

S2 EPISODE 06

[INTRO]

[0:00:08.4] 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 nutrition science and true whole health. Fair warning, this is not your parents' health care. This is a big rebel yell to those who crave meaning, hunger for truth, and whose lust for life is truly insatiable. Believe me, freedom awaits.

[INTRODUCTION]

[0: 00:47.4] AS: Welcome to season 2, episodes 6 of the Insatiable Podcast; Fitness , Beauty and Power with Dr. Polly Young-Eisendrath. Last year, the book; Woman and Desire Beyond Wanting to be Wanted by Dr. Young-Eisendrath came into my life. I honestly can't even tell you how it happened. It's a book that's about 18- years-old, but after I read it I was like, "She is on my bucket list, because you insatiable listeners would love her expertise in which she explores in that book and in her work.

The season is about the feminine perspective, and so we are going deep and into the female psyche today, which unfortunately as we talk about in this episode has been conditioned to wanting to be wanted to look like the good girl, rather than saying, "Hey! What's great for me?" Unfortunately, because of this, we often think that weight loss and thinness or what we now say as strong is the new sexy, is our path to power because of the patriarchy, that there is a deeper sense and more lasting sense of power that we're going to talk about today.

We're going to explore all of that in today's episode, including the sneaky difference between self-awareness and self-criticism and why you really need to know the difference to live an authentic life. What is true power, what we think of as confidence and courage and, again, how thinness or strong is the new sexy offers an illusion of power, but won't really get you what you want. So you're going to love today's episode.

A little bit more about Dr. Polly Young-Eisendrath, she's a Jungian analyst, psychologist and clinical supervisor at Norwich University in Vermont where she lives. She is the author of the book; *Women and Desire: Beyond Wanting to Be Wanted*, which we talked about a lot today, and she also has a new book coming out in the fall called *Love Between Equals: Relationship as a Spiritual Path*, and we get into today's episode a lot about how to be, have your own needs and desires and how that accentuates, not detracts from healthy relationships.

So enjoy today's episode, and I'll see you on the flipside.

[INTERVIEW]

[0:03:00.5] AS: Dr. Young-Eisenrath, thank you so much for being here today to discuss *Women and Desire: Beyond Wanting to Be Wanted*, and all of your work on love and relationships in the self. I really appreciate your time today.

[0:03:13.4] PYE: Thanks, Ali. I'm really happy to be here.

[0:03:15.7] AS: Yeah. I recently came across *Women and Desire* and I was like, "Why didn't — I should have found this book 15 years ago," because it's very timeless and classic and I feel especially with this surge in feminism since the 2016, and it even more relevant, because it was relevant obvious 20 years ago, but it seems like we still have a lot of the same lessons to learn.

[0:03:39.4] PYE: I haven't gotten very far.

[0:03:43.5] AS: I think it speaks to the tricky nature of what you cover in this book, and before we get into that, you're a traditionally trained psychologist, but you are also what I would consider in the realm of depth psychology, where you look at symbolism, like when women want to lose weight or they're just happy with their bodies. You really look at the metaphor and the symbolism of that. So for our audience, can explain what depth psychology is rather than maybe a traditional therapy or how it's a little different.

[0:04:11.3] PYE: Okay. Let me just say first what my training is. So, you know, I'm a clinical psychologist and I'm a also Jungian and analyst, and that's Carl Jung's School of

Psychoanalysis, and Jung emphasis metaphors, symbols, mythology, ritual, that side of our collective life. Also, I happened to be a long-term Buddhist practitioner. I started practicing Buddhism in 1970 and I have practiced it in the forms of Zen and also Vipassana and some forms of Tibetan Buddhism. The combination of Buddhism as a practice, which is kind of a practice for everyday life to make you aware of how you're perceiving and how you're acting and what you're doing with your actions and your perceptions.

The combination of that with analysis, particularly Jung's psychoanalysis, and then also feminism and psychology, that combination has resulted in my being able to kind of look at human behavior not so much from the behavioral side, but more from the side of deeper motivations. That is what causes us to behave in a certain way or what causes us to perceive in a certain way, and in my view, that's what depth psychology does. It asks us to examine the deeper aspects of our actions and behaviors, not simply the behaviors and their rewards and their gratification and so on, which is useful as well, but I think when it comes to human beings, the bigger picture is really how we see things and how we make meaning of things, and then that leads to our actions and that leads to our behaviors.

So does that make sense?

[0:06:21.1] AS: Yeah, that is so clear. I mean, it's exactly like your book, very deep but very practical, and I think for everyone listening on this podcast, we often talk about in the healthcare, the health space root cause resolution, which is if someone's coming and they're struggling with hypothyroidism or depression, there can be food things that can support them. Let's get to the root cause, and what you're saying from a behavioral standpoint, rather than saying, "Okay. Let's just focus on habit change or something. Let's look at those deeper motivations," and where you're coming from and the meaning that you're making of why you're doing this, which is I think it's pulling behavioral change out at it's root, which is much more effective.

