

Welcome to wellness, rebranded. We know there's conflicting health and fitness advice out there. You're tired of the senseless and toxic diet culture noise; you're ready to tune into your body, feel empowered around food and focus on your health and well-being. Welcome to the wellness rebranded podcast, where the healing trio of your health and wellness anti-diet dreams. I'm Tara, the personal trainer. I'm Elizabeth, a registered dietitian and certified Intuitive Eating counselor, and I'm more of a licensed clinical social worker. Together we're pushing back on the diet, culture, hustle culture, and toxic positivity to help you practice natural health-promoting self-care. So grab your water bottle, and forget the rules. And let's start rebranding your wellness journey.

Welcome back to another episode of Wellness, rebranded. I'm Tara, and I'm here with Elizabeth today; Maura is not with us today; she had something come up last minute. So you are here with us. And we are super excited today because we are discussing raising intuitive eaters. And Elizabeth has this course, Mastering the Art of Raising an intuitive eater, that I have taken myself. As you've probably heard, I have a two-and-a-half-year-old, and I love it.

It's been a game changer with how I look at food when feeding my child and the things I don't stress about. And now I don't worry about anything other than Yeah, but I found it helpful. So if you want more info than what we can do in this episode, I would check that out. We'll link it in the show notes below. Thank you so much for that. I loved having you in that workshop. Yeah, it's a digital course. And we'll link it in the show notes. So raising intuitive eaters with food and body confidence is near and dear to my heart.

This is a passion project for me to get out into the world. And that course, in particular, I tend to work with people who have lost 80 years of their life to dieting and diet culture. And I look at this as if we can help raise the next generation. As intuitive eaters outside the confines of diet culture, we can work together to help the next generation avoid some of those struggles with food and body that are so common.

Yeah, it'll be like changing society at the ground floor level. One of the super important things Evelyn always says about Intuitive Eating is ending the legacy of diet culture within families. And I just love that because I love that too. It captures it so perfectly. So we've spoken before, we all, at this point, hopefully, know that diet culture is synonymous with pressure, proper pressure to eat a certain way, pressure to look a certain way, pressure to exercise a certain way, pressure to have a specific type of body pressure around how we think of food.

And they wanted to start today with some difficult statistics think they're essential to getting out there because they remind us that adults are not the only ones to feel that pressure. So some horrifying statistics from various research studies show that even children as young as preschoolers as young as three and four can experience body dissatisfaction. , But also they're able to connect talk of healthy eating with fineness.

So they're already making that association at three and four years old and hate that too. 81% of 10-year-olds in this research study have said they're afraid to be fat, and nearly half of the kids aged nine to 11 either have tried or frequently diet. And even just around again, in another research study,

42% of first to third-graders express a desire to be thinner. So think about those statistics, which all talk about kids aged 11 years old. And then you shouldn't even be worried about anything at those ages. Right? You know, yeah, and it's super, super sad. And then between 2002 and 2018, the incidence, and again, is at the extreme talking about eating disorders. However, it doubled in those years, probably higher, because many of them go unreported.

And they have the highest mortality rate of any mental illness. And then that's not counting the other kids who may struggle with challenging body image, disordered eating, dieting, or just playing, feeling poorly, and diet culture. I don't have any stats to back this up, although I'm sure they're there. But even in my work, I've seen that eating disorders used to be predominantly female. Now we see almost equal numbers.

Yeah, they impact everybody, male, female, and all genders. They also all stereotype the person you imagine, as you know, a thin white teenager with an eating disorder. It's just frankly not true. They impact everybody at every age and every body shape and size. So how do we raise kids with food and body confidence?

Intuitive Eating is the best tool to do that. And there's research to back it up. Intuitive Eating has been linked with lower rates of depression, higher self-esteem, and better body image. It also can reduce stress at mealtimes, encourage kids to eat a wider variety of foods, and is a much more health-promoting way of looking at nutrition, exercise, and having a body for our kids. Agree. That's why we're here. Yeah. So how do you do that?

I want to start a little bit differently by talking about the fact that we're all, with relatively few exceptions, born intuitive eaters. And if you think about a baby that cries when hungry, they turn away when complete. And it's challenging to overfeed; they just won't take any more food.

Likewise, when they get a little older, they start taking solid foods; they mostly listen to their bodies, eat when hungry, and stop when they're full. And they are also good at telling us what they like and don't like, right? They will just throw it on the floor, close their mouths and refuse to take it.

They don't want any more food. I have to tell you, that statement gave me so much comfort when I was learning how to be a mother because I felt like, Oh my God, is he getting enough? Should I weigh him after breastfeeding or measure his bottles? Or how do I know if he's getting enough? And even with solid foods? I was stressed about it until I took your course. And I realized, like, he's not going to go hungry.

