

# Nicole DeMasi: Perfectionism, interoception & the dieting tr...

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## SPEAKERS

Nicole DeMasi, Katy Weber



Katy Weber 00:00

So let's start out with your ADHD diagnosis in terms of how long ago it happened and how old you were and kind of what led up to what were the signs that led up to you actually thinking you might have ADHD? And how did you get your diagnosis?



Nicole DeMasi 00:23

Um, so I remember looking at a book that that was describing ADHD back when I was maybe 12. And I was like, Hmm, that's strange. Like, I have a lot of these symptoms, I have memory issues, and I can't pay attention, I have to read things over and over and over again, I wonder if this is me. But when I was young, and even still, now, I kind of had a lot of health anxiety where I always thought there was something wrong with me. Kind of that like hypochondriac type of feeling. And so I always just thought, like, Oh, no, it's just me. Like, I'm just worried about it. I'm just anxious. And so I never actually pursued it. And I never talked about it with anyone, like, I would just tell my mom like, Hey, I'm, you know, I'm feeling anxious, and I'm having trouble with things. But my mom, I'm pretty sure has ADHD as well. So she wasn't like mentally stable enough to help me through these things. Because she didn't understand it, either. She was just kind of in her own little ADHD brain, as well. So I didn't get the support I needed. And so I just kind of went through life. that's a that's a huge summary of what my life was like.



Katy Weber 01:43

But sometimes it does feel like you're just kind of sailing through.



Nicole DeMasi 01:48

Oh, my gosh, yeah. It was like, it was lots of bumpy sails. Let me put it that way. Like whitewater rafting, I was like my life. But yeah, I had like a pretty I wouldn't I don't want to say a rough childhood, because I think we compare ourselves to others a lot, right? And we're like, oh, no, like my mother half as bad compared to these other people. But for my childhood, it was it was pretty tough. Like, my parents weren't together, my dad was an alcoholic. And then my mom sort of had ADHD and didn't really know it. And she was struggling with depression. And so there was like, all these things that I used to blame my symptoms on, right? So I'd be like, I just, I'm just anxious because of, you know, dad, or something that Mom's going through. I never actually like thought it was me, right. So I had all these problems. And it wasn't until I was in, actually, way after college, maybe in my 20s, like, late 20s, that I was like, my wonder if I have ADHD like, but I don't fit the mold, right. So I was that that person that was like, I'm not like my friend, like, I can think of one of my best friends growing up who had ADHD and she was just like, you know, the typical like, what I would call like, not to be offensive, but a scatterbrain. Right, like total like all over the place, like just it and she embraced it. She knew and everyone knew she had ADHD because she got diagnosed when she was young. So she was my like, I guess poster for what I thought I should be like, because she was more hyperactive. But I was more inattentive. Right? So I was just basically thinking that because I don't look like her, I don't have it. And so I just never pursued it. And I was actually a little bit like, ashamed of like, what I was going through, because I did well in school, but not really like I did well in certain classes like science. And that was about it. I hated math, I hated English, anything that had to memorize stuff, it did not like it. And then this is probably like way much more information than you're looking for. But I'm just trying to think of like my life and how I went through, but I didn't get diagnosed officially until last year, at the age of 33. I'm gonna be 35 this year. So I basically went through my whole life with all of these weird feelings and things that I couldn't describe to people. No one really understood me no one got me. And I just felt like I there was something wrong with me like I was broken. Like, how can life is so much harder for me than it is for everyone else. You know, that sort of like feeling where you're just like, you just don't know Really What's going on? And so sorry, I'm getting emotional about it. Um, so I thought I wasn't gonna cry about it, but I



Katy Weber 05:12

am. It is such an emotional journey, you know? And I mean, I have so many listeners to

who talk about crying listening to the episodes and I always sort of feel like, like, it is it is so emotional, especially talking about what you're talking about when it comes to this, like the struggle, you know, like, how do we even define what is the struggle for ourselves for so long? Am I even struggling? Like you said, like, there's always this way in which you kind of Gaslight yourself, which is like, other people are struggling more, you know, so I don't have a reason. And I remember feeling that so many times in my life being like, why am I so depressed? There's nothing wrong with my life. I have this husband who loves me, I have kids, I have like, everything seems okay, why am I so depressed all the time? And always wondering, like, Do I have a learning disorder? Or do I have something? You know, what is that? You know, just the the exhaustion, the constant exhaustion of just always feeling like the answer is out there somewhere. I just haven't found it.

