

S2 EPISODE 07

[INTRO]

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

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

[INTRODUCTION]

[0:00:47.7] AS: Welcome to Season 2, Episode 7 of Insatiable; Food, Body and our Moms with Bethany Webster. We all came from a woman and so have a mother. Some of us even have two, either from same sex marriages, or adoption. We all have bodies and we've all grown up under patriarchal conditions that tell us women are less than men, and their value is often in how we look.

This reality can create quite a tangled web of body image and weight issues. According to Bethany Webster, a pioneering coach and writer, it's not the body image and weight issues we need to address. Our moms didn't pass on body image issues, rather we are all struggling with what Bethany calls the mother wound.

I wanted to have Bethany on, because no one walks around thinking their body and weight issues are, "Hey, it's because I have a mother wound." We might joke that we are the people we date and know have mommy issues. How is this actually influencing how we feel about our bodies? What is our body image and weight issues about on a deeper level?

We are going to get into that in today's episode and so much more, including the political implications of the mother wound, and how every time Bethany and I talk about this certain

topic, we lose subscribers and followers. I might even lose some listeners here once we discuss it. It is what it is.

Part of why I wanted to have Bethany on is because her process and expertise goes deep. I found it fascinating how many seeming disconnected issues can be traced back to the mother wound. Her process is also radical and then healing the mother wound isn't about blaming our mothers, but rather looking at the larger safety dynamic it sets up within us, no matter how great, or how awful your relationship is with your mom and how we can start to take responsibility to expand how safe we feel in our lives, so we can step into our power and increase our impact in the world.

Selfishly, I wanted to ask Bethany if the mother wound is really the parent wound. Are we just focusing on women when our safety is tied into our family unit and community, including our dads? We'll hear her answer in powerful steps to start exploring your own relationship with your mother in a constructive, empathetic and helpful way.

A little bit more about Bethany, she is a writer, a transformational coach and international speaker. Her work is focused on helping women heal the mother wound, so they can step into their full power and potential. She teaches workshops and online course and offers a coaching program for women leaders. You can find more about her at the motherwound.com.

Insatiable listeners, this episode concludes our last in our season 2, the feminine perspective series. I will be replaying episodes, I think are important for you to hear again this time of the year. I'll also be back around the spring equinox, with a brand new season.

Enjoy today's, go back and listen to some of the others from the season you didn't get to here and sit tight for some important episodes from archives that even it's a different time and place, you'll probably hear different things as you progress on your journey. First, enjoy today's incredible episode.

[INTERVIEW]

[0:04:08.7] AS: Thank you so much for being here today, Bethany. This is going to hit home for so many of our listeners discussing the mother wound and how that relates to body image. Also I want to bridge to our bigger political body in terms of what's going on, because you've just written a really great piece. Let's open up with what is the mother wound and how did you discover this?

[0:04:31.8] BW: Yeah. Well, the mother wound, I like to talk about it having three different levels. It's got a personal level, cultural and spiritual. The way I came to be talking about this topic, it's not something I ever really expected to specialize in. It's really an organic byproduct of my own healing journey.

My way into it was really just struggling with my own mother wound. It was something that I try to avoid as long as possible, but a long story short, once I started looking at it on a personal level it really transformed my entire life. As I healed more and more on my own personal level, like the relationship with my mother, how it impacted me, I began to see it everywhere. On a cultural level and on a spiritual level, I began to feel more and more reconnected with my own body, with life itself, with other people.

It's really a big wound for a lot of us and many levels. To talk about the definition of the mother wound, I really see it as a byproduct of patriarchy really, which means living in a culture that devalues women; says that women are less than men, you could say at a very broad level.

What that does is it creates a distortion in the mother-daughter relationship, where it's hard for mothers and daughters to be both equally powerful and equally loved. There is a sense that there is not enough. It creates a backdrop of scarcity, of personal power and love between women. It makes it really challenging to love ourselves and to love each other.

That's the cultural impact and the cultural atmosphere that gives rise to a lot of these personal problems between mothers and daughters, and also between women and within women, ourselves. On a personal level, the mother wound is really something that's in us. It's like, because our mothers are really our foundation for how we see ourselves and how capable we feel in the world, our mother is really our raw material. That relationship really shapes who we are from such a young, young age.

That's why it has such a big impact, but it's something that lives in us. To heal the mother wound, we don't have to necessarily have a harmonious relationship with our mother. Ultimately, it's really about a relationship with ourselves.

[0:07:21.3] AS: Yeah. You just said so much that I want to circle back to. I often hear from clients, I just feel like I'm – when you talked about it made you feel more connected to life, my clients and listeners as well here, I've often heard from them like – I just feel like I'm this – I say it's like a bubblehead. I'm just this floating head always trying to manage things. I think that's a big sign of –

What I've heard you say in other interviews and I agree with is the mother wound is also about safety. How safe do we feel and how much – not only – not just physical safety, but emotional safety of how much at risk can we take? Can we ask for what we want? All these type of things. It really disconnects us from the present, because we're trying to make sure that we're safe. I think that's so beautiful how you described when you heal it, you've – It's almost like sometimes when the stuff is, we don't know what to call it. We have to know what we don't have and that connection to being in our bodies in present is often because we're just these bubbleheads trying to make sure that we're not at risk.

I love that you brought that up. I think that's one of the signs and symptoms sometimes, correct? Are there any other signs and symptoms you would say about when we feel this disconnection within ourselves and also with our mothers?