[0:07:00.7] PYE: I think so too. In many of the behaviors that cause difficulties for human beings in relation to themselves and in relationships with others, many of those behaviors are motivated by habits of perception, and the habits of our perceptions are motivated by assumptions of symbol, the meaning that we bring to our lives, because, for example, when it

comes to thinness, many women have tended to feel that being thin is more powerful than having some other body type, and that has been a motif in our cultures since probably about the 1960s, and even though we've had a lot of reform of that through feminism, through various kinds of changes in our eating styles and understanding nutrition better, working with various kinds of eating disorders and so on, I still think that for many educated young women, having a thin or muscular body becomes a priority that can overtake other priorities and become an obsession or an anxiety without them even knowing that it's based on a bunch of assumptions that are really questionable.

Being thin is sort of one of those — It's sort of, I guess, the Duchess of Windsor says, "You can never be thin or too rich." Well, I totally disagree with that whole philosophy, but I think it's an assumption that people make and they have cultural and symbolic reason for making that assumption, but let's just say, again, just for the sake of putting this out there, many of the role models that I had as a young woman and still have are black women of various sorts. Everyone from Tina Turner, and black women have never idealized being thin. Not generally, anyway.

I mean, there's a certain — Since Oprah, there's a kind of preoccupation maybe with weight loss, but mostly and by enlarge, black women understood that having a presence in a room, and especially a large presence and maybe even enlarging your presence with some high heels on and a big hat, wear some bright colors, that that presence makes a powerful impact and that that power can be used in the same way that, let's say, in Greek's theater, the actors wore very big costumes. Their shoulders were broaden and their shoes were made very high so that they could have power in their appearance. That way if power that black women have traditionally shown in their presence is a real contrast with the idea that thinness is powerful.

[0:10:18.7] AS: I love that example, because what I work on with my clients is trying to get them to see that the power is not in the finish line of weight loss. It's in metrics of your choosing if you work through that, right? You can't just like give that up because, to your point, the cultural since 1960s and it keeps reinforcing, and I think that's one thing that was really interesting in your book and I think is important for us to define here is the difference between patriarchal power and personal power. So can you talk a little bit about that, because I think a lot of times women think, especially now where we have things on social media, likes fit is the new thin or strong is

the new skinny. We think we are making progress but we're still putting ourselves in the same box. It just looks —

[0:11:04.8] PYE: Oh! It's the same exactly. Just like, again, try to think about someone like Maya Angelou or even Oprah Winfrey who's not a slim babe. Just to try to think about these women saying something like — What did you say? Like strong is the new skinny or something.

[0:11:26.9] AS: It changes, but it's the same thing to me.

[0:11:29.5] PYE: Yeah, they would even think that way. Yeah. Our culture has been patriarchal. There is probably, right now, a kind of chaotic mix of different kinds of cultures within our culture and yet it's still principally patriarchal in that. Many, many positions of power are filled by men, but not exclusively and not in the ways they used to be. There's a lot more possibility for women now and many of the professions, like medicine and law and so on, have a majority of women entering the profession, and in many cases occupying the profession now.

There are many ways that, since I was a young woman, opportunities for women have changed, possibilities have changed and the capacity for self-actualizing has really changed. So the way that I think of like personal power or whatever, is that you begin to take seriously your own desires so that you become, as in the book I talk about, the subject of your desires, that you say, "Okay. This is what I want to do with my life. This is how I find it to be meaningful, and I realized that I would like to have these ingredients." Of course, following your desires does not mean you will get what you want. It does not mean that. It just means that you know what you want. It doesn't mean you get what you want. It means you know what you want. This is another thing, we don't have control of our lives. We have responsibility for our desires, but we don't have control of how they will turn out. So in any case, you can even begin the journey of some sort of deeper meaning for yourself or self-actualization unless you know what you want.

Within patriarchal culture and up until, let's say, about the end of the 20th century, although maybe in the last decade of the 20th century, up until about that time, women had very limited possibilities for power, and one of those possibilities was that power in their appearance, that that would give them at least some more options and might give them more options for a mate,

for example, or it might give them more options even to go forward in a career if they had a beautiful appearance, because there was the tendency to be attracted to that.

Consequently, women probably, for a very long period of time, who knows? Maybe since civilization, got kind of organized, became objects of desire so that somebody looks at them from the outside and says, "You're beautiful. You're wonderful. You're desirable. You're virtuous. You are kind," or whatever from the outside, and women thought that kind of power. They wanted to be objects of desire.