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Nicole DeMasi 06:12

Yeah, and there's that perfectionism piece, because you, you know that you can reach a certain standard, but you can't actually get there. And that's like, frustrating, right? So it's that feeling of like, and I know, you talked about this before, on your other episodes where you feel like you, you know, you can do it, you've done it before, but you can't figure out why. And then once I figured out what ADHD was, and what hyper focuses, I'm like, Oh, my God, that's why like, I could get through college, because I was hyper focusing. And I waited till the last minute to do everything. And I was up till 2am, writing my paper, and I got it done. And it was great. But it was a stressful experience all the time, like hyper focus for me gives me anxiety. And I think it's because I get so excited. Or I get like overstimulated about something, what depending on what it is, it could be excitement, it could be anxiety if a deadline or whatever it is. But that experience for me is just uncomfortable. And I used to put that down, I used to think of it as a negative experience, because I didn't know what it was. But now that I understand what hyper focus is, and that it's actually my brain just getting a little bit of dopamine that it's not used to, that I can actually, like, identify as a positive feeling instead. And that's really been really helpful for me.



Katy Weber 07:39

Yeah, so much of this journey. I feel like has been reframing the way I define a lot of these things in my life. Yeah. So was your diagnosis lockdown related? Because I, I feel like so many of the people I interviewed. It was like, yeah, the pandemic lockdown. That was definitely my experience. I just was like, my house of cards just fell apart. Yes, it was,

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Nicole DeMasi 08:04

I would say, you know what, the year before lockdown, I was actually planning my wedding. And that was a disaster for me. I'm not gonna lie. Like, I was like, perfectionist, I needed to have everything that was like Pinterest. Ready? And like exactly how I wanted it. yet. I did not have the budget for that. So I was like, creating this experience that was so hard for me. I even had a wedding planner, and I just like, didn't listen to her. I was like, No, no, I want it this way. Like your way does not gonna work for me. So bad. And then that's like one of the questions you have is like when you when you look back and what was what was ADHD like that was a totally ADHD for me. But I actually, this this is ADHD in itself is I diagnosed myself that year. While I was wedding planning. I specifically remember I woke up one morning and I was like, so frustrated with myself and I just googled Why can't concentrate an ad she popped up. And I read an article on attitude magazine and I just bursted out in tears. I felt like I could have read the article myself or written it myself and my husband came in the room it and he was like, just comforting me and I remember feeling like so relieved that there was a name to put to what I was feeling, you know, and it was like, because I had always expect suspected it but I didn't realize that it was different in women and inattentive ADHD was different and I was just like, oh my god, this is me like, I'm not broken. There's something. There's something like that I can actually label myself as an made me feel really good. But also That started the whole I guess. I kind of felt like, well, what if my fiance at the time doesn't want to marry me now because I have this like issue that's wrong with me, right? So because anytime you have a diagnosis or like grief, you go through all the stages of grief. Right? So you're like processing it till you get to the acceptance phase. And so at that point, I was just like, in shock, because I was like, Oh my god, I have this and I'm really excited and relieved. And so he just comforted me and said, You know, like, this is a good thing. You know, now you can get help for it. And it was just so nice. And then of course, I spent the next nine months planning the wedding and I didn't



10:43

Oh, God,

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Nicole DeMasi 10:45

I if I could do anything differently, I wish that I had gotten treatment before I planned my wedding because I just totally I, I stressed myself out so much. I wasn't sleeping. I was like, ruminating about things. I was trying to be perfect about everything. And the point, it got to the point where the day of my wedding came, and I was so stressed out that I couldn't even enjoy the positive feelings. And I regret that so much. But yeah, it is what it is. I mean,

I'm I can just look back at it now. And and my husband actually laughs at me because I this is so add, okay, I didn't know they have my wedding. And I'm this is probably going way off topic, but I'm not really because it's ADHD.



Katy Weber 11:46

This is all about meandering.



Nicole DeMasi 11:50

The I was so stressed out on the day of the wedding, not because I wasn't excited, not because I wasn't happy, but just overwhelmed with emotion and like, how the day was supposed to go and I wasn't sleeping well, because I was so anxious and all these things. So the day of the wedding got there. And I had my family around me and my friends. But I forgot to get my nails done. So they had someone come to the room. Like do my nails for me the morning of and I totally time blind, completely time blind when it comes to that stuff. Nobody Nobody know that I had ADHD. So nobody was there to support me to be like, hey, Nicole, by the way, like you only have an hour left to get ready. I did not I wasn't paying attention. They thought that I just had it all figured out. So basically, they come I get my nails done. The woman is she leaves and they're like, okay, Nicole, like you need to hurry up. Now you need to get ready. And I'm like, Oh my god, okay, like, Sure, I'll get ready. And then it comes time to walk down the aisle and I haven't eaten lunch. And I got so shaky, that I just started feeling like oh my god, I need to eat something. So they pull me into the office, they give me a banana and some water. Meanwhile, the wedding planner didn't know that I wasn't there. And she started the ceremony without me. So the whole like, Oh my gosh, Nicole, you're late to everything you're going to be late for your own wedding thing actually happened to me. This is my worst. Like the wedding planner had to come running for me in the back and was like, Nicole, we start like we're starting. They're waiting for you. And I was like, What do you mean? It was awful. And I'm laughing about it now. But it was really really like a terrible experience for me because I was like, Oh my god, like I was so stressed out and it kind of frazzled me to the point where I couldn't actually enjoy the moment of getting married, because that was in my head like it was taking over. And so now I laugh. But yeah, I'm sure we've all had these experiences where we kind of ruin a moment that's, like, so important to us because of time management or just not even realizing that. You know, we haven't been taking care of ourselves, right? So that lack of self care, because you're so hyper focused on other things.