[0:08:40.9] BW: Sure. Yeah. There's a lot of different manifestations, because I like to think of the mother wound, it really has a spectrum. On one end of the spectrum is healthy relationships between mothers and daughters. The other side of the spectrum is more abusive traumatic relationships. All of us fall somewhere on the spectrum.

The way the mother wound manifest inside of us can have a lot of variety. Some of the most common ones are things like comparing ourselves to others, not feeling good enough, feeling like there's something wrong with you. What's another one? Over functioning, emotional

caretaking other people, self-sabotage, also addictions and body issues, eating issues as well can all be traced back to the mother wound.

There's a lot of different ways that can show up. The way I like to think about it is that every woman's mother wound is different in a sense that the way it manifests is different. But also, as a woman heals her mother wound, with each layer there is gifts that show up in a woman's life. It's like with each layer, you heal. You also get a commensurate level of empowerment and access to your full self.

It's not the kind of thing that we can heal in one go. Sometimes I have women ask me, "Can I just cry for one year and get it all out and not have to think about it again?" Well, I would love that to be the case. It's an organic process. It's not this artificial robotic thing, we can push a button. That's when my frustration with the coaching industry is that there is a lot of this talk like instant results and this is so much bigger than that. This is so much more holy. I mean, that's the word that comes to me when I think about how profound it is to work on this issue, how deep it is.

I think we're living at a time in our history where – I mean, we can look around us and see that the patriarchy is falling. We've got dysfunctional systems everywhere. The mother wound is part of that. I think it's really inspiring and exciting that so many women on the world right now are ready to look at this issue, which a lot of our mothers and grandmothers weren't conscious of, or were terrified to look at.

I think it's exciting that we're looking at it collectively. Women are really supporting each other as well in doing this deeper work. It's really tracing back to what the real cause is of a lot of the issues that we deal with. That's one of my goals as a writer and a speaker is to – and a coach, is to really help people see that a lot of the problems that we experience on the outer level personally and culturally really stem from these very deep inner wound, the mother wound being I think the biggest one.

When we can commit to a process of deep inner work over the long-term, let go of the need to be done, the need to be healed, but rather see it as an adventure in a deep holy process, then I think we can really transform things in a larger scale.

[0:12:13.4] AS: Yeah. I love that you said that, because our work is very parallel and that with food and body image issues, at the core of it is helping my clients feel more safe emotionally and at home in their bodies. They find it – I love that you use the word holy, because what we're really doing is reclaiming parts of themselves that they never really let themselves look at because of that sense it was inferior, or that it wasn't good enough and that you had to be done. I loved how you say like there is an endpoint.

I find that once they start to get the relief when you really get to root-cause resolution, they really fall in love with their own story in a way that they hadn't before. It really becomes epic, because they're like, "This is freeing and I see the benefits of going deep, rather than just sticking on the surface." You have to have, I think to your point a really trusted guide that knows what to look for and to tell you it's okay to struggle, because so much of the coaching industry – is, "Oh, my God. Let's think positive." Like, "What do you want? How do you want to feel?" No one says, "Uh, I want to feel uncomfortable on change."

I think to that point and I'm glad you brought that up is that why this mother wound is so hard to identify and why our mothers have it, even men have it. Everybody has it is because the systems itself. I mean, I look at healthcare and I can see the mother wound in healthcare and how women when they're – whether it's considered disability when they're growing another human being and how we treat women when they're in labor, or how women are dismissed when they say that they're in pain in the medical system. The mother wound is in all of our systems, because we're not addressing it.

[0:13:52.3] BW: Exactly. Exactly. I think all the crisis that are surrounding us now are pointing us inward to that cause, as you were saying. Our outer unsafety, if you want to put it like with – what's happening with the planet, it's causing us to have to create an inner safety.

Yeah, it's all about inner safety. Many of us as kids, growing up in dysfunctional families to some degree and whatever degree, there was some – usually some places where we couldn't be our full selves. All of us got the message in some form that it's not okay to be who you are in some way. A lot of us created these compensating patterns to survive emotionally in our families.

The thing is, these very patterns actually keep us safe. They are like a life raft that keep us safe in the interim until we can become adults and see that we need to revise and rework our safety system, so to speak. I see women at a lot of points in their lives where those old compensating patterns for safety aren't working anymore. They're now actually instead of a safety raft, they become like a barrier to where they want to go.

At that point, it's time to dismantle. Dismantle all those false structures in us that actually support a false self. They don't support the real, whole, inherently, loveable and precious self that's inside of us. A lot of the work that I do and my process is about inner mothering and how to teach women how to mother themselves, it's really all about self-love at the end of the day. It's about how do we give ourselves the love that we didn't receive? How do we give ourselves the freedom that we never received?

It's painful in the sense that we have to grieve what happened that was painful. The cool thing is that as we grieve with each layer that we grieve, we get more and more freedom. Our heart expands to hold a compassion for not just ourselves, but for all life and for all people. I think that's the awakening that really needs to happen for all of us that we all belong, that we're all interconnected. We can't feel that unless we first have the courage to feel the pain of what we went through as little kids.

[0:16:28.5] AS: Yeah. I think this is an important point and that you talked about the mother being on a continuum, because I know a lot of my clients they would say they have relatively good relationships with their mother. You wouldn't consider it abusive, or neglectful. However, there also was intentionally or unintentionally, their mom might have sent them to Weight Watchers. Or they saw their mother dieting, because I think one of the ways that this lack of inner safety comes up is deflecting to the body.

