success can be achieved based on ability and talent, in other words we're all born equal, hard work, it's opportunity regardless of race, class or creed. The truth is, however, that that's not really true all of the time. Research shows in terms of a disintegrating middle class and the gaps between the rich and the poor that America is becoming less and less a meritocracy.

The Donald represents success as predicated mainly on riches and influence. I was just reading last week in the New York Times magazine how without The Apprentice, his presidency probably would have never happened. Jeff Zucker, who was then the president of NBC approached him about doing the apprentice. The Donald was on his fourth bankruptcy. If you saw how New York City itself vote up for Donald, I think it's clear what the business community who knew him there thought of how effective he was as a business person.

He equated his ability to own things with his merit for presidency; it's almost like people who are naturally genetically thin and we think they try so hard. It doesn't mean they're healthy, but it feels like, "Oh my God!" So the reality is success in terms of wealth isn't necessarily achieved through merit. Granted, there are some successes that are achieved this way and there's packets of upward mobility. America is really about ownership. The majority of ownership in our country is by a few families and corporations, these wealth oligarchy. This is inherited, not earned through merit. Yet, if you don't really think about this, the automatic response is to think rich people are better. They're more successful because of much they have, rather how far have they traveled to get there.

Being thin is often a result of wealth. You're able to hire a chef if you need it. You have more flexible work arrangements. You have the resources to buy organic, have a trainer come to your house.

My sister said her definition of wealthy is never inconvenienced, and I think that's very true of the wealthy in this country. I'm not saying they're happy per se, but they do have a level of access and time that you can get to the salon, you can get to the dentist, and there's this less chronic stress about safety for your kids. Can you pay the bills?

So many times we unconsciously equate thin with life being easy, easier. Often, it's the wealth and resources, not the thinness that make life easier. Many people don't learn to see the invisible social and environmental systems that negate meritocracy, such as a lack of support for working families, polluted air, water and soil, lack of educational opportunities, and emotional threats, like trauma, isolation, and financial insecurity.

It's not that many of — I know those of you who listen to this podcast and my clients, it's not that we thought America was a true meritocracy. In fact, many of us feel — Many of are in social justice, public service fields because you're trying to make it more true. I think a lot of us thought it was much more alive and healthy than it really is.

Part of the reason why many of us initially thought alone and overwhelmed and maybe still do is because the ground we thought we all stood on with this meritocracy and the values of equality and justice had an earthquake. Where meritocracy trickles down and hides in our health beliefs.

Like I said, there can be incredible upside to this accurate clear diagnosis related to our health and weight loss efforts.

Alas! The American idea of meritocracy parallels the traditional weight loss conversations. All bodies are equal, or physiologically and emotionally the same at any given time, which is preposterous. It's totally unchallenged in mainstream conversation. There's this belief that you're overweight, it's your fault for not trying hard enough, that if you work hard, accounting calories, stay disciplined around tempting foods, and focus at the gym and follow the rules, which boil down to eat less, move more, you will succeed weight loss, which is weight loss.

This follows along the same condition that says if you work hard, keep a positive attitude and never give up, you will achieve the American dream. Culturally, we equate being good as making choices which leads to being thin. This implies thin people are healthy and work hard for their figures, which both assumptions are often untrue.

Obviously, I believe there's considerable to taking responsibility for our health, but it doesn't involve the meritocracy idea that discipline and following the eat less-move more rules you've been thought will lead to successful goals. In reality, these ideas really are highly half-truths. Most of my clients have tried everything under the sun, under the meritocracy premise. They work hard in learning about nutrition. They get to the gym while juggling the rest of their overworked lives. They're thinking about food a lot, but that's one example of just because it's hard, doesn't mean it's helping.

Their efforts are based on an idea that was never true. This can be really hard to reckon with. I personally, and still pissed off at all the time I wasted on oversimplification of calories in, calories out, while suffering with depression and irritable bowel syndrome. From the anti-depressants I was on, to the heartburn meds, to my crippling IBS, I was a big pharma cash cow. That's really what I was.

While we're in this meritocracy bubble, you can choose to break out of the illusion and start to put your efforts into something that was more true; the ownership opportunity for all of us.