Katy Weber 14:24

Oh, yeah. Oh my goodness, I've related so much to all of that by wedding planning. Mine was 20 years ago and like I had so many you know, the same idea of like the perfectionism wanting everything to be perfect doing it all myself and then you know, also showing up late and and not really being able to enjoy the day because it just all went through by so quickly and I didn't eat anything and like I just got drunk on champagne so quickly that like I don't remember a lot of it and I regret so much now being a sober person, like all of these moments in my life that I regret using alcohol to such a degree that I was like, I don't know what I said. to people I don't you know, like it was just such a sad. I feel like we could have like an entire episode devoted to women ADHD and wedding planning. But like also even just like birthdays, like, I have a really, really hard time with my birthday because I'm like, I don't like to throw parties for myself, because I get so stressed out, I don't like attention. But if I don't get attention, then that's a problem. You know, like, I just feel like there's so much that just becomes heightened, and kind of in the for, you know, the sort of social anxieties that I don't like to think about, and then all of a sudden, become these huge stressful issues for me that I'm like, I just want this day to be over with as best as possible and get over and then go back to it. And I'm like, well, that's so sad. It's a day to celebrate you. Like that's not so fair. But I just feel like there's just so much detail and subtext that I just can't I get overwhelmed, emotionally overwhelmed, and I can't handle it. Yeah. And then you feel guilty because you let that happen instead of just enjoying the day. Yeah, exactly. And then it goes back to that idea of like, why am I so depressed all the time? Like, I'm not I don't have a bad life read out again. It's sort of like what is wrong with me? Always going back to that question that we always have about ourselves. Yeah. Now tell me about becoming a registered dietician because that so I'm curious kind of what led you to even be interested in becoming a registered dietician, we all have such a complicated relationship with academia with ADHD. So how, what was your schooling like growing up?

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Nicole DeMasi 17:15

I've always I always science, but I didn't know what I wanted to do. On. Yeah, I actually didn't know what I wanted to do until my junior year of college, like three years in, it was like three years in. And I basically was like, I still I don't have a major yet. Like, I need to pick a major in college for three years now. And I was just sort of taking like chemistry and, you know, like, anatomy and physiology, because I was like, well, I might be a nurse, I might do this. I might do that. But none of it actually was exciting to me. And I had always been interested in nutrition, but I didn't even know that it was possible to have a career in it. Because I didn't I didn't have a dietician growing up. Like I didn't even know that that was an option, really. Because I grew up like pretty poor, I would say so we didn't have those things around. Like none of my friends and family members went to dieticians, we didn't really have one in school. I didn't really learn about it until I took a nutrition class.

And I like aced it. Because I was so hyper focused the whole time. I was like, Oh my god, this is so cool. Like I love nutrition. And it's interesting because even though I did have disordered eating back when I was like 12 years old, like starting at 12, I had no idea that huge, like a career in nutrition was even a thing. So it's so strange, because it was sort of disconnected but came full circle once I got into nutrition. So once I started taking nutrition classes, I had to switch over to university because my college didn't offer it. So then I did another two and a half years at the University of Rhode Island. And then as you know, when you major in nutrition, the only option really if you want to further your career is to become a registered dietitian. Unless you want to, you know, just work in a health club or become a scientist or nutrition science, but I wanted to be a dietitian. So I actually, I didn't think my grades were good enough at the time to to get into an internship program. I'm sure like, you've heard how intense it is to actually get into an internship like with all the other dietitians that you've you've interviewed but it's a very intense process. So I worked for a little bit and then I applied to an internship. And I wanted to sort of get out of Rhode Island because that's where I'm from, and it's a tiny state and I was like I need something new. So I went over to cows cows Cal State Northridge and in California, and I didn't get in the first time because it was like an intense process where I had to fly all the way to LA. And they there were eight people doing the interview, sort of like you were on trial. And it was very intense, it wasn't ready for it. So I went back applied again got in, did that for two years. And it's a combined master's program. So I got my rd in 2013. And then I finished with my masters in 2014. So during that time, I actually felt like and I know that this is sort of jumping around a little bit, because I haven't, we haven't talked about like my history with my relationship with food yet, but I would say it was is very all over the place, depending on how my life was and how my stresses, how my stress was at the time, like it would jump around. But definitely when I got into nutrition, there were parts of me that had a better relationship with food. But what I didn't realize was that the rules, the food rules just kept compounding, like it was one food rule after the next that I was adding on. And I thought it was just me bettering my health. I didn't think of it as disordered eating, I just thought like, this is what you're supposed to do to be healthy. And this is how it is. And you're a dietitian, so you know how to eat healthy and you should do it, you should follow it. There's a lot to unpack in those years. But But yeah, that's basically how I became a dietitian. And then I, I worked in hospitals, I worked in outpatient clinics, I've worked in dialysis, I've worked for medical device company selling Omni pods, which is like a insulin pump that you wear to



Katy Weber 22:17

cordless one.