My real life will begin – I'll feel more confident once I lose 20 or 30 pounds, which is really saying, "I'll feel safe to be me in 20 or 30 pounds." I think a lot of people this can be like, "Oh, but I have a –" I know I have a great relationship with my mother and it was actually my dad in my household that struggled with his weight. I know, because he grew up in a very poor area, lack of unsafe – I'm getting off on a tangent, but I can still see where maybe for me the mother

wound didn't come out in terms of my body image or whatever. Also I see how my mom was always depleting herself.

I mean, I don't know if she would say that, but went off a tangent. Back to the body stuff. But I think a lot of mothers unintentionally pass it on, especially around body image, even if you had a good relationship there was that sticking point sometimes of feeling like, "I wasn't fully accepted," because my mom didn't fully accept herself and she was worried for us, right?

[0:17:58.1] BW: Absolutely. The ways our mothers felt about their own bodies has such a profound impact on how we see our bodies and see ourselves in the world, because if you think about it our body is just an expression of ourselves, our power, our beauty, our worthiness.

I remember too, I used to watch my mother struggle with weight and not loving her body. I mean, I went through so many layers of body stuff on my journey. I am still healing a lot and it's really exciting, because I feel like I'm in a place of deep love and acceptance that I never would've imagined years ago.

I remember dieting when I was getting married. I was I like, "Okay, I want to get to the lowest weight I can." I remember, I got to my ideal weight or whatever and I was way too thin. I was like, "All my problems are still here. This actually didn't solve anything." It was so cool though to go through that, because I was like, "I get it. This is not it. This is not the answer in any way. This is a total distraction from the real issues."

I remember when I was a little girl, I think I was around 10 years old, I would say a novena to St. Theresa, "I would not – never get fat." I remember praying and saying I pray to never get fat. Because I saw my mother struggle and I saw how society treats fat women. I was like, "I can't be that. It's so unsafe." 10 years old.

It's something that all little girls will feel, because it comes to us from so many levels, right? At school, on TV –

[0:19:45.4] AS: Other girls.

[0:19:47.2] BW: Other girls. Oh, my gosh.

[0:19:48.5] AS: Really in us.

[0:19:49.7] BW: Really cruel.

[0:19:51.6] AS: Yeah. I have to laugh about your novena, because – for people who aren't Catholic, or had Catholic influences growing up, a novena is where you would give up something for nine days, correct? It goes nine days to a certain saint. I think it's nine days. The idea is that you would get what you want this very sacrifice-reward model. That has definitely has the mother wound in it.

I used to do that with like – Yeah, I was going to say, but I remember I would try to double-duty mine, like giving up sweets for nine days in hopes of losing weight and getting the reward, but I never could do it. I remember my mom grew up Catholic so I'd be like, "Mom, can I – I said I was going to never give up sugar – I was going to give up candy, but does this **[0:20:29.7]** all our account?" She's like, "You can have it." I was like, "You're most loosey-goosey Catholic ever." Because my mom, she was into nutrition, but from a health standpoint, which has its own challenges. I just have to laugh about your novenas. It me think about how – as like weight loss coded tools.

[0:20:49.0] BW: Oh, my gosh. Wow.

[0:20:51.2] AS: One thing I want to say before we move forward is you're really big on, this is not about blaming our mothers. I think we need to get that out of the way upfront. Can you talk a little bit about that?

[0:21:03.0] BW: Yeah. Thank you for asking that question. Yeah, and this is really, really important for everybody to understand, because I find that the women who suffer – a lot of us are suffering with the mother wound alone, because they're thinking, "If I look at my relationship with my mother, I would be automatically blaming her."

This is a false equivalence that's been around for a long time. Our society either DFIs mothers where they're like next to God, or they're blamed for everything. Our society has a really black or white wounded relationship with women and mothers in general. The really big healing opportunity is for us to see that looking at the relationships with our mother is not about blame at all. It's actually, if you think about it, it's like using our relationships with our mothers as the enormous source of information they are about who we became to be who we are, right?

Mothers aren't perfect. They're human beings with their own journeys, with their own mistakes, their own flaws, their own dreams. This is really about yes, your mother may have tried her best. That's one thing I hear a lot is people are like, "Well, I don't want to look at how my mother harmed me, because she just tried her best." I need to just look at that and not even look at any anger, or negative emotions with her.

The truth is that yes, your mother may have tried her best, and the second part is your feelings matter. We got to move outside of this wounded idea about mothers and daughters. We have to go beyond the blame game and go into really how this relationship serves as something that can limit us, but also something that can liberate us beyond anything else, because it has this amazing deep roots into how we are, who we are.

It's not about blame, but it's looking at how can I be the best woman I can be? How can I be the most actualized and fully realized woman and reach my full potential? That's how I see healing the mother wound is really this doorway into self-actualization for women. Because if we don't look at this, and this is the risk, this is a very big risk; if we don't look at the mother wound, we end up stalling our potential, living way below what's possible for us and staying small. Our world needs more empowered women right more than ever.

[0:23:49.0] AS: Truly empowered. Not still walking around thinking they're empowered, but wounded on the inside, right? Because you have all the external trappings. I think one thing that you said that's really important is when we look at these patterns and we think, "Oh, I don't want to blame my mom. I don't want to be angry," part of the reason there is so much charge around them is because they aren't healed.

The more that you heal, the more you can look at things as they are what they are, what I call the truce, very neutral. I think the feeling that they're so charged is often a sign that, "Oh, there is work to be done, because I still feel maybe it is my mom's fault, or there's still residue there." Which is a hint that hey, there is an opportunity for more freedom, more healing and more compassion. I like to your point, like taking up more space, being more empowered.