As the, let's say, financial world developed for more educated people, there tended to be a financial advantage for women if they could get into a situation where that being an object of desire kind of supported them through the lifespan. First, they would be like to beautiful maiden, then they'd be the wonderful mother, and then they would be the grandmother, great aunt or whatever all along being seen from the outside as being beautiful, or good, or virtuous, whatever, but there wasn't any attention to how were they feeling from the inside about all of that. There wasn't any focus on, "Hey, what's going on within you? Are you liking that? Did you enjoy that? Is this the next thing you want to take on?"

So having these roles in which they were object of desire was very, very attractive, again, for educated women, and what I want to say is that sometimes less educated women, women who weren't white, who didn't come from a privileged environment, they were often doing other things during all these time. They weren't doing this object of desire thing. It was mostly privileged and educated women, but women kind of got trapped in it. So by the time feminism came along as more of a cultural motif and you began to have the possibility of becoming educated, of choosing a career, of choosing a life path, of no longer having to have children, no longer having to be reproductive in order to be supported. When that all came along, I think women were pretty much unprepared for it. It was difficult for them, and here I'm talking about my generation. So I grew up in the 60s and I kind of came into my career in the 70s and it's about the same time I came into feminism and lots of other things, and I could see that women around me were still getting snagged into wanting to be desirable, wanting to be known as something, wanting to be seen as something, instead of finding out what they wanted and what they wanted for their lives. Again, not that we control it, but if you don't even know what you want, you can't go where you want to go.

I wrote *Women and Desire*, I think it came out in 1999. Did it? I don't have it in front of me.

[0:17:31.6] AS: Yup, 1999. Copyrighted 1999.

[0:17:33.9] PYE: 1999.

[0:17:35.0] AS: Yup.

[0:17:35.5] PYE: Yeah. So I wrote it because I felt like there was still so much confusion between following your own desires and being desirable, and even though the women's movement had changed so much, women were still focusing on how thin they were, they fit they were, whether their children were perfect, how the family looks from the outside, whether they were getting the motherhood thing right. I mean, they just weren't actually examining themselves as subjects of their own desire. So there was a kind of emptiness still in the majority of women that I was seeing in therapy. They were still really just struggling on this level of how they should be or how they should look instead of what they wanted.

So that's why I wrote the book. I was kind of amazed what happened to that book. That book was published in 16 languages. It's sold all over the world, but it did not sell that much in America. It was as though at that moment the women in America did not think that feminism was important to them. Younger women were like, "No. I'm not feminist. I'm not going to go there." The baby boomer women, they were buying the book, but there weren't that many of them. I mean, the book — All books sell most. The largest reading population for all books is women in their 30s. Any time you write a book, you want to appeal to women in their 30s, because you can sell a lot of books.

Women in their 30s in America did not read my book when it came out, and I think a lot of women now have found it later, but it was as though were in a kind of a parenthesis when it came to feminism or even looking at the issues that had to do with appearance and being an object of desire and that kind of thing. It was as though I felt like, here, feminism opened up all these opportunities and the women were still running after the same old things; How do I look? Am I a perfect mother? Are my children perfect? Do we have the right house? And so on.

[0:20:09.9] AS: One of the things that I just loved in your book is you talked about the subtleties of the desired effect and how when we're constantly, what I call the good girl mindset kind of looking outwards and saying, "Am I being good? Am I wanting to be wanted?" We often confuse what we want with what other people want, and what I know a lot of my clients are shocked in the work — I actually take them through a self-discovery process to figure out, basically, when they're eating. It's really that they're feeling powerless over something in their life more than it's really not about food at that point.

One of the things that's really shocking to them is that I make this distinction between them between being self-critical and self-aware and they confuse the two. They thought they were self-aware, because they knew how to get the desired effect, not realizing that they were actually being very critical and judgmental, and that wasn't actually what they really wanted more deeply. So I wonder when your book came out, everyone thought, "Oh! I have that figured out." Not realizing that they had confused the two.

[0:21:12.2] PYE: Yeah. No, I agree with you, and I think that's a very good distinction. I did a TED Talk, that's online, that's called The Key to Happiness is Letting Go of Self-Importance, but the self-importance that I talked about in TED Talk is this constant negative review of yourself. It's like when women, especially, then they're focused on themselves, it's generally a negative. They're generally saying, "I'm not doing this enough. I'm not that enough already." So it's not like selfishness. It's more like a wet blanket. It's just a constant focus on what you haven't done yet.

So that self-criticalness is, I think, confused with self-awareness. That's a great way of putting it, and also I think taking responsibility is confused with being in control, that people don't take responsibility, like, "Here's what I want, and I'm going to go after it." Instead they say, "Here's what I want to get, and if I don't get it, that means that I failed." Like a lot of people, women particularly, will say things like, "Well, I have to be responsible that I married that guy. I created that, that miserable life, and so I need to take responsibility."