Yeah, he's going to get food at some point. So I don't need to worry about him not eating any veggies. Like, it'll come right. And now it feels much calmer for me, even though he probably didn't notice any. There's so much less pressure around it. Yeah. So if we're all born intuitive eaters, then what happens? Well, diet culture happens, especially as kids get older, although, as we just heard, it impacts even tiny kids.

But some messages that we can get from our families in childhood can also pull us away from that innate Intuitive Eating ability. And I want to preface this by saying that if you're listening if you listen to today's episode, you will find this topic is for you no matter how old your kids are. They do not have to be little preschool-age or two-year-olds that we're talking about. It is always possible to change or model a different relationship with food. Amen to that.

So my course is suitable for parents of all ages. Also, if you are listening to today's episode, you find yourself thinking, Oh, I'm doing some of the things they suggest not to do. It's okay to say to you. There's no judgment around that I'm very open and said I was not yet a dietitian, nor did I know about intuitive eating when my kids were younger. And I made every mistake in the book; if I could go back to know you like that's motherhood, right? So Truett Tara, if I could go back, I would do so many things differently now. And in fact, I do them differently now. And I've seen the benefits in my older children.

Now they're all in high school and college, but I saw it even when they were in middle school and high school ages for making some of these changes. It's okay if you do something other than what we discussed today. And there is always time to shift the tone around food in your house. Some things that may pull kids away from those innate Intuitive Eating abilities are messages we get from our families as children.

And these things come from a healthy meaning place, for in nearly all cases, it's a parent who loves their child and is doing what they think is the best thing to do. But they have unintended consequences that we may not be aware of. So things like encouraging our kids to clean their plates or requiring them to eat a certain number of bytes before they can get up from the table.

Those have the unintended consequence of teaching kids to ignore or override their fullness or hunger cues. If I'm a parent, and I'm saying to a child, we have to finish your plate, finish what's on your plate. Before you can get up. I know more about how much food you need than you or your body. And that which is so ridiculous. It is when you think about it. And yet I did that to my children. I got it.

I tried to get them to finish what was on their plate because I was concerned they weren't getting enough. Some other things are telling a child or a kid that they have to, for example, eat their vegetables or their chicken before they can get dessert. Yes, when we do that, we accidentally put food on a hierarchy so that in the child's mind, they have to slog through the veggies and the chicken or something to get the wonderful dessert.

I struggle with this even now because I love Vegetables and starch. But I prefer something other than protein on the plate. So subconsciously, I'll say, " Okay, eat all your chicken, then you can have your veggies. No, I have to force myself to get it in, probably because, like, a million years ago, growing up, something like that was said to me at some point.

So instead, if we put all of the food out in front, or what feels like an appropriate serving of dessert with the rest of the food, and let the child pick and choose what they eat and don't eat, that might be a more helpful way to approach it so that you're not setting it up on a hierarchy, or at least doing that occasional anyone, Elizabeth, after I took your class, I was very skeptical of this thing, because I thought for sure if

I just put dessert out with the dinner, there was no way MAVs was going to eat all the like good food, right? And he is going to going to go straight to dessert.

And that would be that. But I overcame my insecurities about it. And I served a meal like chicken, steamed veggies, blueberries, rice, and a cookie. No, it was putting, and I put it on the plate. And I was like, let's see what happens. And sure enough, he ate little bits of it and weighed twice in a circuit around the plate. Yeah. And he didn't eat anything. He didn't just go for the pudding, right? Like, oh, veggies, yum.

But then I went back to putting, and all the things and I was like, wow, that's not what I expected out of my toddler, yeah. Because he, in his mind, they're all neutral. He's young enough, and that's not to say he wouldn't do that daily, right? But when you take some of the pressure off and use that as your approach, generally, you start to realize they do eat a wide variety of foods, most kids, you know, and given the opportunity.

Some other statements like saying that food has too much sugar in it or it's not healthy or using food as a reward or a bribe or taking it away as a form of punishment are all things that could impact a child's relationship with food, it could pull them away from its body cues, it could potentially introduce emotional eating or what we might think of as emotional eating. Those are some ways that we may inadvertently be giving messages around food that may not be that, so I guess the first thing that I would encourage parents to know about intuitive eating is sort of what is the parent's job, and what is the child's position when it comes As I think as parents, we feel like it's our job to get our child to eat. But that's different from actually not our job.

So our job is to the best of our ability to provide a wide variety of foods, lots of nutrient-dense foods and fun foods to give the child plenty of opportunity to experiment with all of them to see how they feel in their body, to notice the difference, and to listen to their body. And its cues and taste preferences while letting the child decide what and how much your child would like to eat.