Another great thing that I thought you said and I just had this like, "Huh." I see this mirrored in so many of my clients' black and white mindset. You said we either say, "Oh, we celebrate women as being perfect and close to God. That they sacrifice for everyone else and that they've done everything for their families." Or we demonize them when they do anything that is out of the "role." That very much mirrors people on a day-to-day level, their black and white thinking like have to be totally over-accomplishing, over-performing, or I'm nothing. I think for people listening, that's a huge sign that potentially these patterns operating. If you feel like you don't have – I call it room for error, or imperfection that that imprint is there sometimes.

[0:25:24.0] BW: Yes. I totally agree with you. Something I like to say is, because I've gone through this myself and I've seen other – a lot of my clients as well. There is this feeling like, when another layer comes up to be healed like another trigger and there's a tendency for us to say, "Oh, I'm not there yet. I still have so much more to go. What's wrong with me? Why aren't am I healed yet?"

That's a totally natural feeling to have given the culture that we live in. It's really important for us in order to truly reach our potential and have the lives that we deserve and to realize our worth, is to really develop a new kind of relationship with our triggers. Instead, celebrate. When you get a trigger, what it means. It doesn't mean you're bad, or unhealed, or defective. It really means that you're actually ready to graduate to a new level. There is a big thing that's ready to be healed, and another side of it is waiting for you a whole new round of possibilities.

That's how I look at it and it took me years, like 20 years of consistent therapy to be able to really live that. Life becomes so much more fun when we can look at it that way, rather than spend a lot of time in resistance and self-judgment when triggers comes up. Because the truth is as human beings that we are, we heal in cycles and we heal little bits at a time gradually. Just like the seasons that they change.

Spring doesn't come before summer, or summer doesn't come before spring. There is a real wisdom and organic timing to things. I think the more we can flow with that and embrace that and love that, like the more exhilarating life becomes.

[0:27:18.6] AS: Yeah, that reminds me I had a client that she's pretty far along on her path, in her healing path. But of course, things always come up and she had just taken a program that I offered in the fall, because she needed a tune-up and found herself slipping. I was like, "Oh, that means something new was up for – your psyche feels strong enough to address something new and deeper."

One of the things that came up in one of our sessions, what she was talking about – she's like, her and mom again had a great relationship. She's like, "But it's the holidays." She's like, "My mom always – was always doing from faster. Always doing something. She's very thin as a result." She's like, "I didn't want to do that, because I knew it wasn't healthy."

She's like, "But then when she says certain things to me about food, I still feel triggered. Why is that?" We started talking about – I said, "Do you more deeply feel like she's again that unconscious competition is there, and she's winning and you're losing because you feel like you're slipping, or you're not this thing with her?" She was like, "Oh, my God. That is totally it." It was so freeing. Rather than being like, "Oh, my God."

She was able to look at it in a completely different angle and realize that she was unconsciously competing with her mom, even though she would've never have thought that, because they're close, but it just made for a much better holiday season. I think that is a concrete example of what you're saying about, like liberation happens when we can see this stuff.

I don't know about you, but I find that often the beginning of healing is the hardest, because you've never been through the process of struggle before. Knowing that you're going to get through the other side with the liberation – like when you're first starting you're like, "Oh, my God. It's just everything is just going. This is tough." There is that gap between the relief, versus once you've done it again you're like, "At least, I know this is going to be hard, but I know there is going to be a payoff." Do you see that with your clients?

[0:29:02.2] BW: Yeah, totally. Absolutely. That's my hope for our culture is that the more people get the hang of it and embrace the journey as – the deep journey as a way of life, like transformation as a way of living, the more will people to like, have more rapid change that we made. Each of us, on our journey is important to the collective. It might seem unglamorous to work through some deep stuff, but that's the real work. That's the real change.

[0:29:38.4] AS: Yeah. When you do the deeper work, a lot of things – you think you have all the stuff to change, but a lot of other things just clear up on their own. I always tell my clients, I'm like, "Part of a success is what's no longer there." Keep paying attention to the fact like, "Oh, my God. I no longer obsess over what I'm going to eat. I no longer feel like I have to plan my meal." Remember this is often what isn't there any more, including what is there.

One of the things that you talk about and you had just mentioned earlier is that we have to transform the mother within us. Can you talk a little bit about that? Because all of us have – I always joke, like when we're eating, there's a crowd at the table in our head, right? There's all these different stories competing and characters. Can you talk a little bit about the inner mother and mothering the inner mother, or the inner child, or however you approach it? I think that's really interesting concept that we've internalized our mothers.

[0:30:32.3] BW: Yeah, absolutely. I mean, for most of us the mother – our mother's voice becomes our own inner voice. We begin to talk to ourselves as we develop in many similar ways that our mothers spoke to us. With time, we can recognize like, "Wow, that's not really how I feel." Or, "This voice in my head is actually harming me." It's replaying either my mother's beliefs, or the culture's beliefs or whatever.

That's an important point is to look at what your mother's beliefs were, how she spoke to you and are you talking to yourself in that way? That's really key. Then taking some distance and taking a step back and realizing, "Is this really supporting me? What do I really want to create and how do I need to feel about myself in order to do that?" There's a lot of different steps to it. Some of it is looking at what your mother didn't give you and what you really needed, which I call like it's the mother gap. Or what did you receive that you should never have received? What were you saddled with that never should've been your responsibility?