Well, you don't control how everything happens in your life. You have to take responsibility moment to moment to moment. What do I want to do right now under these circumstances? Again, that might not lead you to the exact place you want to go, but if you constantly go back

and say, “What do I want to do now?” and you look at the bigger picture and you know who you are, you know what you're good at, you know what you're not good at, you can always, always, always correct your course of action. If you took a right turn and it didn't go well, for God's sakes, take the left turn. You don't have to beat yourself up about that right turn.

So this issue of self-criticism, the constant focusing on what I haven't done yet and how I'm not good as the others and then whoever's got whatever on their Facebook page, which really is another big wrinkle. Those kinds of things really take you away from being in your life, from actually feeling your life, and each day saying, “So what do I want to do today?” I don't mean that you make that, that you ask that question out of a complete fog or blank state, because most of us have very structured life, and that's good. Structure is good in life, but we do have choices and those choices come up on a moment to moment basis as well as junctures in our lives where when we make a decision to go to school for something, or to marry a person, or to not marry somebody, to have a child or to not have a child, or to travel or own a pet or whatever. All of those are junctures or moments where we have to know what we want, and we have to take responsibility for pursuing that. No one else is going to give it to us.

So those are the reasons why I think being aware of your own subjectivity, of what you want versus the sort of always thinking about what are other people going to think of me or trying to fit some kind of ideal for appearance. Those kinds of preoccupations will lead you away from yourself. They will lead you away from having a satisfying life.

[0:24:54.7] AS: I love that you talk about, because what I think you're also saying is if you make a left or maybe you needed to make a right, you often have to have the resilience and the sense of self to trust that you can get back there rather than being perfect, and what you say in your book — Because I think if you don't start doing that, you never develop the resilience, you never develop the compass, and what I thought was so beautiful what you said in your book is when you know your own needs, it also clarifies, and this is a quote from your book, “vulnerabilities, limitations and frailties of your own and of other peoples”, and so you also become this generous person with yourself, because you become more compassionate. I think that compassion, a lot of women, because there's so self-critical, they're waiting for the compassion to almost give them permission to find their needs, but what you're saying is in the discovering

of our needs and our wants, we really, I think, become more compassionate. Because like you said, we don't have control. I think that's —

[0:25:56.9] PYE: We start to recognize how complex life is and how everybody's in the same soup.

[0:26:03.5] AS: Yes!

[0:26:04.1] PYE: It's like start to see. If you decide that you're going to do something, you can then fail at it, so you're more vulnerable when you choose something than when you just keep trying to do what other people want you to do. I mean a lot of times there is a confusion, women have this desire for empowerment, which is a term I really don't like very much. But in any case, I know what it means.

To be empowered really means that you are in touch with yourself and you're able to make choices decisions and that you can make decisions with the recognition, but you're vulnerable that you might not succeed, that you're like other people.

I just saw the Leonard Cohen exhibition in Montréal, and Leonard Cohen is a great hero of mine, and of course his — That song that everybody knows, is that there's a crack in everything, and that's how the light gets in. So he basically says, “Ring the bells that still can ring. forget your perfect offering. There is a crack in everything, and that's how the light gets in.”

When you forget the perfectionism and you deal with the bells that can ring, you ring the ones that you want to ring, then you find that something happens and you didn't succeed and there's a crack, and then you begin to see, “Ah! That's the way that love and compassion and kindness and so on work. That warmth comes in when you see how broken the world is in yourself as well.” That you can do it to the perfection thing, because you're not in control. It's like a pretty straightforward path when you try to follow your own desires and you become vulnerable to your needs. You recognize that you need, that you will fail, you will see your limitations and then there will be an opening there. Not only will you find out that you can always apologize, you can always change your mind, you can always change the course of your action, but also that everybody else's feeling too, and so there's nothing wrong with making mistakes and failing and

so on. That's actually the way you learn to be compassionate, and it's the way others will help you also, that when you have failed at something, if you turn to other people for help at that moment, they really do want to help you, that there's a warmth towards vulnerability. There's no warmth towards perfection.

[0:28:53.7] AS: Yeah, there's often like judgment or comparison and disconnection.

[0:28:57.3] PYE: Yeah.

[0:28:58.1] AS: I always joke. I grew up in the 80s and I was like, "Oh my God! All of the 80s love songs were just codependency. No one told us." They were just you complete — They were all about wanting to be wanted, if you were a female. I'm like, "No wonder the divorce rate was so high like 20 years later."

[0:29:16.5] PYE: But it was also — There was some good music, I have to say. I really liked that.

[0:29:23.0] AS: It's kind of like the word empowerment. Okay. I'm going to sing this and I like — I know what they mean. I'm not going to buy into it but I'm going to rock out.

