Confront Emotional Eating And Heal Your Hunger Transcript

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Introduction to Emotional Eating

Hi, ladies. Welcome back to Mastering Your Menopause Transition Summit 2.0, I'm still your host, Dr. Sharon Stills, and it's good to be with you. We're going to have a real meaningful conversation today as some of these talks are fun and light and some are more science.

And this one is going to be a heart centered, emotional conversation that's really, really important. And it was like crucial to me. I was like, I have to get my guests to I'm going to introduce in a moment and have this conversation because it's something that I have seen in my over 21 years of practice.

Now that it comes up all the time and we're all curious about our diet, we all at this point know our diet is important. What you eat. I always like to add what you absorb on top of that is our fuel and feeds ourselves.

But there's a whole other side to what we eat, which comes from our emotions and how we're eating and why we're eating and where we're eating and what we're eating.

And in the manner we're doing it. And are we on diets and is it coming from an addictive place and all of these things? And so I got for you an expert in the field, Tricia Nelson, who's here with us today.

She has her own powerful personal story from over 30 years ago. She lost 50 pounds. She understands emotional hunger and eating addictions. She's written a book.

She she this is like her jam. This is her thing. And that's why I wanted to share it with you, because I feel like all of us on some level have either had had maybe something's coming down the road.

But eating is such a emotional topic and it's not talked about enough. And that's why I wanted to talk about it here at the summit, even in menopause, it's never too late to turn things around, too.

It's such a good time, you know. I'm all obsessed about my pause and pausing. And so it's a great time to pause and look at what we're doing. And so Tricia, as a TEDx speaker, she's been on all the media like you're in for a treat.

So welcome, Tricia. Thank you so much for being here. Thank you for having me. It's so good to be here, Sharon. Yes, I am very, very excited. And you are pink. So we're in the red hues.

I love. It. So, I mean, I just want to jump in. And how did how did Healing Your Hunger I mean, I know you got into this because of your own personal journey.

Tricia Nelsonu2019s Personal Recovery Story

And I think so many listening can really relate when it's not just like all the data says or the studies show, but it's like you, another woman, just like everyone sitting at home and watching, has a personal story.

So I'd love for you to share it with us. Thank you for having me. Yeah, mine's very personal. I, i it. Anybody see my TEDx talk? I start with an episode of me eating out of the garbage and, like, throwing my binge foods out and then going back later and digging them.

Digging those cookies that I know that are there back out of the garbage. And so, you know, which of course, doing that brought me so much shame. I did that on several occasions.

It gave me so much shame. I thought I was the only person in the world who had ever done such a despicable

thing. Turns out, you know, I get like hundreds of thousands of comments about, oh, my God, I've done that too.

So but you don't know when you live with it, you do it in secret, you don't tell anybody about it, and then you think you're the only one and then you beat yourself up.

So that was my life for a long time. And I did become, you know, by age21, 50 pounds overweight. And I was a binge eater. I was a secret, secret eater not all the time.

I mean, I could do plenty of eating in front of people, but the binges right at my age ruined my cookies. Like, because you have to have salty with the sweet, you know?

So like, like that whole binge ritual in front of the TV passing out on the couch. I did that for a long time. And, and I also did a lot of the conventional things you do when you gain weight and you feel out of control.

So I went and got a bunch of books. I read all these self-help books. I went to self-help groups. I, you know, pills and potions. You try that. And so exercise program.

So I did a lot of things to try to lose weight and keep it off. And, you know, you can't lose weight on a diet, obviously. But this, you know, sustainable weight loss is a whole nother ball of wax.

And that I couldn't you know, I always want to back up the scale and I was a yo yo or so I had like, you know, up 30 pounds, down 20 pounds, up 10 pounds.

I had like four or five different sizes of pants in my closet. Like what? I don't know where I am right now and my sizes. So so it's a journey like it's a real roller coaster ride. And, and basically I got to the point where I just couldn't diet anymore.

I just, I, you know, I, I, I looked at my track record and I'm like, you know, I've been doing this for a good while now. Nothing's really changing except I'm starving myself on a regular basis, you know, feeling deprived. And I just thought, there's got to be a better way.

Like this cannot be the way. And I was very blessed to meet somebody who showed me a different way, like how to get off the diet track and onto a path of healing, emotional eating.

And I didn't know that was the crux of my problem. And, you know, looking back, of course, I could have written a nutrition book, for God's sakes, like I.

I knew what to eat, what not to eat, but I couldn't follow through on what I knew. That was the kicker. It's like I'm a smart girl. Like, why am I, you know, why am I still eating the pizza when I should be eating the salad?

You know? So. So, anyway, I was blessed to go on a journey of healing. And then based on the things that I did, I started showing other people how to do it.

And it turned into what is now known as Heal Your Hunger. And it's a beautiful path of addressing and healing, emotional eating and also self-care, like it's a path of self-care.