You've likely heard the call, if you listen to — I would say mainstream networks, that we cannot normalize the acts of this regime. The normalization happens steadily and it's really devastating. Some of the ways, for example, we've normalized in our health is we've normalized high-levels of pesticides in the foods we buy in the grocery store. We've normalized by buying water, turning it into a commodity that corporations like Nestle now own.

We've normalized paying extra for egg whites while wasting the healthiest part of the egg, which is the yolk, and we've normalized medicating anxiety and depression while contributing to its causes through low fat diets and lack of agency. The most tragic outcome of normalizing the illusion of meritocracy is that we ignore our ability to listen to our own truths in terms of what our body is tell us about the needs of our body and soul.

Instead, most people pay attention to ideas that are constantly changing. Based on the idea that you can earn health by following the conventional diet and nutrition rules and doing everything right. This is a distraction from looking at your own truth, the one Ellen couldn't ignore any longer that led to her epic success. The one that makes you feel seen for who you are. This distracts you too from figuring out what metrics matter to you. What gets you results?

If you have three things on your to-do list that can be enjoyable, and you might actually enjoy running errands, but if you have 10, nothing is enjoyable. It doesn't even have to be errands, it can be work stuff, whatever. It's like a lot of my clients enjoy their work, but it's so much, or they like their kids but it can be a lot. This is what we've done in America, and wherever American cultures spread, we make it about quantity, not quality.

Here are some of the ways working hard shows up in weight loss and health. Fighting your hunger when you're actually hungry, resisting cravings, doing exercise you hate, because the sacrifice will be worth it. I think a lot of times, gearing up all Sunday to cook all day only to be exhausted and feel like you missed one of your free days in life for the week. Maundering all your food, which strings you into an app that assumes all bodies are the same.

I could go and on, but this just a few. Are you ready for a hard truth? Health and weight loss are not about exhausting yourself. That's actually the condition for illness and stress weight gain. Now, don't get me wrong. This is a nuanced conversation. Being healthy and losing weight does

require work, but it involves the right work. The effort you put in should lead to you feeling more free and hopeful, more comfortable in your skin, not more attached independent on working more.

I really believe our bodies are wired for vitality, and so my focus for my clients and myself is always for help to be a natural part of life. I want them to cultivate a healthy lifestyle, but it's the vehicle to the living the life they want to live, not the focus. When this is the focus, yes, they end up eating healthy, but they do it so they have the energy, focus, and confidence to take risks in life.

They start to feel like it's their choice to eat healthy, because they have more energy and clear thinking and they're no longer snacking, so they only have to think three meals, instead of six mini meals. They make the healthy choice not because it's a sacrifice, because it's rewarding and fueling their life. I really want you to let this mindset shift sync in. Healthy living should be rewarding. It should give you vitality. It shouldn't bring out the shame stick.

I want to give you some beginning steps on this, because it's certainly a matrix. I'm not going to pretend that this is something that you can just do overnight. We're in our first couple of weeks with Truce with Food, and it's challenging, as the group is basically composting their psyches by seeing their own stories, and it's really challenging, and they will tell you that. However, it's a challenge that they're going to get more relief and freedom from. It's not the challenge of hoping you can make through eating perfectly.

Think of how many times you followed a meritocracy premise only to be worse off, gaining weight back or feeling more defeated. Part of what I want you guys to think about is how do I make this more rewarding? My efforts. If I'm hungry, maybe — This is not about overriding my hunger, or my cravings, I got to figure out what foods make me feel really grounded and full and satiated. I can't state this enough. This is really the first level.

I have been doing this for 10 years. No matter how much people have read, how many things they've tried, they might be on the right track, but they're still not eating the right combinations of fats, proteins, and carbs for them. They aren't quite where they need to be on the vegetarian Mediterranean paleo spectrum.

Get that started first. That will start to open you up to the possibility that, “Hey, when I feel good, I want to keep going.” Rather than, “Oh my God, these cravings and hunger are making me exhausted, so I’m going to eat for energy.”

So many of my clients start to realize that a lot of their eating is because they’re exhausted, and most of their exhaustion is coming from food and thinking about food all the time, and and having to grocery shop and all the angst and anxiety that is tied up into that. I’m not going to say that’s going to go overnight, but really start to get energy and focus and clarity from your food. If that’s not happening, you got to start there before you can go anywhere else.