This kind of leads into what you talk about personal sovereignty, and I just love that phrase and that concept, and I want to talk a little bit about how this goes wrong when a lot of listeners and a lot of my clients are on a spiritual path. They're trying to be better people. Personally, this is my favorite part of the book, where you talked about how a lot of these spirituality approaches, the difference between — I hear from my clients a lot, "Well, I just have to let go," or it's all about letting go. But you bring up a really important distinction and when women sometimes bring their own context to this idea of letting go of the self, about it not letting go of self-determination, but about letting go of your attitude about yourself. Can you talk about that a little?

[0:30:17.7] PYE: Well, I mean I think women get confused around the issue of being selfless versus what they might call selfish and not recognizing that being self-determining or having sovereignty in your own life is not selfish or selfless. It's using the self in a responsible way. We all, once we're adults, we have the capacity to govern our lives to make decisions for ourselves

and we're protected by law in doing that now. So as adults, really, that's our whole opportunity there. That's the nature of being an adult in Western societies that we get to make decisions for ourselves.

I know in the book I used the this story of Sir Gawain and the Lady Ragnell.

[0:31:13.6] AS: Yeah.

[0:31:15.0] PYE: And that's just such a great story, because it comes from the European Middle Ages. It comes from the 13th century when it was written down, and the question that's asked, and of course it's put as a test to King Arthur, is what do women want above all else? Arthur is actually going to lose his head if he doesn't find the answer and he has a year to find the answer, and he looks everywhere for the answer, and of course many of the answers are like women want jewels, woman want land, they want beautiful and he kind of knows that those answers are not correct.

Finally, he gets confronted by a hag, and she's just this ugly creature who comes out of the forest and she knows that he's looking for an answer to this question, and she tells him that she has the answer, but he doesn't believe her at first, but as she goes on, she recognizes she probably has the answer, so he says, "What do you want you in exchange for giving me this answer? Like I could give you a lot of land or a lot of money." She says, "Well, no, I don't want any of that. What I want is, is I want the hand in marriage of your finest knight," and that's Sir Gawain, who is the finest, the handsome knight, the most sort of gentle and so on of all of the knights of the round table, and Arthur says, "Well, you know I can't give you Sir Gawain. He's his own man." Or course, at that point, at the point, the time of the story, women were given always. They weren't free, so they were given by their fathers to a man in marriage. And so here is a woman asking for a man to be given to her in exchange for her answer.

At first King Arthur goes, "Oh no. I can't do that. I can't bring that up to Gawain. I would never bring that up to Gawain. He's such a great guy," and then I Arthur starts worrying about himself. He finds like — He unintentionally brings that up to Gawain, and Gawain says, "Sure, I'll do it. I'll do anything to save the king." So they go out and they meet up with this hag whose name is Ragnell, and she gives them the answer, and the answer which saves Arthur's neck is what

women desire above all else is sovereignty, the right to rule their own lives, and then after she gives the answer, she and Gawain go back to the castle and, of course, there Gawain, the finest, most handsome knight with this really ugly woman and everybody in the court wonders like how did this happen. What's going on there? Is she really wealthy? Did he kind of get involved with her because she has all these money?

So Gawain, being a kind of honest dude, he treats her kindly, he doesn't humiliate her. They have a dinner with the whole court. They get married and they go back to the chamber and she says to him, "Okay, now. Here we are. Come and kiss me." Now, you have to kind of now that in that period of time there was a lot of anxiety about kissing witches, because the witches could suck your soul out, and so there was like a prohibition against kissing a witch, and she looked like a witch. So Gawain had to really muster a lot of courage, because he would have been afraid to kiss her, and she was saying, "Come kiss me. We're in the chamber, and this is your job," but Gawain being courageous, she went and kissed her, and the moment he kissed her, she turned into this beautiful serene looking woman with these gray eyes and she looked at him and he was really startled and he was afraid because he knew that she was a witch if she could change herself like that.

He said, "What's going on here? This is terrible. Who are you?" and that kind of thing. He wasn't pleased.

[0:36:02.7] AS: Where is my soul?

[0:36:05.1] PYE: Yeah, he wasn't pleased. He was like, "Yeah, you're good looking, but who are you anyway?" She said that she was — This is her actual form and her stepbrother had put a curse on her. Her stepbrother was Morgan le Fay, who a sorcerer, and he put two curse on her because she was too uppity, because she was acting like she knew what she was doing and that she could run her own life, and so the curse was that she would have to stay in this form as a hag until the finest knight in all of Britain willingly decided to marry her. So Gawain was kind of really relieved and he said, "Wow!" He said, "That's great! So the curse has been broken," and she said, "Well, not entirely." She said, "My stepbrothers said that once the knight married me, he had to make a choice, whether I would be beautiful like this in my actual form by day in the castle where we're around all the other people, or would I be beautiful at night and ugly by day."

This knight had to make this choice about how he wanted me to be beautiful by day beautiful or beautiful by night, and Gawain immediately knelt before her and said, "I cannot choose. That choice is only for you. It's your life." At that point she sighed this sigh of tremendous relief, and she said, "You've answered well. This breaks the curse entirely.,," and then they lived happily ever after.