Nicole DeMasi 22:18

So I've done all these different jobs because I was never satisfied with one I was just like, No, I want to get this experience and that experience. And that's like so add, right. So I basically wanted to get experience in everything. And mostly because I couldn't decide what I wanted to do. And then I became a certified diabetes educator. So that was mostly out of the job that I was doing working with insulin pumps. So that's when I became the educator. But it wasn't until the last few years that I've really, really thought about having my own practice. Specifically, during quarantine, I kind of was like, Okay, well, I'm not going to go back to working at a clinic, I don't want to work in a hospital. So I'm just going to create my own private practice, because I'm tired of working for all of these. These companies and clinics that just don't get it. Like they didn't see what I saw. And they were just harming people. And yeah, it just it was I wanted to do things the way I wanted to do it, which is yes, it's like add to Right. Right. Yeah. Not wanting to sort of follow what everyone else was doing that?



Katy Weber 23:36

Yeah. Well, you know, I was recently listening to the book, atomic habits, which I don't feel like I can recommend simply because it's very interesting. And I think it's very add friendly. And I'm sure somebody with ADHD recommended it in the first place. I don't remember who recommended it to me. But he talks about eating and dieting whenever he talks about like healthy habits, you know, and so he always like when he's talking about healthy habits, the examples he uses a lot of the time are structured around food and eating and weight, and exercise and, and he has such as like, regimented idea of what health is, you know, and and so it was this idea of like, Well, of course, you would do all of these things that are empirically healthy. And you know, and it was frustrating because I was listening to him through my own lens of having this, like dieting history, and going through diet recovery. And I was like, it's not that simple for so many of us, like some people just have this gift, if they don't, you know, basically men, but not all men, but you know, this idea that like they have this very like regimented idea of like what you do and what you don't do. And this is good, and this is bad. And so it was just interesting listening to him talk about that, because I was like, This is such a nuanced topic, and it's something I love talking, thinking about and talking about and now Ria Evaluating everything through this lens of ADHD being like, why, you know, I think we are naturally drawn to being like geeking out over the details. And nutrition has a lot of details, and it's something that we do every day. And so it's like, it makes sense to me why we get so fascinated by all of the science behind everything. But at the same time, like, there are just certain elements to nutrition that are, you can't control, you know, like your, by the end of the day, your body is not a machine that you can control. And so like honoring that and working with it, and

then kind of the gentle nutrition side of it is such a huge part of healthy living when you take into the emotional elements of it. But I don't feel like that kind of fluidity and that kind of freedom that is involved with gentle nutrition and intuitive eating. I don't think that feels comfortable. For a lot of us with ADHD, it's certainly I'm very uncomfortable with intuitive eating, because of structure, you know, and because of needing so much of that science and the answers and the hard black and white thinking that we tend to do. And so anyway, it's a topic I endlessly fascinated by? Yeah, definitely, I think at the end of the day, like I really relate to those people who are like, I just want a pill that will feed me, you know, how there's always a person who's like, I don't like I just want to know what the right thing to do is. And I think so many of us feel that way, which is like just telling me the thing to do. And it's that's impossible, especially when it comes to nutrition. Yeah, it

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Nicole DeMasi 26:36

really is, because there is no one size fits all. But I, you know, I look back to when I first became a dietitian, and I was just like, you don't really have your, your own values yet, right, you're sort of just like going by the book, you're trying to be like this star dietitian by following all the rules, and you know, following these diets Exactly. Because you know, your preceptors and your the other dietitians who are watching over you're just making sure that you're going by the book, right, you're not allowed to have your own ideas of what nutrition should be yet, until you you know, until you get your own private practice. And you're like, you know what, like, I have my own ideas, and you can use science and you should use science, right? I'm not saying that you should go against it. I'm saying that you should use science, evidence based nutrition. But there's a reason why these people keep coming back to you over and over and over again, not being able to follow your rules, right. And I'm using quotes for rules, because there's so many rules around food and you just your we don't work like that as humans, not even not even people with ADHD, just people in general. And I honestly, I would like to send out a mass apology to everyone that I ever counseled back then, who I gave any rules to because you don't know what type of psyche these people have. Right? You don't know what what they're dealing with. And you can't possibly when you have 30 minutes with someone to sit down with them. You don't know if this person has history of eating disorder, you don't know what they're going through. And you don't have time to go through all of that and ask all those questions in a typical clinic setting, right? Because you're you might be seeing them, like I said, for 30 minutes, or maybe an hour if you're lucky. And you could be harming them. And that's why I really believe in that like one on one, sort of like long term program, like I do with my clients, because you have to get to know them, you need to see where they're coming from their history with eating their relationship with food and their bodies, like there's so much that goes into it. But you cannot possibly do in one session. And that is why I cannot and will not ever again work in an outpatient clinic setting unless it's, you

know, one that could potentially give the type of program that I could do, but I'd rather just do it on my own,