So this is all based again, I mean, I wrote my book about six years ago, my, my podcast came out around that time and then more recently that TED Talk.

But I'm just all about letting people know they don't have to be on the dieting roller coaster ride in order to lose weight and keep it off. Like there is another path.

And it's, as you were saying that I was thinking so often we think about when we go on these roller coaster diets and we go up £30 and down, it really can mess with our metabolism and can really get in the way.

And so it's good to see you sitting there and go, you know, but there is hope like right away. I did have hope plastered across your forehead. And so and we don't talk about that and it's such a good point.

So we know, yes, eat this, eat that. But then we find ourselves with our hand. You know, elbow deep in the bag of chips or the bag of cookies or whatever it is.

And so something takes over and it's not enough to just know this is you know, if otherwise, everyone would do it. And so and there's no you brought up the word shame.

And so if you're listening and this is not about shame, this is about opening up the conversation. This is about saying there's another way and you're not alone.

Understanding the Emotional Eating Spectrum

Because that is so true. I think we all and then I could relate to I've had some stories like that. So I think it's so much more common and just bringing it out in the open is like, Oh, that's just a giant exhale and healing.

Like, Oh, wow, I'm not alone. This is this is more common than I realized. Totally. Absolutely. And I think that I think you're so right. I think we all have we have it in us too, emotionally.

You know, I think we're we're hardwired to have an emotional connection with food, starting with breastfeeding. Right. And and so it's not a bad thing.

It keeps us interested in eating for sure, which that way we subsist as a species. But, you know, people are a different places on that emotional eating spectrum.

And I actually have a quiz that helps people determine where they are on the spectrum, because I think in general it's emotional eating and specific, and when it gets worse, it becomes an addiction.

So food addiction. And so where somebody is on that spectrum can help, you know, knowing that can help to know at what like where, what next steps are.

So, you know, I think I think you're so right on that it's we all relate like it's no like it's it's like we can all laugh about our, you know, adventures, right?

But it does turn really dark for those who are on the higher end of the spectrum of emotional eating, where they have symptoms like, you know, social isolation and like they don't want to go out with friends and want to be seen in their video on Zoom.

You know, they don't want to go to the reunion. They cancel plans. It affects our job performance. You know, when we're in a sugar coma, it's hard to show up and be clear and feel good.

It affects our self-confidence and that self-confidence, boy, when you don't feel self-confident about how you look and how you feel in your body, that affects everything and affects your relationships, your sex life, you know, your show up at work, you know how higher hold you'll hold your head when you go for the next promotion.

I mean, there's so many areas of life that are affected that we don't think about. We're like, Oh, I can't go to the beach in a bikini for sure. But it's so much more than that.

It's, it's, it's all encompassing when you're not feeling good about yourself and your choices. So let's, let's take that spectrum. So on the lower end of the spectrum, what are some of the things you see?

What causes emotional eating? Is it sadness, anger? Do you see certain patterns or is it all over the place? No. I mean, I've done a lot of work to try to make it more understandable and specific.

And so I love that you just asked. And so let me talk about that spectrum for a second and what qualifies where somebody ends up on that spectrum. So, for instance, if somebody goes on a cruise and they, you know, they prepaid, they're like, well, I got all this, you know, I got to get my money's worth.

So they drink all the wine, they eat all the cheese and the desserts, and they come home and they're like 5 pounds heavieror like my jeans, again, get them on.

You know, we all know that feeling. So and they're like, okay, well, I'm cutting out sweets and I'm going to jog, you know, extra five miles a week for the next three weeks.

And boom, those 5 pounds are off. They're feeling better. And it's like, oh, it was a fun vacation. No biggie. That's someone with very little consequences from their overindulging, you know, and a good amount of control.

Right. They can course. Correct. Get those 5 pounds off there. Good. That's it. And so control and consequences is really to me what qualifies where we end up on that spectrum.

So somebody with a lot of consequences and very little control is somebody in the food addiction side of things. And my experience is that was me for for for for starters that was me you know binges that started out just one night.

But then it turned out to be the weekend, which I had trouble getting back on track the following week. So the following weekend I was doing the same thing.

And then my, you know, my exercise fell off because I just feel gross and it's like, I don't want to put spandex on, you know? And then the sex goes the way because you don't want to be touched because you've gained weight.

And it just snowballs into this, you know, thing, this thing that you can't pull back from you. You're not doing a good job, of course, correcting from.

And then it's got mounting consequences. And when you live there, you know, and you can get back on track. I mean, we all have new diet syndrome, you know, where you're like, I'm doing it, you know, and you do that for a while, but then when you fall off again, it goes you fall way off.

Like it's like a ski jump, you know, you fall way off. And then it could be months before you get back to feeling good again. So that's someone with mounting consequences because if you do that over several years, I mean, most of my clients are in the menopausal and post-menopausal.