So that the whole story, and this is a story in 1260 or something, is about this issue of sovereignty, not beauty, but sovereignty. I used that story I used it a lot over time in different things that I wrote, because I think it's such an illustration of how long it takes women to get to the truth. It's like, "What's the deal here?" This was known way back and the reason that story was told is that in that period of time, women became the possessions of men. In order to marry, they had to give away their identities, they had to take on the man's name and they became property of the man, and all their own properties then also went to the man, and so many women who were really powerful women didn't want to marry, because they wanted to have lives of their own, but it was a very narrow range of people, women who could have lives of their own. You could have your own live as a nun, but it was pretty constraining. You could have your own life as a prostitute, but that was pretty dangerous. So there wasn't a lot of room to actually have your own desires, and then this story basically is about that men could participate by actually surrendering the sovereignty to their wives saying, "You have a choice. You can decide how you want to be." To my way of thinking, it's kind of crazy that in the 21st-century women haven't figured this out yet.

[0:39:30.4] AS: Yeah. As you're saying, the story was like — What? A thousand year or 1200th? I'm like, "Have we made progress or are we going backwards?" Because I think, again, the illusion of — We use the word empowerment or this idea because we can make career choices and what not. You even opened the book up with talking about how when you would ask women in therapy like, "What do you want?" It was this very bewildering question, because I think sometimes I think we know what we want because we've been culturally conditioned for illusions of power, and then when we don't feel powerful, because we're still trying to have the desired effect. It almost is more jarring. It's almost like — We're recording this on Martin Luther King Day, but it's almost like it's easier to see the KKK and say, "Those people are racist, rather than the invisible structures of racism in a way."

[0:40:21.3] PYE: Right. Yes. No, I agree with you very much on that. I mean, it's very difficult to see how we constrain ourselves and why we type somebody else's having power. I think that in the 21st century, we do have law, we have social conditions, we have possibilities, that women truly never ever had ever before, and in many parts of the world do not have now. We should be very clear about that. I mean, we have protection to meet our needs and we have fairly good protection for our bodies, and so on. Not perfect, but nothing is perfect. Still, so many women are still doing the same old thing. Like they're looking to have the desired effect, to be beautiful, to be seen as kind, to be seen as a good mother, to have children who appear to be perfect. All of these things are a part of the reason why the curse was put on us in the first place, that we basically weren't seen as full human beings who could make their own decisions. We were seen somehow as childlike or we needed to be possessed by somebody else, and that's been going on for eons of time, but it's over for a while now.

It's like get with the program, ladies. I mean, it seems to me to be a very sad situation that so many women who are educated, especially, and who have the possibility of really making a life of their own design and participating in something, again, it doesn't mean doing it perfectly or having the outcome you want, but that so many women deferral of that to have a certain kind of appearance or to do "what they should do" rather than to find out what they want to do.

It is a funny thing to recognize that the issues of sovereignty, the right to govern your own life, those issues are really what people have fought for, especially in the West for generations, eons of time, the right to be an individual who can make choices. That's what black people, white people, women have fought for again and again and again, and now we women have that, but they may not be exercising it. They might instead be exercising their thighs, and that's not to say that, of course, you need to pay some attention to your body and to your appearance, but it's more like in my view, the attention that you would pay to that would be playful, would be creative, would be interesting. It wouldn't be just trying to slog through whatever it is to get the best body.

[0:43:30.5] AS: Yeah. I mean I have a question for you around — You said that people have fought for us to have like freedom of choices, but one of the things that I've really been thinking about since the 2016 election is — And this kind of goes back, you were talking about America

and it didn't sell as well here, and I think archetypal America is kind of this like raging teenager at that stage, just kind of a white raging teenager, kind of like, "I want my way, and I don't have to reflect."

I think America, a lot of Americans often want safety more than freedom, and I —

[0:44:06.9] PYE: I don't really know. I don't really know. I've traveled a lot. I lived in other countries. Every country has limitations and constraints. Every country has a culture. America is a young yellow country and it did rebel and probably — We probably got our away from the American Revolution a little too soon, and we're very mature.

On the other hand, the rights that in our Constitution and our Bill of Rights are not perfect and they don't even approach what's in India, for example, or Germany, places where the Constitution has been redone as a result of either some crisis or as a result of overthrow of a government. But our Constitution is not a bad one and our basic laws aren't bad ones, and I don't know about the safety versus the freedom thing. Freedom is a complicated thing and it means different things to different people, and for many people it's a freedom from something rather than being a freedom to something. It can be free to do something or you can be free from something.