That's different. And a tough shift for many parents, depending on how old your child is and how long you may have been doing it the other way. But it goes to what you said about some of your shifts. Yeah, it was a huge mindset shift for me, you know, and I've read things like it's okay to put chips in their lunch; for example, most of us would probably consider chips not like a high nutrient-dense food, but putting them in a bag in their lunch, like the bag is exciting for a kid, right? It's crunchy, and it makes noise.

So taking them out of that, and it just becomes like food. So many of these little tricks and tips were helpful for me and still are, but now I've absorbed them a little more. And they're like part of my parenting style. Yeah, rather than something I have to think about doing, right? So we can avoid pressuring kids.

It is common to try to pressure kids to eat. And we may be thinking in our head, well, I'm not pressuring them. I'm just encouraging them. I tried every trick in the book, and I wouldn't, at the time, have

identified it as pressure looking back and seeing that it was. So what are some examples of that? Well, rewarding your child.

If you eat this, we can go to the playground. Right? Or enforcing Triet baits. Yeah, people have different struggles with that. Yeah, I want him to try all the things. But I don't want to force food on him, either. Right? Right. And so the best way to encourage your child to try something is just to serve it many, many times in different ways and allow them the freedom to pick it up and play with it and explore it and smell it and put it down and maybe next actually take a nibble or give them sauces and dips and different things. We went to the beach last summer and soft-served ice cream cones, and Math didn't want to try them.

He was adamant, not wanting that food. And Marcus took the ice cream and bonked him in the face with it. And so he tasted it and was like home, give it to me. So we would like to provide him with a little lick. And then he'd be like more, more. Yeah. And pretty soon, he just took the whole ice cream and, just like, took this massive bite. And, of course, he discovered brain-freezing funny because I don't advocate forcing your kids to try stuff. But that was just, like, really cute. Yekind of glad I did it. Yeah. That is cute. Even though probably on a bucket with asparagus may not have the same impact, it might not be the same.

I have discovered that calling broccoli dinosaur trees is helpful, however. Oh, yeah, sure. Like, that's way more fun than broccoli. Right? Yeah. Yeah. And then think about even things like you're not making your child eat something. And this, especially as they get a little bit older, but you might be making a comment that expresses judgment if they don't like it, or we'll all be okay; I just spent a couple of hours in the kitchen.

But if you're not going to eat it right or making them want to be big and strong, I'm making them feel guilty. So there are many ways or comments like you have another one that could be perceived as judgmental the other way. Shaming or making a child feel bad for what they are eating, or even labeling kids if you're such a demanding or picky eater, things like that are generally not very helpful.

There's lots and lots of research to show that restrictive feeding practices are associated with more eating. So, when parents tried to have very restrictive approaches to what foods they would or won't allow their kids to eat. The research shows that those children tend to eat more, and it's associated with increased weight gain; not that I'm saying there's anything wrong with that, but it just shows the opposite of the factors that are what they're for.

And likewise, pressure to eat is linked with less eating and decreased weight gain. That's one thing that is eye-opening and helpful to know that those don't work, right? We do them because we should, and that's what to do, or we're genuinely worried about our child's not growing fast enough or growing too fast or short, whatever it is, but it doesn't work.

Yeah, the research shows it has the exact opposite effect. Okay, that's disheartening. Right? So that's one thing, and we don't. Unfortunately, there are nuances to this. And if you're listening and have a young child, you may have many questions. But yeah, I tried. I tried it, and it didn't work, or yeah,

please don't feel guilty. And every mistake in the book I practically made is the same, so I'm sure many questions are coming up for you.

Unfortunately, we could do another episode about the division of feeding responsibility. But for now, at a high level, one of them is getting clear on your job when it comes to feeding and your child's job when it comes to eating. And then, where may you be putting pressure on your child without realizing it? Looking at that would be a significant first step.

The next step is developing your intuitive eating voice as a parent. So remember, Intuitive Eating is weight neutral. It is compassionate because we want our kids to be compassionate towards themselves. And it conveys trust in your child's food preferences, and their body and their body's signals. And we want to avoid labeling foods. So we don't want to call them good or bad or healthy or unhealthy or clean or junk food to our children.

And the reason why is anyone suitable? In general, yes, I try to get out of the healthy, unhealthy mindset of morality. Yeah, because its character is also black and white, and eating isn't black and white. And all foods can fit into a health-promoting diet unless you have a life-threatening allergy or a specific medical condition.

But when we call them good or bad, kids can start to think of themselves as good or bad based on what they're eating; they can begin to take on that identity by avoiding labeling foods like that. It's free of pressure. It's not fear-inducing. Right? Our goal is to keep food neutral. Even when we say things like well, it has too much sugar in it, That has too many calories, or That's empty calories or stuff like that are generally not that helpful.