I mean, I have clients in their seventies, you know, who have been doing that whole thing I just described for literally like six decades, you know.

The PEP Formula: Pain, Escape, Punishment

And so when you do that long enough, your body is like, you know, uncle, you know, this hurts a lot. The autoimmune issues, right? That the diabetes, the pre-diabetes, the heart issues.

I mean, it goes on and on and gut stuff. So, you know, mountain consequences and very little control to course correct. So those scenarios I just described and that's basically what qualifies where you end up on that spectrum.

So, you know, it's people can kind of again the quiz they can take on my it's on my website they can take that free quiz and find out immediately where they are on that spectrum.

You asked about emotion, so I kind of want to go there now, if that's okay. Yeah, yeah, it's a lot, but I have something that I talk about and I teach on called The Anatomy of the Emotional Eater.

And I use the word anatomy, obviously is a play on words, but my experience is, you know, most people think that

cravings just happen. You know, most people feel like the cravings just happen.

But my experience is they don't just happen. So so first, I'm going to talk to you about the pep formula and then I'm going to go to the anatomy of the Emotional Eater next.

The formula is a way of just identifying kind of an umbrella set of three emotions that drive emotional eating because it's yeah, we have a gazillion emotions.

So which emotions are they? Right. So I'm like, okay, let's just, let's just distill this into three primary emotions because I find that to be a lot more manageable.

So the pep formula is a way to start just identifying identity even is emotional because I know there's people listening who will probably be like, I'm not an emotional eater, I just like food.

Because I said that to, you know, it's easy to think it's like food is good, food is good. I still like food, you know? And so it's easy to think it's that's like skin deep, like that's as far as it goes.

So the pep formula will help you start to go, huh? Like, is this more than that? And so PEP is an acronym and the first and what it's an acronym about is what foods are doing for us, not what they're doing to us.

So we know what they do to us. We've had a lot of experience with that. But what I want people to do is start considering what it's doing for them. Okay, so the first P in PEP is painkiller.

So food is a great painkiller, right? Like I'm feeling some pain. Like I just lost a job. My kid just, you know, said something really mean to me or, you know, whatever.

I just got a really, really atrocious bill in the mail. So we feel emotional pain. Call it an uncomfortable feeling. We go to the refrigerator, we munch on something, and all of a sudden we don't feel quite as much pain.

That's emotional eating. Like it just kind of softens the edges of whatever we're going through. And so and we don't but you don't think about you think, oh, no, I just wanted some chocolate so you don't eat.

It's like the right hand doesn't know what the left hand's doing. So what I want people to do is start considering how is this serving me, this chocolate?

Like what? What was I feeling? And am I using the chocolate for an emotional reason? The E and part stands for escape and we use food as a form of escape.

Escape from what? Well, from really busy minds. And my experiences over eaters are over thinkers. Okay, like we are off the charts. What did he mean by that?

Why did she look at me that way? Why didn't I get an invite? You know? Am I working too much or am I not working enough? Or am I about to get fired? It goes on and on, you know.

And so that busy mind that's usually creating really scary scenarios, right? Like I'm I'm going to get fired. I suck. Everybody's better than me, right?

I'm never going to find another partner. Like, it's awful losing. It's thinking of worst case scenarios constantly. Who wouldn't want to escape a mind like that?

Right. So when we have all that reasoning, mind food settles it down, right? We get the serotonin effect, we kind of calm down. And so my experiences sitting in front of the TV with our favorite foods is a great escape.

You know, a good movie. We never run on TV without the food. So, Art, unless we're in there on our healing journey. But point is escape. Escaping a busy mind and the fear that comes from our thoughts is another way that

we use food the way the food is serving us.

So the first one is using food as a painkiller. The second is using food as an escape. And the third, which is a little bit more counterintuitive, is we use food as a punishment.

And it's counterintuitive because we think of food as a reward, like, oh, no, I'm going to reward myself. I've had a hard week. I'm going to go get my favorite dessert.

So it starts out as a reward. But for those of us who don't stop at just that one pastry rate and we're like, Oh no, I need some more and some more and some more.

And before you know it, you feel stuffed and sick and pissed at yourself. That's more like a punishment. Mm hmm. Yeah, for sure. And I feel like it. It also, it's like a distraction.

So then you could start focusing on how sick I feel or beating yourself up. And then you've. You've moved away from the original, like you were saying, the overthinking of am I going to get fired?

Or Why did she look at me or whatever is going on? So it just kind of so yep. So we use the food as a punishment, you know, because we aren't, we aren't just over thinkers, but we're also the over feelers and we do tend.

My experience is emotional eaters also feel guilty more easily than your average person, like we absorb like if there's any shame, you know, running around in the air, it sticks to us very empathic.

Yeah. So it's like, must be my fault. Some cheese mad. Must be. I must be wrong here. So. So then we beat ourselves up. So using food as a painkiller, an escape and a punishment.