Katy Weber 29:11

I guess. Well, yeah. And it's so funny, because I think another quality of ADHD is that sort of stubbornness and feeling like you need to figure this out on your own right? You need to be able to I can do the research, I can do the work. I can figure this out on my own. I'm bright enough. I'll just read I'll just Google I'll look it up. Like I'll do everyday, like we have such a reluctance to ask for help. And then there's apps like new and weightwatchers that are like I can help you for \$14 a month. Does that sound perfect? And you're like, yeah, it kind of does. You know, like, we have such a problematic relationship with spending money on ourselves and spending money on resources. And then the it seems like there is a market for cheap resources, even though none of them work and they're all scams, but they're We, you know, we get this sense of like, well, this is how much my health is valued at, you know, \$15 a month or something. And I think that's been a big mind shift mindset shift for me in, the more I've realized about my ADHD and how it sort of manifests and how much help I need, like how I really needed to reevaluate what I spend my money on, in terms of getting help, you know, and how, like, I really had to embrace help, you know, and look at like, Why? Why do I feel like asking for help is such a negative thing in my life? Why do we have so much shame around that? I don't know why I started. What do you even got me on that little rampage? I think it was about one on one work. Yes. That's what it was working one on one. I think it's so important, especially for people with ADHD who need individualized attention and need hand holding a lot.



Nicole DeMasi 30:54

Yeah, and I think, I think it's just because we want that immediate satisfaction A lot of times, right, like, because we get bored easily. So if something's taking too long, we know it's not going to work for us, right. And that's why people go from diet to diet diet to diet and not just because they don't work, but because you might do like a knock, I don't recommend this. But like you might do keto for like, you know, two weeks, and it's great at first, but then it kind of fizzles out because you're like, this is this is really hard. And I'm bored with it. And I need to switch up what I'm eating. And so then you go to the next thing, and the next thing and the next thing. And that's like, there's a whole other reason, obviously why those don't work just and I don't recommend them. But I was just speaking to one of my clients about this the other day of how she said, You know, I, I'll try new things for like two weeks, but I never stick with them. Because they're so exciting. They have that you know, shiny object syndrome, where you go for something that's really exciting. And then it fizzles out. But when you do a one on one program, you're speaking

to this person every week, and you talk about whatever it is that burning, right, that burning desire that you have to speak about whatever it is that is on your mind, whatever troubles you're having. That's what you talk about that day, right? And you might have a little bit of an agenda, but it's usually just about what the client needs. And that's why it's so different than something like zoo, new zoo, new or these other programs where you're, it's not really that one on one personalized approach that you need, I guess. Yeah, and again, I'm I'm digressing. I don't even know what we're talking about anymore. But basically saying is don't do new. Yeah. Just we have to be really, really careful that we're not promoting disordered eating and people. That's the biggest thing.



Katy Weber 33:00

Yeah. And and again, I you know, I think the term health is incredibly nuanced, when you take into consideration the like, emotional toll of chronic dieting, and feeling like, you know, so many of us when we start out something like keto with, with such fervor and excitement, or any diet that we get really into for a couple of weeks, because we're hyper focusing, and, and then there's that inevitable belief that we are failures, because we couldn't stick with it, you know, and so then, and, and diet, culture will, will promote that. I mean, diet culture works in that much in that same way, which is like, the diet works. You know, we i, this was my criticism with Weight Watchers all the time, which was like when it's working, it's because of Weight Watchers, when it's not working, it's because you're the failure. And you know, so there was always that assumption that, like, if you could just get your act together and get back on the program, it would work for you again. And so there's always this sort of assumption that if whatever working is, I mean, that's another conversation. You know, rather than work, you know, rather than talking about things in terms of always a weight centric idea of what health is, and what working is, you know, there's so many more factors in terms of your emotional health and like, How happy are you with what you're doing right now. And I think structures in general for people with ADHD to like, you know, I sometimes I see myself getting like, super excited to have a new calendar system and I get like, super hyper focused into all of my to do list in all of like, organizing, I love organizing, and I get really into it, and then I'm like, it's at the expense of productivity. Where it's sort of like you realize, you get you back yourself into these corners, where you're doing things at the expense of your own happiness. And, and I think that that's something I can't even like articulate what that is, but I feel like that's something that people with ADHD struggle with a lot which is like getting so wrapped up in the details that they lose track of like, what was my goal even in the first place? And so if you take that and approach it, or if you take that idea, and apply it to food and eating and nutrition, I think a lot of us struggle with that a lot of us struggle with like, I don't even really know what feeling good is like I don't you know, these are a lot of questions that I

think people take for granted, which is like, I don't even know when I feel good in my body and when I don't, because that kind of level of attention is hard. Yeah, totally. Cuz I'm on overdrive all the time.