So Americans are diverse population and the ways that wealth has worked in this country have changed enormously since I grew up. I grew when I was really a large middle class and it was possible to become middle class from working class. Now, America has changed in that regard and I really don't know where that change is going, and I think the 2016 election expressed something of that change, and I can't say that I understand any of it, like where it's going or why Donald Trump was elected. I mean, I can say I think that educated privileged people were kind of ignoring a whole bunch of people who voted for him and we thought somehow we were smarter, and that we were better. It turned out that even he was surprised he got voted in. So that's a part of democracy too, is that there would be a surprise. There should be a surprise occasionally in democracy or you know that there are some underlying deep state that's controlling it if there's not a surprise.

So there're just a lot of things to say about the 2016 election. My feeling is that the complexity politically of this situation that we're in is just beyond my pay grade, like I just don't —

[0:46:53.7] AS: It is quite complex.

[0:46:56.3] PYE: Yeah. It's like I don't even have a thing to say about it anymore. It's way beyond anything that I understand. I mean, I'm glad that I have work that I do that I do understand. I'm doing psychotherapy. I understand that, and the things that I write about, I understand that. I don't really understand the larger political forces that are at work now, and I don't also fully understand how women are working with those forces. I do not like the mob psychology of the need to movement, because people lose their jobs and lose their reputations without having due process. I believe that if somebody's charged with something, that there should be an opportunity for a due process where that person also gets to speak or say something.

I never liked any form of mob psychology. When it was lynching she or it was a witch hunt or whatever. So I'm not particularly happy about the way things are happening with the me too movement.

[0:48:12.7] AS: Yeah, I was talking to some of my African-American friends and they were saying the same thing about how important due process is and going through the due process to really look at the evidence and all that stuff. I think I just met more — The election made me realize I was thinking more about the people who I grew up in a suburb that is now relatively wealthy. It was very middle-class when there was a middle-class, but the people who live out there, those are actually to me a big part of Trump's base more than like white working class that people have been focusing on, and I think part of this desire to be thin and beautiful is a desire for safety in a way. It's not really safe in the long run, but it's the safe in the short term of, "Well, I know this is what the society tells me," will get me certain power to your point in your book.

[0:49:01.7] PYE: Yeah.

[0:49:02.8] AS: Patriarchal power.

[0:49:03.5] PYE: But it's really such a delusion, because you can never keep it and it's like there's no way to have that. It's a moment in life maybe, but it's such a worthless moment, you know? Again, when I think of the black women that I have loved in life and that I have actually learned so much from in terms of the way they moved and the way they dressed, and they just never been quiet and thin, but such a waspy thing. It's not an ideal. In many places in the world, it's not an ideal either.

In some places it is, like in Asia, for example, it's a surprising ideal in Japan and Korea right now anyway, but in Greece and in Russia and in parts of Italy, the Mediterranean, women don't look that way. They don't want to look that way. They want to actually enjoy and live. I mean, it's not like I weigh 200 pounds or whatever. I don't. I have a fairly athletic physique, but it just happened to be part of my fate or whatever. I don't work on it all the time, but I just happened to have a particular body form, but I also know that it's not what's getting me somewhere in life, so I don't know if it is just the wealthy. I think that there is something that women themselves across the classes have to wake up to and it has to do with sovereignty and their right to govern your own life.

Whether you're poor or whether you're wealthy, whether you're privileged or not, you are protected at least in those rights and you should try to find a way to get to know yourself. Find out what you want, and then take some steps to pursue it. Again, when you make mistakes, you can work with that. When you piss somebody off you can apologize if you make the wrong choice, you can choose again, but don't get hung up with trying to look a certain way, because that just doesn't — It's like in the story of Sir Gawain and Lady Ragnell. He said, "I'm not going to make that choice for how you look at your life.

You choose how you want to be." It's always, I think, such — In the story even, it's such a powerful moment, because you think that there is a right answer to, "Should I be beautiful by day in the chamber —" I'm sorry. "When I'm in the court, should I be beautiful by day or should I be beautiful by night in the chamber when we're together." Ourselves and most people are thinking, "Well, which is a better way?" Then Gawain says, "Get out of the double-blind. That's not even the issue."

[0:52:11.5] AS: I think that's such a great point and that often we're conditioned to believe that if we're — We have to throw ourselves under the bus to get that desired effect rather than or to make everyone else happy or whatnot, and it doesn't mean if you pursue your desires, you're going to be all alone. You may not have everyone to be there like cheering you on, but you'll have the right people there, I think which is so important for women to realize. I don't think it is a double bind once you start practicing and getting in touch with what you really want. I've found that those right people that appreciate that will somehow come out or you find them.

[0:52:48.7] PYE: Yeah, you basically start on a [inaudible 0:52:50.8] that where the people that come into your life are also connected with what you're interested in, what you're creating, what you're making in your life, whatever, whether it's worth or — I mean, for me it's really with my career that I really wanted to be a psychologist. I wanted to be a psychoanalyst, and once I did that training, then I had groups of people I was relating too who also wanted to be those things and then over time you create things with those people. So there is a defining aspect to finding out what you want and then following that meaning. Again, it may not work the way you wanted it to work, but then you could change it.