Interrupting Cravings and Building Morning Support

And the emotion, the corresponding emotions are pain, fear and guilt. This is just a way, using that pet formula and that pet, like doing a little pet test when you're going to the refrigerator, it's just a way to sort of dip your toe into what's going on here.

What do you recommend when when you go to the refrigerator? And I know sometimes it's like you don't it's like you're so in the stress or trauma response.

You're just so out of your body that it's like it all happened so quick. You're just like open grabs stuff. Like, but is there, like, any tips to, like, break that psych goal or like you said, when you're at the fridge to kind of check in with yourself?

Yeah. So changing your state is really important. So we are kind of in that trance, right? And so breaking that state, that pattern, doing a pattern interrupt either by like walking outside like literally leave the house, you know, go for a walk around the block, can do amazing things like just just a walk around the block.

And so I recommend that I recommend, you know, calling a friend like a real it has to be a real pattern interrupt you don't just want to stand there looking the refrigerator and being like a gun battle with it, like you'll lose that.

So you have to do a real pattern interrupt. But beyond that, Sharon, it's really important that we give ourselves a fighting chance, if you will, talk about fighting, but a real chance by starting with the day differently than we normally do.

And so it's like we got it. Like we we have to go we have to backtrack a little bit to the beginning of the day, because so much of our eating is stress.

And so much of our our eating is nighttime eating. So my experience is like 75% of emotional eaters do the worst eating from like 4:00 on. And that's usually because we've piled up a lot of stress in our day.

And we're also at the end of the day, you're at home, you're not running around like a chicken with your head cut off and you're starting the emotions are starting to catch up to you, you know.

And so starting first thing in the morning with some kind of routine that can help you just be calm and still is really, really important. And I think that people don't do this, you know, often, but it's really, really, really important.

And so like meditation, prayer, spiritual readings, a walk in nature, yoga, breathing, something that get just like, like puts up like put some deposits in that bank account with common grounding exercises that practices.

You know, I meditate in the morning and I for 20 minutes, and I also read some spiritual literature. I need that time because I'm going to make withdrawals later in the day when I'm stressed and tired. MM.

Right, but if you don't put that money in the bank, you're in the red like you're about to. Get an allergy. It's chocolate coffee all the way. So that's really important is it doesn't we can't fight the problem at the when our hands on the refrigerator door it's a little late usually so and that's why obviously getting our house is good but we can start earlier in the day by lowering like doing some stress relieving things and also getting grounded.

And it is often caused by stress as well. Right. And so we need some ways to de-stress later in the day as well. So what can you do when you leave the house?

I mean, when you come home and enter the house, you know, can you go to your bedroom? Can you light a candle? Can you take some time to unwind? Because oftentimes we go straight to the kitchen and we munch as a way to unwind.

Right. That we're in that trance of just eating out of the bag. And it does we do kind of calm down. We start to freeze. I just kind of settle down. But it costs us, you know, it definitely costs us.

So are there ways that we can unwind, you know, and and de-stress that are healthy and don't cost, you know, our health, basically. So those are some things.

So I want to get over to the anatomy because I promised I was going to get back to the anatomy and most of it are so, so like what causes the stress? What causes the pain?

Right. What causes the the feelings of guilt? My experience is as emotional eaters, we have we have personality traits that definitely cause those things.

And the reason why that's good news is because it feels like we're victims of the compulsion to eat chocolate. Like it feels like we're just like we're just screwed, like we're just going to eat chocolate and there's nothing we can do about it.

And my experience is that's not really true because the compulsory chocolate oftentimes comes from stress that we created.

Personality Traits Behind Emotional Eating

Okay, so which means we can create it like we can stop creating it. And that's what I like, because we're not victims of cravings. My experience is 90% of cravings.

I know there's definitely an you know, there's definitely hormonal things that go on in our bodies that create cravings oftentimes. But my experience is putting that, you know, taking care of that is vital.

But beyond that, a lot of this is emotional cravings that come from stress that we created with these personality traits. So I'm going to give you three of the top traits because there's 24 of them.

And I think you'd be not so happy with me if I launched into the top trait is people pleasing and this is like I've never

I've rarely I would say rarely met an emotional eater that wasn't tied up in a people pleasing habit, like a really bad habit of people pleasing.

And part of this, I think, is because well, a lot of most leaders are women, not all. There's plenty of them. But as women, I think culturally it's sort of our way to try to please.

But on top of that is the emotional eater personality type, which is, you know, oftentimes we don't get a solid sense of self-worth, growing up. We have trauma, you know, we have dysfunction.

And we learned at a very early age to people, please, like if you have a raging alcoholic parent, you better be a people pleaser, right? Or you're going to get your butt kicked.