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Nicole DeMasi 35:36

Yeah, absolutely. And I think, also, because we don't have as much interoceptive awareness, right. So that feeling of sensations in our body and knowing when we're hungry. And so I think a lot of my clients, I have to, you know, go through the hunger and fullness cues with them and tell them like, this is what it feels like to start being hungry might not be that knowing feeling in your stomach, you might actually start to get irritable, or you might have a headache, or you might actually just start to lose focus a little bit more than you than you already do with ADHD. But there's, there's these other cues and also just like checking in with yourself and knowing like how long has it been since I've eaten my last meal or snack because we don't realize what we're feeling sometimes, right. So like, you can go hours and hours without eating because you're hyper focused, or because you're distracted or because, you know, just life happens. And you get to the point where you're so ravenous, that you end up overeating and you eat whatever's in sight. And people feel a lot of guilt about that. But and then they feel like there's lack of willpower involved with it, like you mentioned earlier, and has nothing to do with willpower, it's actually just your body working the way it's meant to. Right, our bodies are wired for survival. And if if you don't feed your body within a certain amount of time, whether it's intentional or unintentional, it's going to send you a message that says, feed me. And it's going to go for the quick carbs, the ones that break down the easiest because our bodies are very wise, they know exactly what we need. And it's going to make you crave something that's quick and easy. AKA the quick stuff that you grab out of your, your pantry, right. So it's usually the quick stuff that's already prepared, you don't have to make it. So when I talked to my, my clients, I always have them. Plan ahead. And I know that planning is something that we struggle with, which is why a lot of times it's difficult, but planning ahead can be huge. And it doesn't need to be this like huge meal plan or anything that's structured. It's just having some time to check in with yourself. First of all, first and foremost, check in at regular times throughout the day and ask yourself, are you actually hungry? What is it that you need in this moment, and if you know, it's been a while since you've eaten or it's going to be even longer till you can eat your next meal, you have to check in with yourself and potentially have a scheduled snack and and I know that that kind of goes against the intuitive eating principles, which is basically just eat when you're hungry stop when you're full. But with ADHD, because we don't feel those sensations all the time, sometimes you do have to plan those snacks in, especially if you're taking like stimulants, right, because those decrease your appetite. And what happens when you don't eat all day when you take stimulants is you were just in general with anyone that

doesn't eat throughout the whole day, you end up leading to overeating or, or even a binge in the evening because you just didn't give yourself the proper nourishment throughout the day, right. So it's just having those next planned ahead of time. It doesn't need to be anything fancy. It could be an apple with peanut butter, it could be a peanut butter sandwich, things that we can just easily throw in our bags, right just like these quick things. But eating is very, very important to our mental health, emotional health. And also just I know I get super hungry all the time. And I didn't I don't even realize it like sometimes I have to do these check ins myself. There's no such thing as perfect intuitive eating right? You have to do these check ins I have to practice it myself. And that's one of the things that I had to work on. Because I had a hard time when I first figured out that I was under eating as a dietician, and that I was actually exhibiting signs of disordered eating. Because of all the food rules that I have and I did not even realize it until I started my intuitive eating journey myself which was honestly Just last year, like very, very recent.



Katy Weber 41:04

Now, you just reminded me of one of my favorite stories about orthorexia. Because I went, I had struggled with binge eating. And so my story was basically like, I have to nip this in the bud, I have to figure out how to stop binge eating because apparently starving myself all days to offset the bingeing at night is not helping with the binge eating. So I was like, if I can just stop the binge eating, then I can eat normally throughout the day. And I had gotten myself into this like shame spiral of like, not eating all day, because I knew the binge was coming, and so whatever, highly disordered and so I of course, I like started researching binge eating. What is it? Why what's causing it? How do I solve it, quote, unquote? and and you know, the time and time again, it was the answer was, binge eating is not a problem. Binge eating is a symptom of restriction. And so you really, if you want to stop binge eating, you need to stop restriction. But as a chronic diet, I was like, well, that's terrifying. I can't stop restriction. I don't trust myself to eat when I'm hungry, and stop when I'm full. Like, I was like, I don't have any concept of that. And so I figured I could work my way around that by eating whatever I wanted, as long as it was perfectly grass fed, or organic, you know, like, then I could just created this whole long list of food rules about what the type of food was. And so I built my, you know, I had built all of these walls around like, what I couldn't, couldn't eat. And I remember, like, going to visit my mother in law in Florida, which we do every year. And like she, because she's a lovely person, like went out shopping for us so that when we arrived, there would be food in the fridge and I open the fridge and I was like, this milk isn't organic, these eggs aren't pasture raised, or Yeah, whatever. Even I remember, I couldn't I wouldn't even take cage free eggs, because I was like cage free is not enough. They have to be free running eggs. And like, I had just so many rules that I looked in the fridge and I was like, I can't eat anything that's here that she's gotten for us. So I'm just not going to eat anything. And then of course, I started