It can introduce pressure, and it can introduce a kind of fear-mongering; it can interfere with a child's relationship with food, where we want them to think of to be able to listen to their bodies without the shoulds and the schadenfreude and the guilt and all of that kind of stuff I imagined impacts their mental health to Well, certainly your relationship with food and your body affects your mental health. Totally. Yeah, absolutely.

And it's easy to hear this and think, Wait, she is just telling me to give my kid whatever they want whenever they want? No, because remember, you're the adult or the caregiver, and you still get to decide which foods you put out. But, you're just making it a wide variety and then allowing the child, and there will be times when you have to say no to certain foods for various reasons. So think about how you speak; no, I liked the phrase; it's not on the menu now. Oh, I like that for you. So it's not good or bad. It's not clean or junk; it must be added to the menu. Or I hear you. That sounds like a yummy thing. We're not going to have it right now. But I'll make sure we add it to lunch tomorrow, or I'll buy it at the grocery store next week. So I've been using that often, so when you have to say no.

So consider keeping it neutral to avoid blaming it on the food or your child's choices. So instead of saying no, you've had too much sugar today, or is that food bad for you? Can you keep it neutral so that it's more centered? Is it not time for that? Or do we have to save that for another day? Or we have to

keep that for so and so, or we're really into not yet my house in a significant phrase. Yeah, that's a good one. And I love that because it implies that we will. Yeah, but you still need to, right?

So that's just thinking about neutrality with food. And how can you introduce more objectivity into the conversation around food into how you're saying yes or no to your child? Another one is just to watch how you talk about bodies in your household if you want to raise kids with food and body confidence. How we talk about and model approaching other bodies is essential. So can you let your child know that you love and accept their body just as it is without feeling like you need to change it? Make it known in your house that healthy bodies come in all shapes and sizes; body diversity is natural and beautiful.

I liked the phrase; all bodies are good; it made me think about how much emphasis you place on appearance. Instead of putting the focus on how a child looks? Can you put it on like what their body allows them to do? Run Johnny a lot in my house like, "Oh, you're so strong." Thanks for doing this thing. My son likes to carry gallons of water in various places in the house. Sometimes it's helpful, sometimes not. But having a solid body is like the big goal we discuss in our home.

Yeah, so put the emphasis on function, compliment their personality, or their hobbies, or their strengths, or their talents, or how much effort they put into something; there are so many things you can compliment a child or a human on, right? How we look is the least exciting thing about it.

And this would be a good time to say that we have an episode if you want to learn more about making your home a diet culture-free zone. Yeah, go back and listen to one of my favorites. Get more specific tips about that. But also do what you can to normalize your average body. So call out media portrayals of bodies in age-appropriate ways.

And think about how you can have those conversations and get your values around it out there instead of the media's or the outside narrative. I'm not a goober on this. But I noticed that, like Disney movies when I was growing up, the main character was always skinny and gorgeous; the Little Mermaid, Aladdin, and Jasmine Beauty and the Beast Cinderella. And now we're seeing movies that have a lot more like solid leads, you know, in a condo that has a girl in it that's super strong. That's, you know, and she is sizable.

And she's not like the classic Disney princess. So I love to hear that I'm out of the Disney phase of movies. So I need to familiarize myself with it. I'm still getting into it. But we're dipping our toes in, and I see the difference. I am interested and encouraged because the flip side of that is how the villains are. Ursula was like, the little mermaid is my favorite movie. And Ursula was like, huge.

And think about the message that sends to kids. And so, even just sparking an age-appropriate conversation about that, why do you think they did that? And isn't that kind of silly and like, you know, when your kids talk about bodies, I think our natural inclination, like here's a prime example of something that might happen with a child might say, like, Mommy, why is so and so fat, right? Or why am I fat? And then a widespread reaction is to say, oh, no, no, no, you're not fat, you're beautiful, for sure. The implication is that you can keep those, so how can you neutralize that and meet their

questions with neutrality but also curiosity, and just get them having conversations where you get to share the alternate values in your house in our house?

Oh, yeah, I love that modeling gratitude for your body is good. Oh my gosh, there are other things on this topic. And I know that people will have so many questions about the earlier part of it, the division of feeding responsibility. So what I will say now is, send us your question.

Yes, I was welcome to another episode of it. So we can go further. And I would leave you with the thought that the number one most helpful thing you can do to help raise your kids with food and body confidence is to consider your relationship with food and your body to examine your own biases, your judgments, your approach and beliefs around food and nutrition. Because obviously, we set the tone for our children.

Think about how diet culture shows up in your home and how it's impacting you. And if you are making changes, just be upfront and let your kids know, you know what, we used to call it that, but we're not going to anymore. And now I know that all foods are good, for example, or whatever it is. So, modeling it is the best way to help your kids have a healthy relationship with food. Learning what you can do to support that would be super helpful. I love it. Thank you so much; super informative. Yeah, you're welcome.

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