So so we learn this as a kid, even if you didn't have alcoholism or something violent happening, you know, if you didn't get a strong sense of self-worth growing up for one reason or another, you know, you're going to seek it from outside yourself.

You're going to be seeking validation. And it's a human thing to do anyway. But it sticks to us and we bring that into our adult life. And, you know, it might have been a coping skill that really worked for us as kids, you know, but as an adult, it backfires on us because when we people please too much, you know, it's not really about pleasing people.

It's about being validated by getting a sense of worth from outside of ourselves. When we do that, it usually involves overworking, overcommit and being overwhelmed and then being resentful because nobody's ever as pleased as we intend for them to be.

And then we're like, I'm like, I pull all nighter for this project, and I just I barely got a thank you will screw you. I'm going to go you know I'm going to reward myself and then we have the I deserve it binge so so that's an example of how people pleasing which seemingly has nothing to do with eating all of a sudden has everything to do with our eating habits because we're exhausted.

For one thing, when you're a people pleaser and it's a nonstop job, like it's a people, because people get on their on us, like, Oh, she'll do it. These people are, she'll do the project, give it to her.

Right? Like ask her she can't say no. Like we're suckers and people know it, you know? But then we're resentful and we're stressed, you know, our adrenals are stressed, we're exhausted, you know, and it just doesn't end well.

So that's an example, though, of something we can do something about, like start to have boundaries on our time. We can learn to say no. As hard as it is for people pleaser to say no, we can learn to say no.

We can get support in saying no and putting our self care first, you know, and this and when we must like the thing is like the diet level is too superficial.

Like it's not really an eating problem, it's a living problem. Mhm. Exactly. And I think this is for those of you listening that this is such an opportunity because I think sometimes in our human journey as women it's, you hear it differently with the ears that have been on the planet for 50 years or 55 years, more so than 30 years.

And sometimes I think those earlier years we were engaging and maybe some not so healthy, but it's like now we get that's why I love menopause so much.

I'm like, It's this time to just reclaim yourself and be wise and change around those things. And people pleasing is definitely one of them. And now there's like some space.

If you had kids there grown. And so it's this perfect time to like make you the one you're going to please if you're going to be a people, right? Please yourself via self people, please.

Yeah. And we learn to use our voice more. It's really great. Yeah. Yeah. So that, that's one of the traits I'll just give you quickly. The other two, one of them also is I talked about it already, but the racing mind, you know, having that racing mind is very typical for most leaders to be over thinkers.

And that's a lot. Again, why we eat sometimes to slow down our mind, get that serotonin hit from carbs. My experience is we that's why meditation is so powerful or yoga or breathing, because it does help calm our minds and prayer as well.

And we just need that because the over e the overthinking definitely leads to overeating because we react. We have this like scary thought or this painful thought and we react with food.

And when you when you do something like breathing exercises, if t yoga, you know, meditate, zation, what you're doing is learning to just be, you know, learning, putting a little space between your crazy and reaction time.

And that is and we need to train ourselves to be it doesn't come easily. And for anybody who thinks meditation means you sit down and your mind is quiet, it is not that.

So I just say, if your mind goes from 50,000 miles an hour to 10,000 miles an hour, that's a damn good meditation practice. So yeah. I love that because I'm a huge proponent.

I think mindfulness is some of the best medicine around and I teach it. I was fortunate enough to fall into it when I was just in medical school, so I kind of grew up as really understanding the benefit of mindfulness.

And I preach and teach mindful eating. And when you can when you can get into that state, I love that word. You use trance because it really is a trance.

And I know that because I have I have struggled with this in my past, too. So I understand that trance. It's like you don't even realize it till it's all done.

And you're like, What just happened? And there's an empty bag of chocolate in front of you or whatever it is. And so but when you can learn to meditate and be mindful and and it's really not just about on the cushion that's part of it, but it's being mindful in your day to day life where you can go to the fridge and you've had that morning deposit.

I love that analogy where you can say, wait a second, let me just take stock here. Right? I'm am I even hungry? And my thirsty and my lonely and my tired and like, what's going on?

Do I really even want this? Am I really even hungry? And when you can have that dialog with yourself, I think that is such a game changer. Absolutely.

Yeah. Observing your thoughts, you know, and realizing they're not all true. Yeah. The things we're the things we worry about for the over worry is I tend to find the things you worry about are usually things that never happen.

And then something like side smashes you and you're like, Oh, I wasn't even worried about that. And so why even bother worrying? Life is just going to occur the way it's gonna occur.

So I want to ask you about so a big thing and I get asked this all the time. It's like, Dr. Stills, what should I eat? And for me, obviously, yes, I'm an aquatic physician.

It's very important what you eat, but I'm always about we got to get underneath that first and why you're eating it and so on and so forth. And so what is your your stand, your take on on diets?

And there's you know, there's Kito, there's intermittent fasting, there's fasting there's and how do you know? I mean, to me, I think it's like having that self-awareness.