Really the point of entry here is looking at your own history and not because we're blaming your mothers, but because we want to understand what you didn't get, or what you did get that you shouldn't have gotten. The core of that, the reason for it so that you can treat yourself differently, so that you can transform that inner dialogue into one that's not critical, or undermining, but create a relationship with that little girl inside of you, who is like a living energy. The inner child is a living energy inside of us. That's usually trapped at a level where – frozen in some traumatic space where she was wounded.

It's like learning to re-parent ourselves, re-mother ourselves and give that little girl exactly what she needed. I teach a process around that where there is just like cultivating a loving, sincere presence with this little girl inside of me, because – there's a lot of different nuances to that and phases to that. Overall, we're creating inner safety. The reason for this is that often it's self-sabotage. If you're working towards a goal and you find yourself stopping, or thwarting your own progress, it's often because the little girl inside of you is freaking out, because she's like, "Alarm bells. This isn't safe. We're going to get hurt again, just like we did back then. Hello?"

The way to stop that self-sabotage is really to create that inner safety. To find out why you're stopping yourself, what were the beliefs, what happened number one, what were the beliefs that were formed at that time? What needs to be grieved? What needs to be felt? A lot of times, they're suppressed emotions around traumatic events that were never processed. Life causes us to repeat similar situations over and over so that we get a chance to rework it into a higher level.

That's really the cool thing. Every time there's a trigger that it's replication of the past, we get a chance to find out what happened for our inner child at that time, what did she need, what emotional process needs to happen. Then that opens up a space for a new choice; a new choice to be made, a new empowered action step. It's about helping her feel safe, number one. Then also differentiating like, this feels like the past, but it's not the past. We're in the present. There is new choices for us here.

Helping that little girl inside of you realize wow, I'm actually not stuck in the past. There is a whole new safety level here. The way that happens is through relationship. We got harmed in a

relationship and we heal in relationship. Part of that is creating inner relationship within yourself and then also getting outer support that can help support that connection, that bond. What we're doing is really creating an inner bond that transforms the original bond we had with our mothers to whatever level that it was subpar and not optimal. Then we patch that up. We create a new kind of bond that's truly healthy and truly supportive within you.

What this means is that life begins to reorganize itself around you as you do this inner work. New possibilities open up with each new step, with each new trigger that you respond to differently. You get all these new energy; a new energy, expanded capacity for pleasure and to love yourself as you are. Like right now, to really feel that you are loveable, you are whole, you are inherently precious and irreplaceable in this world, and to live as that.

I think that's what a lot of us miss to some degree. Many of us, because of our cultural conditioning and whatever traumatic family wounds got passed down, we got wounded. In adulthood, we get all these opportunity to repair that. There's something magical that happens I think as we do this inner work. When we do it, we actually hold the different frequency I think that really inspires and elevates others.

[0:36:12.4] AS: Yeah. What you said was just so spot on. I think for listeners, one of the big challenges is that the way that often our mothers, or – I want to ask you actually – that reminds of a question I want to ask you. The way that our mothers talk to us, we so internalize that we don't know it's not how we're really feeling and thinking. Because again, because our whole culture is a wash and this mother wound, it's like a fish trying to see it's in water.

Really slowing down and what Bethany said is spot on. Slowing down and saying, "Is this how I would really think about this? Is this what I really need?" Start to create that separation and saying, "Oh, my God. This is what my mother would've said. Rather than this is what I'm thinking." Don't you find that's one of the biggest challenges is being able to recognize that it's not your own voice, or your own preferences?

[0:37:01.8] BW: Yes. I remember when I started my own journey when I was 19, I thought I had a great relationship with my mother. I knew I was in pain, that's all I knew. I didn't realize – it took me a lot of years to figure it out that actually it came from my history and what I grew up

with, which was very well-meaning and well-intentioned and all of that. There was like wounding that happened and I thought, “I have a great relationship with my mother.”

Come to uncover it, it was like, “Nope. That wasn’t great.” I didn’t know anything. I didn’t know how to – I don’t have anything to compare it to. Yeah, learning to differentiate oneself from what you received from your mother. The legacy of your lineage. I think in our culture, we don’t have places and spaces where we get to do this kind of inventory and introspection. We just replay it. We grow up and we just run with it, run with the program until we get mired in some painful situation and we’re like, “What’s going on with me?” Then we start to look within. The suffering, as painful and challenging as it is, it’s helpful and that it helps us to look within and get the answers that we need to transform.

[0:38:19.7] AS: Yeah. I find a lot of times people say, people don’t want to do the work. I found the opposite. I found if you have a structured process for them and you can guide them to results, I find people will do it. Maybe it’s just my clients, but I don’t think that people – I think people want really from pain, and I think people know deep down that they’re stronger than they recognize in that moment.

[0:38:40.8] BW: Yes. We need more of us to model the deep work. A lot of us living now, I think we get it. We realize, because we’re living through that, the status quo ain’t working and it’s not going to work. In our grandmothers and our great grandmothers and our great, great grandmothers, they inner work with what the hell is that?

[0:39:03.4] AS: They probably didn’t even think women had it in our life. It was all about serving the men.

[0:39:08.2] BW: It was all about serving the men. Safety was men. Safety was white men especially. There is all kinds of things for us to unpack there, generations-worth of work to do. I just want to honor your clients and your listeners that our doing this deep work, because it’s important and it’s shifting things.