drinking. And then everybody went to bed and I ate a box of pop tarts. And I just like the absurdity of that whole progression of that whole day just like sat on me where I was like, yeah, this is clearly a problem. And that was when I really started like opening my eyes mind opening my eyes to like, what restriction even it like restriction isn't necessarily caloric restriction restriction exists, especially for women in our society and so many levels, and you really need to, like start unpacking, where am I restricting myself in my life? And that's when I actually was able to stop the binge eating was like, you know, opening my eyes to like, where in my life Am I am I being restrictive and why? But then, but again, like you said, like the a lot of the a lot of the tools in it with that come with intuitive eating are really, really difficult. And I thought it should be easier for me. And I thought, you know, well, this is about freedom, like freedom should be easy, right? Like, and so I also kind of really struggled in silence or, you know, hiding the struggles I was having with the fact that I was like, I don't think I'm ever going to really understand when I'm hungry and I don't think I'm ever going to understand what I'm full and I'm doing this badly. You know, like, I just felt like I was bad at intuitive eating. And again, it was like unpacking that concept of like, you're not bad at thing. You know, there's always going back to that question of like, what's wrong with me that everybody else can figure this out? And I can't. And it was really kind of getting to that question more than anything else that I think Finally I mean, I'm, I haven't finally come to anything. I'm still unpacking all of it constantly and it's like whack a mole when it comes to disorder. So I was curious, you know, when I found out that you had your experience with kidney, you know, a specialty with kidney disease and diabetes, I was like, You must have so many interesting thoughts about Jason Fung, the celebrity nephrologist, and his intermittent fasting, Colt. And you because I know a lot of ADHD ears are super into intermittent fasting. And I actually am not, I mean, I see a lot of I really like geeked out on the concept of time restricted feeding, right? Because again, like when we talk about the structures, you know, having structure in my life outside of a dieting paradigm, I felt like well, maybe this is really gonna work for me. And so I was really into that idea of like, a switch, like you were saying, like now is when I eat now is when I don't now is when I eat now is when I don't, because it was felt very easy. And I felt like, Oh, I'm going to be able to train my body to be you know, like he he sets it all up in this very easy seeming concept of like, there is a switch in your body. And when you're if you are fasting for a certain period of time, then your body like switches over to fat burning ketosis and like, like all of that, I was like, This is so fascinating. Is this true? I've never heard of this. And then all it took was one person to be like, yeah, that's not true. And I was like, Oh, it's not? Like, again, I'm sort of like, Oh, all right. Yeah, you're right. Maybe there are a lot of holes in that theory. But anyway, I'm like, I'm curious at with, with you the lens of blood sugar and diabetes. Like, what are your thoughts on this on the intuitive fasting bandwagon when it comes to ADHD? Yeah, even for intermittent fasting? What did I call it? Oh, I called it intuitive fasting, Oh, God, that book is that seeping into my know intermittent fasting? I actually read that book, so that so that no one else has to

if anyone ever wants opinions on that terrible book, I did, because I was curious, because I was like, there, you know, because of the ADHD element. I was like, I see, you know, I have encountered a lot of intermittent fasters. I've been interested in the science of it, you know, and I was like, maybe there's something here. And of course, there isn't. But I'm, but I do like I find Jason Fung very fascinating. And I do find how he's come to where he is very interesting, just mostly from like a sciency point of view, more than anything else. But at the same time, it's so nuanced, and so problematic when it comes to like, if you have a history of dieting, then, you know, fasting for long periods of time is probably not a great idea. But at the same time, like, you also want to feel healthy and energized. And sometimes intuitive. Eating doesn't is not the best way to get there. You know what I mean? Like, it goes back to your that goes back to that idea of like, we want the fastest, easiest answer. And sometimes like when it comes to like finding a jumpstart, and energy and all of this stuff that we're looking for fasting does that for a lot of people.

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Nicole DeMasi 48:21

Yeah, I agree. I think it's a slippery slope, because I do geek out about all this research. And I get really, really into it. And I'll read all the studies. And that's where I need to be careful because I myself, am triggered by that and like an Orthorexic sense, because remember, I told you since I was a kid, I've had that anxiety, health anxiety and and feeling like, I need to fix a problem because there's something there might be something wrong with me. And so that's like, when I start reading those articles and stuff, it is very triggering. But I have to do it in order to keep up with everything in my my fields. Right. So I have to do it. I there there are there is research on inter intermittent fasting that shows can show some positive results. But I don't care what research shows anything. If it's not sustainable for people, and it's not going to help you mentally in the long run, then it doesn't make a difference to me. People intuitively fasted years and years ago because they had to just because food wasn't available, right? I mean, they had to go and catch their meat and then hunt their, you know, hump their dinner. We don't have to do that anymore. Our body it doesn't necessarily need to be in a fasting state in order to function properly, despite what people would say, right? Because they they'll say like, Oh, your body functions better when it's in ketosis. not actually true. To an extent. I mean, we're not going to get into the science. But I think I just I can't get behind anything that that promotes restriction these days. I mean, I've I've just had to undo so much harm that these diets have caused to people. And I actually regret some of the stuff that I said when I was on Tracy zookas podcast, because, you know, I think I was telling you, she asked me to describe all of the science behind nutrition for ADHD and all these other things. And it's like, yeah, we have the science behind it. But in the long run, if you're being so restrictive, and you're trying to follow this diet exact, you know, the way that the way that it says in this study versus how your body feels and what your body needs, that is going to

ultimately breed bingeing, and you're going to end up eating more than you normally would anyway, or you might even gain, you know, get, you know, let's say high blood sugar or whatever, because of the bingeing, trying to articulate what I'm trying to say, I can see it, but I can't say it right now. Um, and then there's just, there's a bigger overarching issue that people have than just the fact that they need to fast for a few hours a day. Like, I don't think that that's going to help in the long run, to be honest.