But I'm curious to see what you have to say. Like, how do you know? Because you can very easily be fasting or

dieting from your unhealthy behaviors rather than because it's because I mean, I think fasting can be a good thing.

But can you I you're shaking your head so I know you know what I'm alluding. So can you speak to that a little bit? I love that you gave me that. Well, you toss the balls to me that way.

So so my experience is people who are who are on the higher end of that spectrum. I talked about, you know, who are more in the addictive eating part of that spectrum.

Why Fasting and Diet Rules Can Backfire

They will try to do intermittent fasting mostly. Well, obviously, you know, what they hear in their head is quick facts, like we're very emotional eaters are very quick fix oriented.

Like we've been trying this for 60 years, but nevertheless we're looking for the next quick fix and there's nothing quick about it because we keep going to the next one.

But but the point is, we think it's like no matter what the sciences and, you know, fasting and all this and longevity, blah, blah, blah, what we're really translate, it's sexy for one thing, it's very sexy, you know.

But for the emotional eater, fast thing, if they're on the higher end of that spectrum, fasting has some complications to it. And what that is, is that as emotional eaters, you know, as children, food saved our lives.

Okay? When we're dysfunctional, it is dysfunctional home. And we don't we have, you know, stuff, stuff going down. We don't have a lot of options, but food is there. Mm.

Typically we start overeating at a very young age sooner than you might have scored drugs, you know, or did smoke pot in high school or whatever, you know, middle school.

So we started very young medicating our feelings. Remember I talked about the painkiller, medicating our feelings with food. And so food like I always tell my clients, like thank God, like thank God we had food, right?

Because what who knows what we would have done in that amount of pain and dysfunction. And so food served an amazing purpose for us. It's just that as adults, it's backfiring.

It's not working for us overeating, you know, it's causing more harm than good. And so the problem with the fasting is that we have an internal trigger, which when it did save our life, the idea of not eating brings up a panic.

Right? It sort of sets off the alarms of danger. Danger, I'm going to die. And for emotional eaters to be hungry feels dangerous. Hmm. It feels scary, it feels unsafe, it feels raw, it feels way too unprotected.

And that's why we overeat. Because the food does make us feel protected. The food and the fat. Right. So to tell somebody who's got that very deep psychic dependance on food to just starve yourself for 14 to 16 hours on paper, it's great.

But in the reality of an emotional eater who has that, you know, that trigger system, it causes bingeing. You know, they can when they open up their window, they go overboard hard.

And so to me, it's it doesn't pay off, even though the science can be, you know, very seductive and interesting and helpful if you can't do it without doing it appropriately.

Right. And if you're just keep trying it and then you go off the rails and it's the you're just on another yoyo diet. You know, you're really aren't helping your body at all.

And the other thing around that is that people who are out of control with food like the idea of not going to the kitchen for 14 to 16 hours, because once they go to the kitchen, they can't help themselves but eat.

So to them, it's sort of like these, you know, guardrails, these artificial guardrails that keeps them from going out of control. But I'm here to say there's a better way.

So give us an idea. And so, yes, so it's really that goes back to because yeah, I love fasting and intermittent fasting and autophagy and all those things, but it's kind of like there's a foundation.

And so what, what we're saying here is getting clear with what is my relationship with food? Why am I eating? Once you kind of have that handled and having that handle doesn't happen like this, obviously, but then do those things because I see that sometimes in practice where it's like the food rules are so rigid and that's not healthy either.

It's really bad having and I like what you said, it's about can can you go to the party and have that, that ice cream cone. Hopefully it's dairy free but whatever, you know, it's another topic.

But you know, can you have that treat without it derailing you into can you just have it and enjoy it and move on with your day? Or do you beat yourself up like what's going on with you in food?

And I think it does start so young. Like as you were saying that I was thinking like I remember my father used to like hide the good stuff, the cookies, and I grew up on Long Island, the end demons cake and he would like hide it and it was like the forbidden stuff.

And I remember like sneaking around and he wasn't back. He wasn't that great at hiding it. He would, like, hide it on the dining room chair under the tablecloth.

I'm like, Oh, okay. Frowned. But it was like it made it like this, you know, secret thing and it or it. And I think about it all the time with my granddaughters, because I'm so much wiser now than maybe with my own children.

But it's like it's so typical to be like, you did a good job here, have a cookie. Well, eat your broccoli and then you'll get your chocolate bar. Like there's all these typical things.

So I'm like, always catching myself. Wait a second. And, like, make, you know, the cookie in the broccoli or, you know, can be equal and not making a huge deal about it.

Yeah, it's really tricky. And I think that it's just sort of like, what's the net result of these things? Like, like my experiences, you know, asking oneself like how you would treat your little like kid, like your sweet baby daughter like or granddaughter like, would you say to your daughter, your granddaughter?