[0:39:31.1] AS: Yeah. Yeah. There is so many things I want to ask you, but I want to wrap-up that last part with you. You also talk about – I want people to remember that you’re talking about

when you're doing this process, or having your compass of how you would mother yourself, it's not again to be the perfect mother. It's the good-enough mother, correct? Is that –

[0:39:49.5] BW: Exactly. I want to say something about that. I don't think kids need perfect mothers. That's part of our cultural legacy of women depression, is that women feeling like they have to be perfect in every single way. The way I see it, it is. It's about just being good enough in a sense that you're human. Children don't need a robot to be a mom. They want the real mom. The real mom makes mistakes.

The difference between the harmful mother and a mother who's good enough is that she keeps going. She gets support. She is working on herself. She admits she makes mistakes and she keeps going. I think for a lot of us, what happened when we were younger for whatever reason, especially those of us in a more severe end of the spectrum is there was this sense that they got left behind, or there was no effort. There was a stopping of trying, whether it was addiction, abuse, other things in the family that cause things to break down and for their needs to not get met as kids.

Turning it into the inner mother thing, when we make mistakes as inner mothers, we forget about our inner child, or we just lapse and just – That's actually part of the healing, because when we can go back and say, "I'm with you. I'm still with you. I made a mistake. I screwed up, but I love you. I'm going to keep trying. I'm never going to stop trying and working at loving you the way you deserve. Because you deserve that and you mean that to me."

That's what we need to hear. I think that's what kids need to hear is not see someone be perfect and then use that as a way to flagellate themselves, because they don't live up to that. But more like, yeah we're going to fall down. We're going to make mistakes and you're still loveable. I still love myself even when I screw up.

I think that's the attitude to bring to it is like, "Yup, I'm going to make mistakes and I love myself." Same to the child. I'm not always going to be there for you exactly when you need me to, but I promise I will as soon as I can and I'm always going to love you even when I mess up. Does that make sense?

[0:42:00.3] AS: Oh, my God. No, I love it. Again, our processes aren't the same, but they're probably complementaries. I call it research. You're not messing up when you binge, or you overeat. Let's look at what happened there. Then let's not restrain. Let's not go back on a diet. That's again, punishing yourself in a way.

I build "imperfection" into my work, because I'm like, "That's where you learn the most." You don't learn things as well when everything is going your way, because you just don't know what you don't know, right? No, I love that. I think both of our processes are very meta. The design is designed to heal not just what people are doing, but that forgiveness and that room for error and messing up.

[0:42:44.0] BW: I just want to say, yeah. I think what we're doing in a sense and what the healing is from this kind of process is that we're learning – like as kids, some of the pain that we experienced was around something, not being loved, because something didn't go right, love being withheld, or there being punishment when you made a mistake of some kind. We actually need to make mistakes in order to learn that we're loveable and that we're safe.

[0:43:16.3] AS: Yeah. I had one client. When she joined my Truce with Food Program she's like, "I thought this was going to be about being perfect. Now I've learned that this is about being imperfect." I'm like, "Cat's out of the bag."

Yeah, so one question I have for you; so my Truce with Food process mirrors the heroine's journey, which it's an archetypal story. One of the last spots on the heroine's journey is healing the mother wound before you integrate. However, one of the things that I was curious about and I'm just curious of your opinion, is I started to realize that a lot of my clients – actually some of their issues came from their fathers, or from that dynamic of the pressure wanting male attention, all that stuff.

One of the things that I realized too and it's interesting, this season episode 5, we had Angela Saina on, who was science writer and she wrote the book *Inferior: How Science Got Women Wrong*. She talked a lot about this social idea that women are better mothers and then actually men and women can parent equally. It's not something unique to mothers.

I'm wondering for you, do you sometimes think it's the parental wound and that we're calling it the mother wound, because of unrealistic expectations on how we been culturally conditioned to think what a mother should be, when often it's a dynamic of both parents or sometimes it's the absence of a father that makes the mom have to do double duty. I'm curious your thoughts around that and the mother – related to the mother wound.

[0:44:53.4] BW: Yeah. I don't think that it's the parent wound. For me, I think that the mother relationship is very significant in itself. I think it's primary, because a couple of reasons. One is because we were born from a woman and she's our first relationship and we were merged with her. Developmentally, we are fused with her – a portion of our existence in the beginning.

There is special nuances and particular issues that come out that, especially for women because we – number one, we have a gender identification with her. Number two, because we live in a culture that devalues her and thus we devalue ourselves. That's a quick and dirty thing, how I see the mother wound is significant.

The father wound is a wound as well. I chose to focus on the mother wound, because I'm a woman myself and because of the very deep journey I've been on and the wisdom I want to share about that. The father wound is a thing and it's different. It has different implications and nuances in terms of how it impacts us, how we see men in the world, how men see themselves. All of these things have to be unpacked and the subtleties have to be reckoned with.

I see them as linked, like for sure. We're born, there is a configuration there between who gave birth to us and our father, who our father was and what that all fits together. I like to look at the mother wound specifically for women. What I find that is some of the women that come to me are like, "Oh, I spent so much time on my father," and I always through my father was my primary issue. Then, "Oh, my God. It's really mother."

I think people can come from different angles based on what their particular situation is, but ultimately we have to deal with both. There is lot of wisdom to be gained and a lot of information for us, from both the mother side and the father side. Yeah, they're both significant. That's my own personal opinion on it.