I just want to plug that on my website, at alishapiro.com, you can get a breakfast experiment that will help you start to see where you are on that, “Do I do better with vegetarian? Do I do better with the Mediterranean diet, or I do better with the paleo diet?”

Really get clear on that. Also, I’m going to be doing a future episode with Dr. Kelle Berggren about the science that isn’t new, but rather hasn’t been paid attention to, that talks about why we all need different diets. That will be coming up in May, early June. Keep a look up for that. Being willing to consider that food should be rewarding, and I don’t mean it like, “I love cupcakes and candy,” because most people start to realize that stuff drains them and it actually makes them feel crappy. It makes them feel good right in the moment, but they’re not getting rewarded from their other efforts, so it’s almost like they deserve it, because they’re sacrificing so hard. I don’t want you to sacrifice for your health. It should be rewarding.

Really, after you eat, you should feel grounded and powerful and satiated. You shouldn’t need to snack in between meals. Sometimes you do based on where you are with your blood sugar control, but you want to work to a place where you’re eating three meals a day, not six mini meals. That’s just one example of how we think like, “Oh, got to pack all these things. I’m doing great, because I’m planning, planning, planning,” but that planning often times isn’t even necessary.

Again, it can be frustrating to learn that we've been wasting energy and time, but better late than never. Also, you've learned a lot of what has worked for you by doing all of these things. It's not like you're starting over.

The second big tip I want to give you is figure out what in your life drains you. Where do you feel like you're sacrificing? Where do you feel like you need to make more rewarding choices that you want to make? Not out of discipline, but because, "Hey, they're going to get you what you want." I should say less out of will power. Where can you lighten up your life? That is part of the emotional lightness and fulfillment that is blocked when we're in our stories.

I can't, in a podcast, diagnose your story for you, so what I'd rather have you do is start to thinking, "Where can I make things a little bit more rewarding?" And spend as much time there as you do on the. It doesn't have to be this big sweeping change. I suggest focusing on one area of your life and making micro-changes. As you see results there, you can build up to bigger changes.

Exercise, I think, is a great place to start. We all know — Hopefully, you know, intellectually that exercise really doesn't contribute to weight loss and can give you energy as a component, but it's an easy place to test, because it's not going to swing the scale too big one way or the other. Rather than all the shoulds, musts, or have to, why not tune in to your body to see what feels good?

Measure to see if you feel better after a workout, not how many calories you burn. This is what I'm talking about. We think we have to measure certain things, because that's going to lead to success, and we measure the hard work and discipline. That's why I cringe when I hear people in workout classes saying, "Oh my God! Burn this so you can eat your cupcake," or "making up for yesterday's 400-calorie frozen yogurt." It's this whole idea of sacrifice and discipline, where it's like none of that is rewarding. Why couldn't just I enjoy the yogurt if I wanted rather than thinking about that I have to now burn it off, because now this workout doesn't even feel fun, it's just punishment.

Really focus on; do you feel better afterwards? This was huge for me when I started doing this. I used to do these really intense workouts, especially cardio, like an hour-long, and I found myself

exhausted and needing to eat carbs to stay awake and then also wanting to take a nap. That started to totally change how I worked out. Sleep can be a great area. I want to go back to exercise. Maybe you need to do it with a friend. Maybe you like it solo. Maybe you want to be outside. Find all the ways that it can be rewarding, and don't build it up as much. Go out and walk.

A lot of my clients find it just like when they are stuck at work with something they're trying to figure out, they leave now work and they just walk around. Yeah, it exercise, but it's rewarding, because they're getting insights and creativity into their work issue.

I think sleep is another great area. Work on getting to sleep and start to notice the benefits of less cravings, less puffiness, that you actually have more energy for exercise. I was talking to an attendee from the A Cookie Isn't Just a Cookie workshop, and she was experimenting with more sleep after the workshop. She was pleasantly surprised that while she had to say no to some events, her days were better and then when a random opportunity go to soul cycle popped up in the afternoon, she have the energy to go, because she was really well-rested. It's really freeing to have the choice rather than saying simply no, because she was exhausted. I find so many people do things when they're exhausted and making them feel like they're working even harder.