The fact that we have these choices that were not being placed into a marriage by our fathers, were not being made to get pregnant, like women on average got pregnant 15 times in their lives before birth control.

[0:53:50.7] AS: Oh my God!

[0:53:52.4] PYE: That's right. Then they usually had five children that lived from those 15 pregnancies. They had a life that was bound to reproduction, and we don't have anything like that anymore. However, there are certain women in other places in the world who do. They're living that life still. So it's like we are so free by comparison, and if we don't take advantage of that, what a terrible waste of using our sovereignty.

Right now, we have it and we can make our own life. So I think that's probably a good place to stop. In the book that I just finished, which is called *Love Between Equals: Relationship is Spiritual Path*, the way this fits with what we've been talking about is that we women, we wanted to have a marriage in which our marriage or a marriage like relationships in which we would be

equal with our partners, then we would be equal and reciprocal and the dynamics would be mutual and so on, and it turns out that that is very, very, very hard once you really introduce it into your life. So then knowing how to solve those power struggles, knowing how to negotiate, make decisions within equal, knowing how to really be a friend and to be a witness too to the other person so they can be a witness to you. All of those are brand-new skills and most people don't have them. So it's like relationship has changed and there's this possibility now that women have sovereignty. There's a possibility for equality in relationship, but it's a whole new ballpark from what marriage used to be.

I've kind of gone on to write about that and the practices that we need to embrace in order to become more skilled in our intimate relationships and I do think that the challenge right now. I see that as the challenge of the 21st-century, is how to respect and negotiate with an equal without making an enemy and that also spreads out into our relationships with our adult children and our relationships with people of different cultural backgrounds and so on. All of these are equal relationships, and how do we negotiate our differences and how do we show respect through conflict and so on? I think we're on kind of a new horizon in regard to relationship.

[0:56:35.8] AS: I love that and it kind of comes full circle of what you were saying about in the beginning of looking at who we are and the meaning and the perceptions we bring to that relationship can really change or determine the quality of it. So it's looking through a different lens. Yeah, I think relationship is so important, especially as we head into an even more interconnected worlds, to your point, to other —

[0:56:59.4] PYE: Right, and it's like relationship between two sovereign people. One person is not on top now.

[0:57:06.0] AS: Yeah.

[0:57:06.8] PYE: And that's a whole new ballpark even from when I first got married. It was definitely still a man's world then, and now it's different, but it's not easier.

[0:57:18.9] AS: Right. Because we have to go through that transition of there being no hierarchy, which I think —

[0:57:24.3] PYE: That's exactly right. Another example of learning how to live in a sovereign life where you are your own sovereign ruler, whatever, you're the captain of your own ship, and you're with some other captain. Then when there's a conflict and a difference, how do you negotiate that?

[0:57:47.2] AS: That's going to be good.

[0:57:47.4] PYE: Anyway, I think that's a good place to stop.

[0:57:51.1] AS: Yes. Two, I cannot recommend the book *Woman and Desire: Beyond Wanting to be Wanted*. You also give amazing tips for people to start to get. I mean, they're not even tips, but they're strategies for starting to get in touch with what you want and what you need, and I love your emphasis on we can't control things and it's not going to be perfect and yet that's part of that magic of we discover each other's humanity in that process.

[0:58:17.5] PYE: Mm-hmm, absolutely.

[0:58:19.5] AS: And your book is going to be so great. I mean, I'm definitely going to preorder it. Can we preorder it on Amazon or through Shambhala yet?

[0:58:25.7] PYE: I don't think. It's going to be published by Shambhala, and I don't think it's up there yet because we don't — I don't even have to final revisions yet. It'll probably be on Amazon I'd by the middle of the summer or even early summer.

[0:58:41.7] AS: Okay, great. Well, we'll make sure — I'll make sure in the inter to let everyone know where they can find you and follow you so they can be connected. Thank you so much for your time today and your life's work. I think, again, the book is so deep and practical and your work is that way. It's really refreshing to have a clear communicator and make us feel powerful and that we have choices. So thank you.

[0:59:03.6] PYE: Thanks, Ali. It was fun talking to you, and good luck with all you're doing too.

[0:59:08.6] AS: Thank you. Have a good one.

[0:59:10.4] PYE: You too. Bye-bye.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[0:59:14.7] AS: Thank you health rebels for tuning in today. Have a reaction, question, or want the transcript from today's episode? Find me at Alishapiro.com. I'd love if you leave a review on Apple podcast and tell your friends and family about Insatiable. It helps us grow our community and share a new way of approaching health and our bodies. Thanks for engaging in a different kind of conversation, and remember always your body truths are unique, profound real and liberating.

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