[0:47:05.0] AS: No. I love that. Again, my work isn't healing the mother wound per se. It's about internal safety, but it isn't necessarily the mother wound. I really appreciate that distinction, because it helped me learn too. You're right. I mean, we are fused with our mothers for nine months, or 10 months, whatever, give or take some change. That's really helpful. I really believe in archetypes and metaphor and there is definitely differences.

I know we have to wrap-up here. One thing that you said that I really wanted to talk about and you talked about white men in particular. You say to use to be in the form of white men. You wrote this recent piece about what's going on with men and this anger and rage towards women. You talked about, which I think is a really important piece and I will include the link to Bethany's most recent article about what's happening with me too and the rage towards women, which has definitely been up since the 2016 election here in the states about what's really going on. It's a brilliant article. It will be on the blogpost alishapiro.com podcast link.

One of the important points – I was hoping and I know we only have a couple minutes, but you can talk about the value of anger within ourselves. Then also us as white women how we have to be really careful that we are not passing on white supremacy to women of color. Because I think that's a big issue. I know these are big topics to talk about in five minutes, and the article does a great job. I will link to it.

I was wondering if you could just speak to – I know a lot of my clients feel a lot of anger. They are definitely on the side that is seeing the misogyny that the election did not go the way that they had hoped. I think anger is very healthy. It's an expression of an unmet need. I was hoping that you could expand upon that a little bit.

[0:48:51.7] BW: I'd be happy to. Yes. Anger is our friend and we need to get with anger. Anger is I'd say crucial, crucial, crucial, crucial as a woman healing her mother wound, or stepping into her full actualization. I'm trying to think of which way to go with this in the most –

[0:49:11.3] AS: I know. I just asked you such a big question and the article is brilliant. I want everyone really to read it.

[0:49:16.2] BW: Yeah. Well, I'll say this, because this has been on my mind lately and maybe it will resonate with you guys. What I've been noticing in myself and in my clients it's like whenever a woman contacts her healthy outrage about what happened to her as a child, that is when things really change. Why? Because yes, as you said Ali, it's about a boundary being violated, so it's the body's natural response when it's been violated in some way. It's healthy and we want to respect that.

A lot of us had to suppress it as kids, because we've lived in a culture that says, "Anger is bad." The only expression of anger is bad. There is no healthy – we had no healthy models. For many, many reasons, all of us have pushed it down. But anger is really I say aligned into our authenticity. It's aligned into our power, into our energy, into our creativity, into our full expression. We can't fully express ourselves if we continue to demonize anger.

Anger really constructed – constructive way being processed is a milestone that we have to reach. We all get there at different times. It's not like, don't say your – you're not bad if you haven't contacted your anger. It's just a natural organic process where I've just seen it time and time again, where once a woman gets there – I think this is why. Like for my own journey, every time I go to a new layer of healing, I get a new layer of anger.

Why? Because the more you increase your sense of self-worth, guess what? You look back and you look at your childhood differently. You're able to see, "Oh, my God. That precious child went through that." Not as a blame thing, but it's just feeling the magnitude of the way that you suffered. You suffered a lot and you feel healthy outrage on behalf of the child that you were. That becomes fuel that allows you to have really strong boundaries against the things in your present life that deplete you.

It's like a real dialectical process of you feel worthy in a new way, then you look back at your childhood in a new way. That in turn gives you new energy to show up differently and more powerfully in your daily life. Whether that's no longer tolerating certain behaviors that you've tolerated over and over, like saying no and saying yes to yourself in new ways.

I think anger is an essential part of the journey, and so learning to befriend it, to embrace it, to give it a healthy place to be processed really let yourself process it, like in a place that's healthy and safe is the most important thing. Does that make sense though, Ali what I was just saying?

[0:52:07.2] AS: Yeah. I mean, I can give you a client example and a personal example. A lot of my clients, whether they've been put on the birth control pill, or an anti-depressant or whatever, and as they get healthy and start to realize that they should've never been put on that feel like, "I am so angry that I was just given this as my only option."

Nicole Jardim who was on our episode this season called was often people put on the birth control pill without informed consent, and they get so angry. I'm like, "You should be angry." I was like, it was maybe not all-out physical abuse, but it was – maybe no one was conscious of it or trying to do it. People were doing the best they can, but because our systems are so wounded, it's health that you're realizing that you have choices now and stuff.

I think about this last year after the election, I was angry all year. I mean, I'm still fired up, but it's more channeled. I now see places where people have [inaudible 0:52:59.2] to me before. I see places where people have told me not to get upset, that I'm overreacting, or when I speak up against racism or everything it's like, "Oh, well. What can we do?" It's like, no we have power and I feel so much more powerful after learning to deal with anger last year.

Of course, now it's more pointed and effective. I don't think I ever thought of myself, "I'm not an angry person." Last year, I just came home enraged so many days because of the injustice. It was like, "Oh, my God. You're someone who believes in justice." You have to fight for that. It's not a given. I think those are concrete examples of what you're talking about.

[0:53:38.0] BW: Yeah. I think that we're not learning to hold the two things; compassion and fierceness. They both have to be felt. I think in the past, our mothers and grandmothers would be like compassion for the perpetrator like, "Poor thing. He didn't mean it, or she didn't mean it." The truth is it doesn't matter if you mean it or not, it has to be stopped. We're living in a time when we have to stand up against injustice.

In terms of racism, a lot of us white women have – we’re racists in ways that we don’t realize it. It’s very unconscious. We think we’re well-intentioned, that we’re color blind, but there is harm that we’re doing that we don’t see. There’s a lot of inner work to do around that, around unpacking our racism that we might not even see.