Really focus on the rewards, the immediate rewards. Kind of coming back full circle as I wrap this up, that, yeah, there is hard work that involves sacrificing, and then there are choices that involve, yes, discipline, but they provide more immediate rewarding return. That's where you want to focus on, is success and enjoyment need to be now for you, not for other people, but it's now. Not in retirement, or in afterlife. I think this meritocracy idea is even starting to crumble and how we see people wanting meaning in their work. They don't want to just log in and then retire at 55. They want the enjoyment along the way. We're already starting there. We already have these inklings of a more vital way of being.

We want your success and enjoyment to be now, not in retirement, the afterlife, or 30 pounds. It doesn't mean you can't be working towards that and getting excited about those results, but the journey informs the destination. The same way you can't hate yourself into a loving relationship

with yourself. You can't sacrifice sacrifice to a rewarding ending. The path usually leads to resentful, angry, frustration, and shame.

Running my health coaching business, for an example, kicks my ass a lot. It's a lot, but I love it, and I wouldn't trade it for anything. I work harder now than I ever did in the corporate world. I have less security. I have to take more risks. It's a spiritual boot camp most weeks, but I get so much meaning every day that I keep doing it, and that's why it's sustainable.

In closing, one thing I've settled on for my own spiritual beliefs as I have grieved my grandma, continue to grieve her, is the paradox that the only thing I can be certain of is the mystery. The more we get to our truth, the more life opens up for us. It's about becoming more of who we really are, not sacrificing and shoving and putting those parts aside.

It doesn't mean it won't be challenging, but we won't be sacrificing ourselves. Enjoy and meaning are as much a discipline as hard work. I think if we can create a world where people can be who they are truly whole, we'll be able to restructure society that it isn't about power and privilege dynamics, and we'll be much closer to the American promise.

Those who are hungry for power, because they've never had to source it themselves, try and take it from the rest of us, and it's really up to us to know what's true for us and what we're going to live by.

In our last Truce with Food call for my fall 2016 group, clients were sharing how transforming their story and looking for life to be more rewarding and meaningful now, kept them feeling like healthy — They found themselves nurturing relationships and approaching their work in a way that is very “uncharacteristic of me” they would say.

I told them it wasn't uncharacteristic of them, it's the real you who's coming from a powerful, creative, and rewarding place. They've been able to extricate themselves from the patriarchal controls they didn't even know existed. No longer battling food and this idea that you have to work and sacrifice your health and it have to be discipline, can be political and empowering. It can be a political and empowering act.

It requires layers of a learning, it requires considering that it can be rewarding, enjoyable, and quite a wonder to live in your body, which is a radical idea especially if you're a female. This empowerment starts with reframing the entire idea that healthy living is about sacrifice, deprivation, and hard work. It's not finding more will power or somebody else's ideas that most likely also rest on the faulty premise of meritocracy. It's really about coming into your own.

I'm going to leave you with this quote that shakes me to my core from Naomi Wolf from *The Beauty Myth*, "A culture fixated on female thinness is not an obsession about female beauty, but an obsession about female obedience. Dieting is the most potent political sedative in women's history. A quietly mad population is a tractable one."

This idea of meritocracy is keeping all of us stuck if we feel stuck around our health and weight loss. Let me know what you think of this format. I know this is pretty heavy and deep, but let me know if you have questions about this. I might do a Facebook live on this so I can support you in getting out of this puritanical rat race, because the puritans also inform this.

Again, my new page is my Facebook page at facebook/alimarieshapiro, or on Instagram @alimshapiro, and let me know what you liked, what questions you had, or if you want to challenge me. I love really great debate as long as it's done respectfully. I love a really great debate, which most of our community is super respectful. Let me know what you think and I'll see you on our next episode.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[46:00.5] AS: Have questions or reactions about the episode? Reach out to me on Instagram and Twitter @alimshapiro, or Facebook at facebook.com/alimarieshapiro. If you love this show, please leave an iTunes review and tell one friend this week about how to get the Insatiable Podcast on their phone.

See you on social media.

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