Would you say girlfriend, you're going to like, let's not feed you for 14 hours. You know, you're going to shave a few pounds. You're going to look great.

Like we would never do that to our sweet, you know, we never do that. And yet we do that to ourselves daily, for decades, you know. And so to me, that's a great litmus test.

Like, is this a good plan for your granddaughter? You know? And so in a lot of these plans, like, again, there's nothing bad about them in like used in the right way.

But when you have disordered eating habits, it's hard to do them in a right way. Exercise is another thing like exercise is awesome for our bodies, except if you use exercise to beat yourself up after a binge, you know that is a way to use exercise.

So, you know, nothing inherently bad. It's the motive and it's what the net result is. And I, I love free meals with not with not snack with no snacking.

Like, I like free meals and no snacking just to get people back to just some order, some sanity. And you can put 12 or 13, you know, hours in between dinner and breakfast and still get some of that autophagy, you know, benefit.

But it's again, you know, if you're thinking about a kid you're feeding, it would feel kind of like you're taking care of that that sweet kid, you know, and you're letting the kid know they're going to get fed on a regular basis.

And there's not going to be any funny business. There's not going to be an erratic schedule. There's just going to be something that's that's stabilizing.

And I just think for people who have been on so many diets and they've been up and down the scale and it's been deprivation over indulgence, you know, that in that pattern and we have to take a breather.

You know, we have to find something that just brings calm and peace. And I like the no snacking thing because it enables people to make peace with hunger, you know, physical hunger, because our queues are all off, you know, our kids are off, you know, like intuitive eating is a great idea, but if your cues are off, you can't we can't quite know what intuition is and especially when you've got your emotions all erratic as well.

So just finding a place of common peace, like you said, stair stepping, you know, and and getting to a place kind of like as a, you know, is a time out is a time out.

Like learn to feed yourself, treat your body like you would, you know, it was your it was your sweet daughters or granddaughters and go from there. I love that.

And, you know, friendly reminder, we all have that sweet little inner child inside of us. That is probably where all the hunger issues have stemmed from anyway.

And I think that's such a good point you brought up about making peace with feeling hungry. I often talk about that with silence. We're so and I think it's really the same thing because we're so uncomfortable with silence.

Often we got to fill all the space, whether it's a podcast or the music or the TV or talking to someone and like just learning, like I always say, silence speaks loudly if you'll actually listen and being okay with the feeling of hunger and knowing what that is and understand it so well, so healthy.

A healed emotional eating looks like three meals a day to you. There are a few other things you can share. Before we. Wrap up, I'm going to piggyback on what you just said about the silence, because I didn't give you the third.

A trait is there might be somebody here who is counting and be like, what? Give it to you. So the third trait of the anatomy, emotional eater, is overdoing.

Okay? And that is similar to people pleasing, but the overdoing comes from a need to be busy, so we don't feel so emotion. Leaders are typically like maxed out, like their schedule is so busy and there is no time for themselves whatsoever.

Kind of subconsciously, intentionally, because they think to be with oneself is to feel really uncomfortable and to have all kinds of stuff come up that they've been running from for a lifetime.

You But like you said about the silence, like we have to make peace with silence and with with space and space between meals. And yes, you will have feelings, but they're kind of the boogeyman.

Like they're not nearly as bad as we think they're going to be. And especially when you have a way of dealing with them, you know, that is helpful. Like a whole I mean, a whole process of emotional healing, which is what I do with people, is I help them heal those feelings.

Once they feel those feelings because they aren't so bad and scary and they are much easier to acclimate to when you have a plan. But that's the overdoing is something to be aware of because it just creates the stress and the cycle of overeating as well.

That that was that was definitely me.

Healing the Root Cause and Finding Support

I can. I can. And now I'm like, I love my favorite thing of healing is blank space in the calendar, whether it be a block of time or a day or a week, but under scheduling and just being able to be in the moment and be in the flow and yeah, it didn't happen overnight.

It takes time and working out. A lot of it does go back to our childhood and our trauma and things of that nature. And it's so I was thinking about from addiction and I can speak from personal past experience, but it's like it's easy.

Well, maybe easy is the wrong word, but you can say quit drinking alcohol or quit smoking cigarets or quit snorting cocaine because you can still go throughout your life and exist.

But you can't you can't quit eating food. We need food. And so it's one of those things and I find addictions can be layers. And often when you have the addictive personality, you kind of just, well, I'm not an alcoholic anymore, but now you're a shopaholic or your rage aholic or stress aholic or whatever a holic.

And, and so it's easy to shift that like I often see think about that. I don't have personal experience, but I have patients who do like the 12 step and then what's going on at the 12 steps, they're sugaring it up with donuts and coffee and right.

And so it's like so we have to really be clear and remember, like be kind to human. You know, you're on the journey. No one's perfect. We're just learning to to get better and better as we can.