Katy Weber 51:31

Well, I think it goes back to sort of what I was saying about atomic habits, which is I think there are certain people who don't question things. How do I want to put this? I don't want to say like, you're not questioning things, but I think when it comes to like, wait, you know, if somebody were to say what I do this, because it keeps my weight in check, there might be a person who thinks, of course, I need to keep my weight in check, right? Like, that's a priority. That's health. And whereas somebody who has struggled with yo dieting, and weight Cycling is like, actually, I want to break free from feeling like weight is the ultimate indicator of health, you know, and so I want to break free from activities that, that focus on keeping my weight in check. And so then again, it's like an idea of like, weight itself becomes such a nuanced thing, in terms of like, is this really what I should be focusing on? You know, because I have a history of losing track of my health in pursuit of a number on a scale. And so I need to really like withdraw from that the same way that like 10,000 steps can be a really healthy life choice for a lot of people. But then there's certain parts of the of the population, we're getting to 10,000 steps ends up becoming like a really disordered activity. I so complicated, like, so beat, right? I'm just like, I like I don't know, I, again, I feel like I battle internally with like, I need answers, and then also feeling like I need to, like, I need to loosen up and realize that I'm never going to get the answers, or you know, or at least it's a lifelong process of, of, you know, talking about it and coming up with whatever is right for you. Yeah,



Nicole DeMasi 53:15

yeah. And I want to, I want to come back to that what you said, but But first, I had a thought about what you said before about the diabetes stuff is I've seen like hundreds of people with diabetes over the years. And, and with kidney disease, I used to work in a dialysis clinic, and I worked for the UCLA kidney program, where I was helping people to basically not have to go on dialysis. And they all have the same issues that we do. It's restricting, and then feeling lack of willpower. And then overeating. It's the same thing. It's not willpower. It's not lack of willpower. It's because in this is so harmful, what I see doctors tell people, and it's not all doctors, but a lot of them is let's say, I go into the office, my agency is Hi, my doctor tells me I'll just lose weight and stop eating carbs. And that's what

they're told, right? That two second piece of advice is so harmful for so many people. And then they try to do that. They're like, Oh, well, I've, you know, I'm trying to lose weight and I'm trying to cut carbs, but I just can't and I don't know what's wrong with me. There's something going on. Like, I'm really scared. I don't want to be I don't want to go on insulin or I don't want to go on dialysis race or they have all this fear, like fear mongering and fear based stuff. And yes, these things can happen. But cutting things out is not the answer. It's actually more of like what you have to add into your diet. Most of the time it's adding in things like fruits and vegetables, and adding in movement and exercise that feels good versus what you need to stop doing and There needs to be this huge movement, I think in the in the medical industry, where doctors need to really stop telling people to just lose weight and stop eating carbs, because that is not the answer. It is so harmful for people, I've had to do so much work. I used to, I used to work for Kaiser and I used to teach weight loss classes and diabetes classes, and heart health classes. And it was all the same, it was focused on losing weight, and, you know, limiting carb intake and all these things. And I absolutely hated it. And I saw that it didn't work. And I mean, Kaiser is a great organization. And if you're not familiar with it, it's basically one of the big hospital groups that's in the Southern California and like the the western region. And they have these weight loss programs. And I used to teach the 24 week program where people would come in, they'd pay, they would meet with you every week with a group of let's say, like five to 20 people. And we would sit down and we'd have a lesson and we'd all talk and we do sort of this, like motivational interviewing in a group style. And it did help for a lot of people, but we wait them every week. And they would feel good or bad based on what the weight was on the scale. Some of them would not even show up if to the class if they knew that their weight hadn't gone down. It's just like, it was awful to watch. Because, first of all, I don't think we should have been weighing them. I think it should be about creating good practices and healthy practices and balanced meals throughout the week. Yes, we can also look at your your diabetes numbers. So like your a one C, which measures how well your blood sugars are for the last two to three months. Like there's other indicators that we can look at for health besides weight on the scale, right. So there's just so much that week that can be done. And I really, really highly recommend that people work with a dietitian that that works with like that's anti diet, that's that works with intuitive eating and how the history of these things because you just really don't know what you're getting yourself into when you work with certain people. So I just recommend that they do it.



Katy Weber 57:28

All right, well, I know I know. I really adore talking to you.