It’s a two-part process in many ways. It’s seeing what we’re doing that’s harmful. I’ve been on a journey of this for a while now and it’s really eye-opening. It’s super eye-opening and hard to take in, how we might be unconsciously harming women of color.

The second thing in a very broad stroke sense is to learn how to step back and amplify women of color. As white women, we’ve been privileged in ways that we always had more of a voice than people of color. We’ve been centering ourselves. We have these ways of living in a world that we have to put into a new context and see actually these are harming – these have been harmful.

Instead, take a step back and give the center to women of color. This so triggering for so many people, because as white women we’ve been oppressed too, right? That’s the first thing that we think is like, “I’ve been oppressed. I’m not oppressing someone else.” The truth is, we have to deal with our privilege. We’ve had a lot of privilege as white women, to not have to deal with a lot of things that so many people of color deal with on a daily basis.

It also comes down to like, we have to lose something here. We have to be willing to lose something. I remember I did – I sent out a newsletter promoting Catrice Jackson who is my mentor in anti-racism work. I got 500 people unsubscribe from my newsletter, because I talked about white women need to lift up black women and we need to deal with our stuff and with our racism.

People just were like – some people just were like, “I can’t do that.” I was amazed, but I was also glad. I was like, “If you’re not in this, then I don’t want to –” I really want women to get onboard with this. If you’re not ready, that’s totally okay. But it’s time. We can’t waste any more time with our privilege.

[0:56:18.7] AS: I love that you said that, because first of all waking up to my own privilege last year as part of my anger, because I was first angry at the election results and then I was angry that I didn't see this coming. I was like, "Oh, my God. You've been in your privileged world." I have friends who are women of color. I thought we were further along and then I was mad at myself.

Then as I've been reading about racism and all the stuff, I'm so horrified at how I've been harming people without meaning to. That anger though, again, I'm like, "This is healthy. You have to learn this, because you would never want to consciously hurt someone." I think that's another example of how anger can help recreate new boundaries that are much healthier.

I agree. It's I don't want to say horrifying, but it's a very humbling, messy process. To your point, I think we need to redefine compassion. I know you're saying holding compassion and fierceness, but I think we need to think of compassion not as like, "Oh, they can't do better." No, men can do better. White women can do better. I know you can. That's my part of my compassion for you is knowing you can do better. I appreciate you sharing that.

I have to laugh every time that I post – I donate a portion of my proceeds into my groups, the Black Lives Matter and Southern Poverty Law Center. Anytime I post about Black Lives Matter on social media – I mean, not so much of my newsletter list and it's not as direct as what you were saying, but on Martin Luther King day I posted a quote about the white moderate being the bigger obstacle than the [inaudible 0:57:46.8].

Every time I post about Black Lives Matter or something like that, I lose so many – I'm like, "Maybe, they're just not unfollowing because it's just from a different post." But every time it happens, and I'm like, "Whatever." I shouldn't say it so flippantly. It's like, "Oh, this is really fascinating. This just proves my point that we have to be talking about this.

[0:58:09.0] BW: Exactly. We have to be talking about it. I think there is a grieving process that we as white women have to step into, which is really confronting and reckoning with like you were saying, the harm that we've been doing. It's really horrifying to look at that. It's really important that we feel that horror, because if we don't feel it, it's not real.

Our privilege has insulated us from the harm that we unknowingly do. If we can feel it, just like the mother wound, we can heal it. If we're willing to feel true empathy with women of color and people of color, then we have hope. I think we can learn from women of color, center them, listen to them, step back, let them have a center and keep doing our work around racism.

[0:58:57.5] AS: Yeah, I love that.

[0:58:57.8] BW: It's a life-long thing.

[0:58:59.8] AS: Yea. Oh, my God. I know. I know there's so much. I think part of the horror of dealing with it is you're like, "Oh, my God. I'm actively benefitting from this," even as I'm working to change it. It's like there is guild, there is all that stuff, so there is a lot there.

I just want to thank you for coming on Bethany. This was like a really wide-ranging but deep conversation, the favorite kind our listeners like. Where can people find more about your wonderful, wonderful work?

[0:59:26.1] BW: Yes. You can go to – actually it's motherwound.com. You can go to motherwound.com and there is free resources. It's Womb of Light too, so womboflight.com or motherwound.com. Either one, but there's a lot of free articles, there is e-books, there is interviews, there is a lot of fun, free stuff that you can check out and there is also an online course that I teach. I also do private coaching. You can see all of that at motherwound.com or womboflight.com as well.

[0:59:58.5] AS: You have a great free e-book on site that too when you sign up, correct? Because I downloaded it.

[1:00:03.5] BW: It's really great. Yeah, it's called Transforming the Inner Mother: Becoming the Mother that you always wanted to yourself. It has a cool overview of what inner mothering is about and also some really concrete practical ways that you can start doing that process.

[1:00:17.9] AS: Yeah. If you really dig this interview, that's a great place to start is get on Bethany's list and get that book. Thank you so much for joining us today.

[1:00:27.3] **BW:** Thank you, Ali. It's been a lot of fun. I really enjoyed our conversation. I felt like we could've just kept going.

[1:00:31.8] **AS:** I know. I know. We'll have to have you back.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[1:00:38.1] **AS:** Thank you, health rebels for tuning in today. Have a reaction, question, or want the transcript from today's episode? Find me at alishapiro.com. I'd love if you leave a review on Apple Podcast and tell your friends and family about Insatiable. It helps us grow our community and share a new way of approaching health and our bodies.

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

[END]