But that food can really be a place where addictions hide. And you can't just say, well, I'm just never going to eat again for the next seven years. I'm done with food.

So it's a place you really got to show up. Well, it's true. It does. It makes you toe the line more like to me, you have to dig deeper to heal from something that you have to handle every day.

Mm hmm. Yeah, exactly. And so it does take more. And the truth is, the food, the alcohol and cigarets, the shopping, they're symptoms, right? There's symptoms.

And that's why the diet has a short know, short lived effectiveness. 98% Maldives fail because you're just dealing with a symptom of food and weight. And when you do the deeper journey of healing, which is doesn't have to be long and hard, you don't need 20 years of therapy to go these to these places because, you know, there is that's why I like lay it out in the anatomy emotional eater like these are the 24 personality traits that will most plague you.

But you need to focus on like it just it doesn't have to take so long. But that journey into the real cause, the underlying causes is that's the journey that will bring you to freedom.

And then when you you handle that, it just kind of spills out into beautiful things in the rest of your life. Like you said, it's just a symptom. And so you get the not only do you heal your relationship with food, but you may find you heal your relationship to yourself or your parents or your partner or whoever it is world in general.

So yeah, it's got a ripple effect that will I mean, you, you can't heal at that deeper level without it having a ripple effect in every area of your life.

MM Well, this is a conversation that could go on for a long time and I just, I so appreciate you coming on and just kind of like, open the door. I pick out the window.

And so for those of you listening, you know, maybe listen again, maybe listen, take a deep breath, have a nice cup of camomile tea and really think about, you know, how much of my not only my life, but even just my present moment is spent stressing about what I did eat or didn't eat or how I'm going to do better tomorrow, or, you know, I'm going to start on Monday.

Or you do something that maybe wasn't the best thing to eat on Friday. And you're like, Well, I might as well just wait till Monday. Like, how many of these behaviors are happening for you?

Because if they are, then the answer isn't just going gluten free and making sure you get wild salmon and organic blueberries like those things are healthy, but they have to go mind body.

Remember the connection. They have to go into a a body. That's I often say like you can eat all the organic broccoli and grass fed and finished steak or whatever your, you know, medicinal food is.

But if you're eating it from anger or you're eating it in the sympathetic state or you're eating it because you should be and you're not enjoying it or you're not chewing and you're not breathing and you're not sitting, then that food is not going to fuel you.

I'd almost rather you drink a chocolate milkshake and be like exalted and enjoying it and just, you know, being grateful for every like there's something to really be said for that.

Not that I prescribe chocolate milkshakes, but it's just to make the point of it's really our emotions and this is with our food and everything. It's not always what you're doing.

It's who are you being when you're doing it. And so food is, it's, it's something we all have to. Food can be a beautiful thing, right? We can break bread with friends and, family, and try new cuisines and enjoy taste.

And there's a lot of benefits once we can kind of weed out some of this emotional stuff. So for those who are like, okay, guilty, I need to do a little further digging on this.

Where can they learn more about you and your work? Good place to start is my website, which is healyourhunger.com, healyourhunger.com. That quiz we talked about is a great place to start and that's front and center on my website.

So go to healyourhunger.com. Take the quiz. It takes 3 minutes, it's free, but you'll get a score and then you prescribe steps based on your personalized score.

You can also access my podcast, The Heal Your Hunger show from the website or anywhere where my podcast or podcasts are, and also Instagram on Instagram @TriciaNelson_ So I can have some fun videos on there about.

I follow her there. She has some fun videos. She speaks. Material. Great. Well, thank you so much. I mean, just for you know, you are as I said in the beginning, hope because.

You have it. And maintained it. And so thank you for the work you do and just for bringing, you know, it's not the most comfortable topic. And so and it can be, you know, if you're listening and you're kind of like you know, that's okay, just listen again.

Take what next? Step away, come back tomorrow. Sometimes it's things that we have to learn about ourselves. We want to we want to push it away because it means we're going to have to go down a little bit of a healing rabbit hole.

But this is this is so important to me. And this is the time. It's not a time to go. Well, I've heard I've been doing it for 50 years. Like, I just, you know, I'm just never going to get better.

Know it can happen. It can happen. It can happen when you're 50 or 60 or 70 or 80. And any time you choose to heal and change, no matter where it is, it's meaningful.

And then the next days that follow will be healthier and more meaningful. So I think every day so that's that is the truth. So thank you and thank you, everyone for being here and being willing to have, you know, the more difficult conversations because this is you know, we are we are stepping into our second sacred act and we want to heal

on all levels.

And that's why menopause is such a beautiful moment to pause and really look at where you could use a little more support. So. Sharon, thanks so much for your amazing work and for bringing this summit to people because I know it will help so many.

So you're awesome and I appreciate being a guest. Thank you. My pleasure. And we'll be back with another interview, so stay tuned.